PERCEPTIONS OF TUTORS AND STUDENT NURSES ON FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT A NURSING COLLEGE

BY

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DECLARATION

I, **Motlatsi George Jafta**, declare that the dissertation submitted by me for the Masters Socientatis (Nursing) Degree at the University of Free State is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted by me at another University. I further cede copyright of the script in favour of the University of Free State.

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M.G. Jafta (Mr)

ABSTRACT

Academic performance appears to be a problem, not only at nursing colleges, but at all academic institutions. An overloaded curriculum, a heavy workload, crowded classes, lack of equipment and scarce resources, amongst others, seem to be the problem.

The study was conducted to determine the factors that influence students' academic performance at a nursing college. A qualitative, explorative, descriptive and contextual design was used. Two samples, namely tutors and student nurses in the first year of their four-year diploma programme, were obtained. Both groups were English-speaking and available at the time of the study.

Two questions were posed to the target groups. Firstly: "What are the factors that influence academic performance at the college?" Secondly: "What can be done to improve the academic performance of the students at the college?" Informed consent was obtained after the purpose of the study had been explained to the participants. Consent to conduct the study was also obtained from the Head of the Department of the Free State Department of Health.

The eight steps identified by Tesch (1990), as cited in Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi and Wright (2010: 224), was used during the process of data analysis. The researcher then did a literature review to support the outcome.

During focus-group interviews, tutors indicated that the type of students selected for training was not committed enough to become competent professional nurses. Some of the tutors were concerned that students only applied to the nursing college to receive bursaries. The bursaries were then misappropriatedfor personal use, instead of being used for their studies. According to tutors, students only applied for training because they had not been admitted at other institutions which offeredthe courses of their choice. Tutors also complained that, due to administrative responsibilities, they lacked the time to accompany students in the clinical areas.

The students identified several factors. They mentioned, for example, that the transition from high school to college and the resultant workloadhad a negative impact on their studies. More freedom at the college and the fact that they no longer studied under the strict supervision of their parents, were also mentioned as factors. Furthermore, it seemed that the study methods that were successful at high school did not have the same effect at college. Students also complained about the appalling living conditions at the nurses' home. Poor hygienic conditions and unbearable noise levels, the lack of security, and a feeling of not being safe were mentioned. The lack of confidentiality when they consulted the student counsellor also added to students' dissatisfaction. A concern was that confidential information would later be disclosed to other students and tutors.

Finally, the researcher's recommendations were to address the most important factors, such as the management of bursaries and accommodation of students and to ensure that a strategic plan would be developed to improve academic performance.

OPSOMMING

Akademiese prestasie blyk ’n probleem te wees, nie net by verpleegkolleges nie, maar by alle akademiese instellings. ’n Oorlaaide kurrikulum, werksoorlading, oorvol klasse, ’n gebrek aan toerusting en skaars hulpbronne blyk ondermeer die probleem te wees.

Die studie is uitgevoer om vas te stel watter faktore studente se akademiese prestasie by ’n verpleegkollege beïnvloed. ’n Kwalitatiewe, verkennende, beskrywende en kontekstuele ontwerp is gebruik. Twee steekproewe, naamlik dosente en studentverpleegkundiges in die eerstejaar van ’n vierjaar-diplomaprogram, is verkry. Beide groepe was Engelssprekend en tydens die studie beskikbaar.

Twee vrae is aan albei teikengroepe gestel. Eerstens: “Watter faktore beïnvloed akademiese prestasie by die kollege?” Tweedens: Wat kan gedoen word om die akademiese prestasie van studente by die kollege te verbeter?” Ingeligte toestemming is nadat die doel van die studie aan deelnemers verduidelik is, verkry. Toestemming is ook van die Departementshoof van die Vrystaatse Departement van Gesondheid verkry.

Die agt stappe van Tesch (1990), soos aangehaal in Botma *et al*. (2010: 224), is tydens die proses van data-analise gevolg. Die navorser het daarna ’n literatuurstudie gedoen om die resultate te ondersteun.

Gedurende die fokusgroep-onderhoude het dosente aangedui dat die tipe student wat vir opleiding gekies is, nie toegewyd genoeg is om vaardige professionele verpleegkundiges te word nie. Sommige dosente was bekommerd dat studente slegs by die verpleegkollege aansoek doen om die beursgeld te ontvang. Die beursgeld word dan vir persoonlike gebruik aangewend, eerder as om dit vir hulle studies aan te wend. Studente doen ook, volgens die dosente, aansoek vir opleiding bloot omdat hulle nie toelating tot ander instellings gekry het wat hulle kursuskeuse betrefnie.

Verder het dosente gekla dat hulle, as gevolg van administratiewe verpligtinge, nie genoeg tyd het om studente in die kliniese areas op te volg nie.

Studente het verskeie faktore geïdentifiseer wat hulle studies kan beïnvloed. Hulle het byvoorbeeld genoem dat die oorgang van die hoërskool na die kollege, en die meegaande werklas,'n negatiewe impak op hulle studies het. Meer vryheid by die kollege en die feit dat hulle nie meer onder streng toesig van hulle ouers studeer nie, is ook as 'n faktor vir swak akademiese prestasie genoem. Verder het studente gevoel dat hulle nie oor toepaslike studiemetodes beskik om die werklading wat met hul studies gepaardgaan te hanteer nie. Dit het geblyk dat metodes wat op hoërskool suksesvol was, nie op kollege vrugte afwerp nie. Studente het ook oor die swak toestande by die verpleegsterstehuis gekla. Swak higiëniese toestande en onuithoudbare geraas, die afwesigheid van sekuriteit, en 'n gevoel van onveiligheid is gemeld. Die studente was ook ontevrede oor die gebrek aan vertroulikheid wanneer hulle van die studentberader gebruik maak. 'n Bekommernis was dat vertroulike en sensitiewe inligting moontlik later aan ander studente en dosente bekendgemaak word.

Laastens is die navorser se aanbevelings daarop gemik om die belangrikste faktore, soos byvoorbeeld, die bestuur van beursgeld en akkommodasie van studente te hanteer. Die navorser poog om'n strategiese plan ontwikkel word om akademiese prestasie te verbeter.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In educational institutions, success is measured by academic performance or how well students meet the standards set out by the local government and the institution itself (Bell, 2012: Online). And schools, though invested in fostering good academic habits, are often influenced by concerns about the school's reputation and the possibility of monetary aid from government institutions, which can hinge on the overall academic performance of the school (Belle, 2011: Online).

When placed under the spotlight at national and local level, it became clear that many educational problems were directly related to the curriculum (Carl cited in Waterson, Harms, Qupe, Maritz, Manning, Makobe and Chabeli, 2006: 57). These problems include, for example, uninformed educators, resistance towards curriculum research, and contributions of educators at meso and macro levels of curriculum design (Carl cited in Waterson *et al*., 2006: 57). Becker, Viljoen, Botma and Bester (cited in Waterson *et al*., 2006: 57), for example, insist that the performance of students is caused by a congested curriculum, emphasis being placed on coverage of the content, fragmented and artificial learning, duplication among disciplines or subjects, and the behavioural-objective model with its authoritarian stance; this should or might also be applicable in nursing schools. It has been argued that although the scientific nursing processes approach replaced the task-centred approach to a large extent, the students still demonstrate a lack of retention and integration of knowledgeparticularly in basic sciences within the clinical context (Fichardt cited in Becker, Viljoen, Botma and Bester, 2003: 58).

Outcomes-based education (OBE), which aims to develop students' critical thinking and their problem-solving abilities, came about during education changes in South Africa. Outcomes-based education requires that learners take greater responsibility for participating actively in the learning process and working hard, while the facilitator

takes full responsibility for the careful planning and management of a conducive learning environment (Van der Horst and McDonald cited in Watson*et al*., 2006: 57). The importance of meeting the objectives of OBE, the use of the integrated and process-oriented curriculum model with the emphasis on community-based education and a philosophy of problem-based learning, has been endorsed (Becker *et al*., 2003: 58; Mtshali, 2005: 10). The curriculum should be revised to make it relevant, realistic, valid and reliable to the learner and the society it serves (Watson*et al*., 2006: 64).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over the past year, the academic and clinical performance of first year students at the nursing college under study was poor. An analysis of the test and examination results of the students revealed that 101/213 (49%) failed their tests and 121/204 (59%) failed their examinations. With regard to clinical performance, the results were satisfactory, hence no percentage calculation. Academic performance is described as the ability to memorise and communicate facts; or as students' ability to effectively manage their studies, to integrate and form relationships between facts (Raise your academic performance, 2003: Online). One can also define academic performance in terms of the number of students completing versus the total number of students enrolled (Adult education, 2012: Online).

Considering the stated definitions, the academic performance of students registered at the nursing college continued despite collaborative efforts by academic staff to improve the curriculum and other support structures such as the Student Support and Development Committee (cfWatson*et al*., 2006: 57).

Factors that in general contribute to the academic performance by nursing college students include, but are not limited to, socio-economic background, the ability of some students to handle the change from a school teaching environment to a nursing college learning environment, and low self-efficacy. It includes a non-English-speaking background with poor comprehension of the content and/or misinterpretation of the content (Andrew and Vialle, 1998: Online). Furthermore, courses adopted from other disciplines, for example, chemistry, physics, biology,

sociology and psychology and the merging of sciences (physics, chemistry and bio-sciences) proved to be too difficult to understand for first year nursing college students from countries such as Australia, the UK and the USA (Akinsanaya and Hayward, 1980; Lenehan, Dunn, Ingham, Signer and Murray, 1994:461-466). Lastly, students' belief regarding the relevance of the nursing course content and the extent to which material presented to them is applicable to nursing influences their academic performance outcome more than various learning strategies (Thornton, 1977:180-186).

Newly registered nurses are not competent enough to apply clinical knowledge and practice skills (Morolong and Chabeli cited in Waterson *et al*., 2006: 57). In every educational institution success is measured not only by academic performance or how well the students meet standards, it is also measured by teachers' observation of students' listening and practical skills or dexterity in clinical areas, punctuality and time management (Belle, 2011: Online). As career competition grows fierce in the working world, the importance of the students doing well in schools caught the attention of parents, legislators, and government education departments (Belle, 2011: Online). Considering the concerns of educators regarding students' academic performance, and students' perceptions of the relevance of nursing curricula content, the researcher wants to focus on the following research question: What are the factors, according to tutors and student nurses, which influence academic performance at the nursing college?

1.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A prerequisite to conduct any research is that the researcher should have an overview of philosophies related to "the scientific nature of seeking knowledge" and a well-established world view (Botma et al., 2010:39). Three philosophical assumptions, namely, ontological, epistemological and methodological, should be used by researchers as guidelines to formulate their views (Botma *et al.,* 2010:40).

The researcher views the education and training of first year nursing students as the responsibility of the nursing college. Support should be rendered to the novice

nursing students to be able to develop as professional practitioners. Tutors are considered to be competent at both theoretical and practicum level. Both tutors and students should apply the values such as respect, integrity, honesty and justice in all aspect of life, including in their professional conduct. The researcher will meticulously follow the stated strategies, for example, sample selection, ethical considerations and description of the data to identify, understand and describe the academic performance of nursing students. The researcher will implement strategies to ensure that no harm comes to participants (cfMcNiff and Whitehead, 2009:8). The dissemination of results will be in agreement with participants and recommendation will be seriously considered to improve the academic performance of students.

1.4 PURPOSE

The purpose of the study is:

- To describe tutors and student nurses perceptions regarding factors that influence academic performance; and
- To make recommendations to improve the academic performance of the student nurses at the college.

1.5 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.5.1 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Academic performance is a complex and problematic concept to define (Jansen, 2004). It could refer to how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers (Belle, 2011: Online). In this study, academic performance will refer to how students perform in tests, examinations and clinical competence examination

1.5.2 PERCEPTION

Perceptions refer to seeing things from a specific frame of reference, worldview or theory (Burns and Grove, 2009: 68). This becomes our reality that will give us a

sense of certainty, security and control (Burns and Grove, 2009: 68). For the purpose of this study, perceptions will entail tutors and student nurses' views on factors that influence academic performance and will be based on personal or "lived experiences" as described by Burns and Grove, (2009: 52). Perceptions will be obtained through focus group interviews with the different groups of participants.

1.5.3 NURSING COLLEGE

A nursing college is a post-secondary educational institution which offers professional nursing education at basic and post-basic level, where such nursing education has been approved in terms of section 15(2) of the Nursing Act, 1978 (South African Nursing Council Regulations R425, as amended). Nursing college means any nursing education institution accredited by the Council in terms of Nursing Act, 2005 (Act no. 33 of 2005).

1.5.4 STUDENT NURSES

The Nursing Act No. 33 of 2005 defines a nursing student as a person undergoing education and training at an approved nursing school and who is registered with the South African Nursing Council under section 23 of the Act (South Africa Act 33 of 2005:5). For the purpose of this study, a nursing student is a person registered as a first year diploma in nursing at the Free State School of Nursing, which will lead to registration as a professional nurse (General, Psychiatric and Community Health Nursing and a Midwife).

1.5.5 TUTOR

A tutor is a nurse who teaches and prepares licensed practical nurses (LPN) and registered nurses (RN) for entry into practice positions (Nurse Educator, 2008: Online). A registered nurse'sprimary area of interest, competence and professional practice is the education of nurses at university level. The minimum education required is a masters' degree in Science in Nursing (Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 2009: Online).

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

To explore the perceptions of tutors and students concerning the factors that contribute to academic performance at the nursing college, a descriptive qualitative inquiry, explorative, and contextual research design will be employed (Botma *et al.,* 2010: 194; Waterson *et al.,* 2006: 57). In qualitative research, the researcher deals with beliefs and opinions which do not have numerical quantification (Brink, Van der Walt, Van Rensburg, 2006: 113). An explorative study is designed to increase the knowledge of the field of study and is not intended for generalisations. The purpose of using exploratory studies is to investigate little-understood phenomena, to identify or discover important categories of meaning, and to generate hypothesis for further research (Marshall and Roseman as cited in Lekalakala-Mokgele, 2005: 19).

The use of descriptive design can be motivated by the fact that it makes provision for the accurate portrayal or account of the characteristics of a particular individual, situation or group (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000:102). Descriptive studies offer researchers a way to discover new meaning, to describe what exists, to determine the frequency with which something occurs, and to categorise information.

The study will also be contextual in nature. A contextual design considers those factors that can influence the implementation of an intervention, and thus the outcome of the study (Sidani and Braden, 1998:64). These contextual factors include social and environmental settings and individual variables that can influence the intervention and study outcomes.

This study will describe tutors and students perceptions of factors that influence academic performance at a nursing college. A nursing college in the Free State will be selected for this purpose. Although the study is contextual in nature, the problem that is addressed concerns students at nursing colleges in the country. The researcher’s intention is to adhere to the recommendations stated in the proposal to make it possible for other nursing colleges to consider the findings in the proposed study, and apply it within their own context.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An explanation of how the research design will be used will be addressed in this section and elaborated on in Chapter 2 (cfHofstee, 2010: 115). The researcher will describe and justify the research technique, brief the reader on the population and sample, as well as how the analysis of the findings will be done.

1.7.1 RESEARCH TECHNIQUE

The researcher will use focus group interviews to obtain the data from the different groups of participants. A focus group interview is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a relaxed, non-threatening environment (Krueger cited in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2008: 300).

It is a very useful tool that can be employed not only to explore people's knowledge and experiences or what people think, but also how they think and why they think the way they do (Bhana, 2009: Online). Focus group interviews in qualitative research deal with words and observations in an effort to express reality whilst describing people in their natural settings where their environment, input, ideas and disclosures are encouraged, and the environment in which this happens is conducive and nurturing (Lewis, [n.d.]: Online). Some participants might be reluctant or feel intimidated when interviewed individually so group dynamics and interaction produced by focus groups greatly minimise this feeling of isolation (Burns and Grove, 2009: 513). Five to fifteen people, whose opinions and experiences are requested simultaneously, are usually selected to participate (Brink*et al.,*2006: 152). The idea is that the group will interact freely, share thoughts and ideas, and thereby produce inputs which would otherwise not be possible if other methods of data collection were used (Burns and Grove, 2009: 513). Saturation of data is an important indicator of the number of focus group interviews needed (Burns and Grove, 2009: 361).

The construction of a research question is crucial in qualitative research. It is *"*concise, interrogative statements developed to direct studies that are focused on the description of the variables, examination of the relationships amongst the variables, and determination of the differences between two or more variables*"* (Burns and Grove, 2009: 720).

Tutors and students will be asked to address two research questions. A time limit of one hour will be allowed per question in order to promote saturation of data. The questions will be as follows:

- What are the factors, according to tutors and student nurses, which influence academic performance at the nursing college?
- How could the academic performance of nursing students be improved?

1.7.2 POPULATION

A population refers to all the elements that meet the criteria for inclusion in a study, or the entire group of persons or objects that meet the criteria that the researcher would like to investigate (Brink*et al.,* 2012: 131; Burns and Grove, 2009: 42). For the purpose of this study two populations will be applicable, namely 26 tutors and 213 first year students registered for the Diploma in Nursing Science (General, Psychiatry and Community Nursing) and Midwifery at a Free State School of Nursing.

1.7.3 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis is the major entity that the researcher is analysing in the study and could include artefacts, individuals, groups, geographical units or social interactions (Trochim, 2006: Online). The analysis that the researcher embarks upon will determine what the unit is (Trochim, 2006: Online).Therefore, in this study the unit of analysis is the tutors and the students.

The process by which the researcher will select participants from the population, which is deemed representative, is referred to as sampling (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 124; Burns and Grove, 2009: 34).

1.7.4 SAMPLE

A sample is subset or a part of a whole and is made up of units of analysis from a defined population (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 124). Studying the sample enables the researcher to better understand the population from which the sample has been selected and thus puts him in a better position to explain some facets of that population (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport*,* 2008: 194). The above-mentioned authors state that the following reasons are important for using samples in qualitative research:

- Including all members of the population in a study could be costly;
- More accurate information could be obtained through using samples as opposed to the whole population; and
- Rich, in-depth information could be obtained because more time, money and effort will be focused on a selected sample.

The nature of the research problem is such that it renders the question of covering the entire population impossible, taking into account time and resources availability (De Vos *et al.,* 2008: 194). In summation, sampling renders the study possibleas compared to a census (Polit and Beck, 2009: 749).

1.7.4.1 Sample size

In qualitative studies a sample size may refer to a number of persons, objects or participants to be included in a study (Brink et al.,2012:143). The size of the sample will be different depending on the purpose, the design and the type of the sample used. The sample size will vary from one study to the other (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 135). By virtue of the type of study, namely qualitative, the researcher will use a convenience sampling technique (Burns and Grove, 2009: 355; De Vos *et al.,* 2008:

202). The number of participants per focus group interview will be between seven and ten tutors and seven and ten students. The total number of participants, tutors and students included in the study will depend on whether saturation is reached or not.

1.7.4.2 Sampling criteria

The inclusion or legibility criterion depicts the characteristics that participants must possess in order to be considered for inclusion in the study (Brink *et al.,* 2012: 133). The inclusion criteria for this study will be:

- English-speaking tutors employed at a Free State School of Nursing sub-campus;
- English-speaking students at first year level of the General Nursing Science and Arts diploma at the same institution.
- Tutors and students must both be available at the time of data collection and must be willing to participate in this research.
- Second, third and fourth year students excluded

1.8 EXPLORATORY INTERVIEW OR PILOT STUDY

An exploratory interview or pilot study is a study that is conducted on a smaller scale, using a smaller sample of the population with the intention of refining the methodology and the research question prior to the commencement of the main study (Burns and Grove, 2009: 54). Polit and Beck (2008: 213) refer to a pilot study as a trial run or a small version of the proposed study, conducted to test methods that will be used in the main study. It is also referred to as a dress rehearsal of the actual or parent study that is conducted to determine how feasible the main study will be and also to detect possible loopholes in the proposed study. This study is conducted in exactly the same manner as the actual study in the sense that the researcher will use similar participants, the same setting and the same data and analysis technique (Burns and Grove, 2009: 103). The moderator will conduct a focus group interview with between seven and ten tutors and seven and ten student nurses at first year

level of the Diploma in Nursing Science (General, Psychiatry and Community Nursing) and Midwifery at the Free State School of Nursing northern campus. The purpose is to test whether the research question generates appropriate responses. The focus group interviews conducted by the researcher will be recorded and transcribed in exactly the same manner as it will be done in the actual study. The results of the explorative interview will be included in the main study, unless the research question was not suitable to obtain the information needed. The moderator and the researcher will meet immediately after the pilot interview to critique the session (Waterson *et al.,* 2006: 56).

1.9 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection refers to the precise collection of data relating to the study purpose or the specific objectives, questions or hypothesis of the inquiry (Burns and Grove, 2009: 695). The researcher will use focus group interviews to gather data from participants, observe the interaction between participants, and record data (cfBurns and Grove, 2009: 44). The process of data gathering will be guided by the research question. One hour will be allocated to each question that will be posed to participants.

1.9.1 ACCESS TO THE SETTING

Permission will be obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of the Free State. Thereafter, the researcher will submit a letter of request to the Dean of the Free State School of Nursing in order to obtain permission to access the setting where the study will be conducted (refer Annexure B). Written consent will be obtained from participants indicating their willingness to participate in the study (cfBrink *et al.,* 2006: 54; Burns and Grove, 2009: 44). The letter to participants will clearly state the purpose of the study and will assure them that they can withdraw from the study without negative consequences (refer Annexure D).

1.9.2 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The study will be conducted and guided by an experienced moderator who has a master's degree in nursing and is an expert in qualitative research (cfWatersone*t al.,* 2006: 57). Throughout this process or session, the researcher will take the role of the observer, noting the verbal and non-verbal messages projected by participants during the interview. Before commencement of the group session, the researcher will clarify the aims of the focus group and communicate this to the moderator and the participants (cf Burns and Grove, 2009: 214). In this study, groups will be allocated according to their roles, namely, tutors and students. For the purpose of data collection, the participants will be seated in a U-shape allowing the moderator to maintain eye contact with them (cfBurns and Grove, 2009: 514). The acoustics of the room should allow the researcher to obtain a quality audiotape recording of the session. Note taking by the researcher is of utmost importance (Lewis, [n.d.]: Online). The session will be scheduled for two hours and taking notes on the dynamics of the group and how members interact with one another is crucial, as the nonverbal behaviour also adds to the richness of the collected data. On completion of the focus group interviews, refreshments will be served to the participants.

1.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are rejected in favour of trustworthiness which will be evaluated on four levels, according to Lincoln and Guba's model (cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 276). The levels are True value/Credibility; Applicability/Transferability; Consistency/Dependability; and Confirmability/Neutrality.

In this study, an experienced moderator who is also an expert in qualitative research will conduct the focus group interviews. The researcher will be responsible for taking the field notes. Data comparison will take place shortly after each session.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of the study are not unique to the original setting, context, groups or circumstances but can be transferred to other samples (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 119; Polit and Beck, 2008: 202). The decision to transfer lies entirely with the person who wants to transfer the findings to other

settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 316). Therefore, it remains the decision of tutors in different settings and colleges to consider the recommendations and strategies to improve the academic performance of students. The results might assist tutors and students in better understanding the different needs and views and possibly enable both parties to better understand one another (cfWaterson *et al.,* 2006:58).

The processes followed in the study should be consistent, dependable, and reasonably stable over a lengthy period of time and across researchers (Burns and Grove, 2009: 431; Polit and Beck, 2008: 539). The researcher will allow a peer to do an audit trial. The peer is usually an expert in qualitative research who will closely observe and scrutinise the methods, procedures, designs and processes used by the researcher in the inquiry to establish how dependable or acceptable they are (cf Brink *et al.,* 2006: 119).

Confirmability embraces the principles and traditions of objectivity and addresses the question of whether the outcome of the inquiry could be confirmed by another inquiry (De Vos *et al.,* 2008: 347). Qualitative studies looks at the degree to which the data is in harmony with the outcome and leads to implications, or whether there is congruency between the outcome, findings, conclusions and the collected data and that there is an internal accord between the meaning that the researcher attaches to the data and the evidence itself (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 119; De Vos *et al.,* 2008: 347; Polit and Beck, 2008: 196). Bracketing, which is the identification and setting aside of the preconceived beliefs and opinions that he might have about phenomenon under investigation, will be implemented by the researcher (cf Brink *et al.,* 2006: 113). To ensure that bracketing is sufficiently achieved, the researcher will employ the “audit trial” by Lincoln and Guba (cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 278). This entails, for example, the storing of raw data-recordings, written field notes documents and survey results; data reduction and analyses products, summaries and condensed notes; theoretical notes such as working hypothesis, concepts, and hunches; and data reconstruction and synthesis products notes showing how different themes relate, including structures of categories and themes.

1.11 ETHICAL ISSUES

The researcher will adhere to the following ethical considerations as stipulated by Bak (2008: 28), Botma *et al*., (2010: 4-26) and Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2010: 73) to ensure that he does not violate the participants' rights. Both the tutors and the student nurses will be asked to participate in the study only after the title, the purpose, and any foreseeable risk and discomforts and the benefits of the study have been explained to them. The data-gathering will be conducted by a moderator who has a master's degree in nursing research, and who is an expert in qualitative research and focus group interviews. Informed consent will be sought prior to conducting the focus group discussion. All participants will be asked to keep information confidential. The researcher, co-coder and study leader will have access to the audiotape material. Audiotapes will be kept in a safe place and the content thereof will be erased after the completion of the research study. Real names of the participants will not be used. Participants will be informed that participation is voluntary and they have the right to discontinue their participation if they feel uncomfortable or do not wish to continue with the study. Consent letters requiring participant's permission to voluntarily take part in the study will be drafted and informed consent obtained from each participant. Participants will be informed that results will be disseminated at conferences and in the form of articles in journals; that no harm will come to them as result of the study; and that no remuneration will be paid to them. They will also be informed that a focus group will take approximately two hours to complete. Permission to conduct the study will be obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of the Free State, and the institution, namely, the Dean of the Free State School of Nursing sub-campus. Anonymity in qualitative studies cannot be guaranteed as the researcher will be in a face-to-face situation with the participants during focus group interviews.

1.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Data will be analysed by means of eight steps described by Tesch (1990), cited in Cresswell (1994: 153-155), and by using the basic steps identified by Tesch (1990), as quoted by Botma *et al*. (2010: 224). The eight steps of Tesch (1990) are, for

example, to obtain a sense of the whole by carefully reading through all the transcriptions, and by jotting down some ideas as they come to mind; to pick one interview or the most interesting or the shortest one on top of the pile, then to go through it asking," What is it about"?; and by having completed this task for several participants, make a list of concepts and cluster similar concepts together.

1.13 VALUE OF THE STUDY

The Free State School of Nursing and its sub-campuses, especially the student nurses and tutors at the college, might benefit greatly from this research. If recommendations made by students and tutors as well as the researcher are implemented, it could possibly lead to improvement in the academic performance of the students. Though the study is qualitative and the findings cannot be generalised, nursing colleges in other parts of the province or country may implement the same recommendations for academic performance.

CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one, the researcher introduced the research topic, stated the problem, and offered an overview of all the processes that wereinvolved in the execution of the study.

In chapter 2, the research methodology, namely, the blueprint or the design, the research technique, the process of data collection and analysis, the methods to ascertain trustworthiness, and the ethical considerations are described (refer Figure 2.1: Data collection process for tutors and students).

The purpose of the study was to describe tutors and student nurses perceptions regarding factors that influence academic performance; and to make recommendations to improve the academic performance of the student nurses at the college.

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A design is the plan for executing an investigation that ensures control over the factors that could interfere with the validity of the outcome (Burns and Grove, 2009: 236). Polit and Beck (2008: 66) assert that the research design is the “architectural backbone” of the study and the overall blueprint for acquiring answers to the problems being investigated. The challenges that might be experienced during the research process are addressed in the design. The design is usually structured to tackle or to deal with different kinds of questions (Henning, *et al.,*2010: 30). When various kinds of studies and designs are categorised, it is not surprising that this is done in accordance with the kinds of questions that they are able to address (Henning *et al*., 2010: 30).

It appears that the authors mentioned above view the research design, especially the type of design, as the most important facet in the planning and execution of a study.

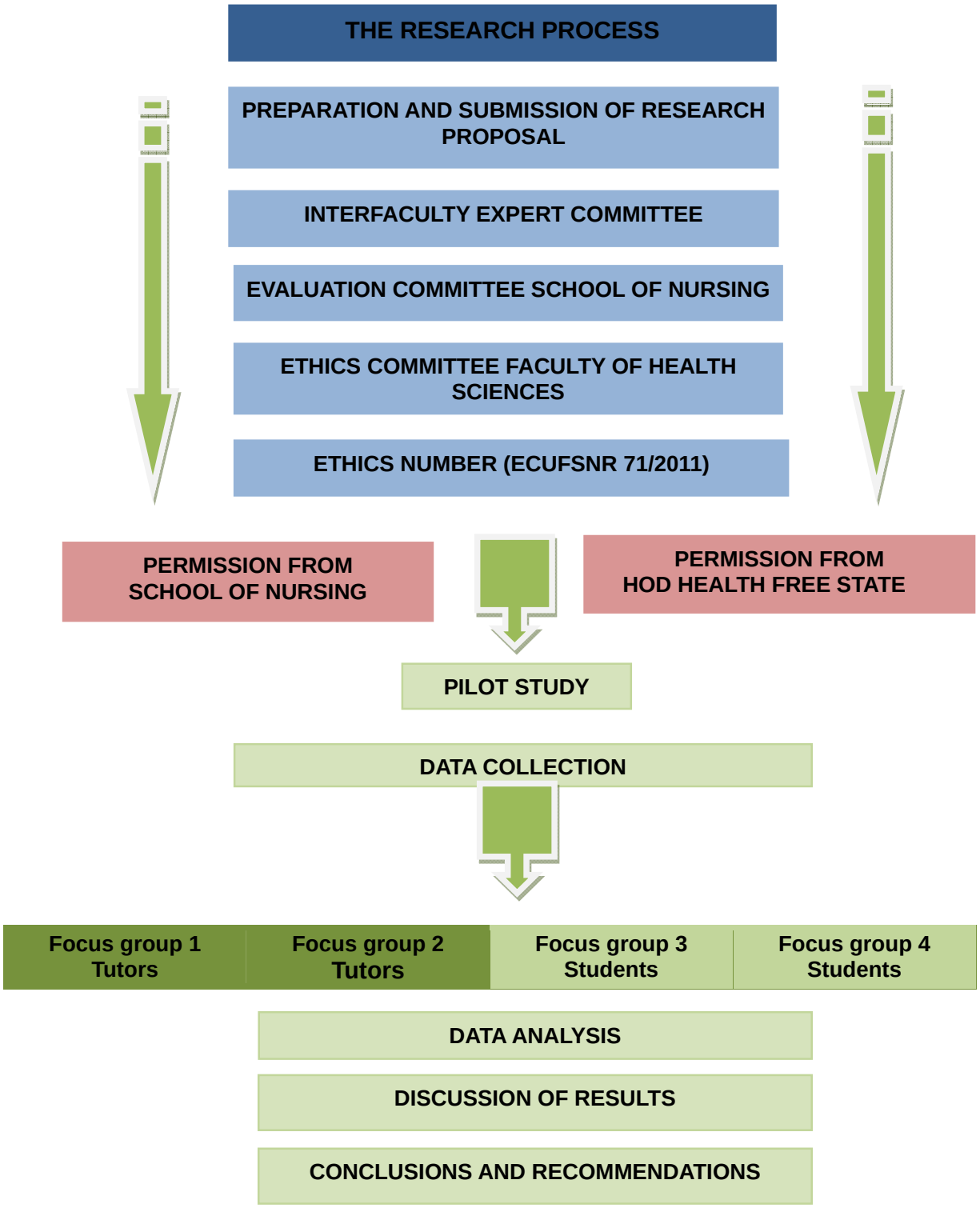


Figure 2.1: Data collection process for tutors and student

2.2.1 DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

A descriptive qualitative enquiry and contextual research design were carefully selected for the study. The mentioned designis ideal, especially when the researcher would like to give a direct mental image of a scene, person, or emotional situation (Botma *et al.,* 2010:194). Polit and Beck (2008:274) proclaim that the purpose of descriptive qualitative inquiryis to make an observation, to describe, to document aspects of an event in its natural setting, and sometimes to act as a premise for theory development.

Furthermore, a descriptive design is considered the most crucial design in ensuring the exactness or correctness of the gathering of the data from the main area of interest (Uys and Basson, 2004: 38). A qualitative researcher's primary focus is to describe the activities, movements and actions of the research participants in greater depth and attempt to give meaning in accordance with participants' own beliefs, interpretations, history and perspective (Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 272). Botma *et al*. (2010: 225) assert that it entails a brief transmission of data concerning people, places or situations. In an effort to remain true to the perceptions of the participantsthisresearcherhas consistently made use of the themes, categories and concepts by the participants themselves, rather than his own words (cfBabbie and Mouton, 2008: 272). Unstructured observation, which involves phenomena, behaviours and interactions as they unfold without any presupposed manipulation and interference from the researcher, was also used (cfBrink *et al.,* 2006: 144). The unstructured observations objectively depict contexts, phenomenon, interactions, dialogue and conversations as accurately and as precisely as is humanly possible (Burns and Grove, 2009: 406).

2.2.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The characteristics of qualitative research described by different authors made it a feasable choice for this study. Qualitative research is highlighted as a way of gaining insight through discovering significance or an approach that affords researchers a comprehensive framework that enable them to explore the deep, rich and complex inherent phenomenon (Burns and Grove, 2009:51). Importantly, Burns and Grove

(2009: 22-23) state that qualitative research is a systematic, interactive, subjective approach, used to describe life experiences and to give them meaning; it is also broad and holistic and the researcher's views and perspectives have an impact on the outcome of the study. The design is ideal for researchers who desire to explore, describe and enhance comprehension of human experiences such as mourning, grief and pain which cannot be quantified numerically (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 113). Considering the fact that qualitative research examines human activity from the premise that insiders' viewpoint play a crucial role, and that the main goal is the comprehension and description of human behaviour as opposed to explicating it (Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 270), support the researcher's choice.

Qualitative researchers' primary focus is to describe the activities, movements and actions of the research participants in greater depth and attempt to give meaning to them in accordance with participants' own beliefs, interpretations, history and perspective (Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 272). Through a qualitative paradigm, the researchers investigate social activity from a wide methodological perspective or approach. The following are the main characteristics that differentiate qualitative from quantitative research (Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 271):

- The study is carried out in the natural setting of social action's role players.
- Participant's point of view is emphatically stressed.
- The main focus is rich, broad, thick description of the phenomenon.
- The means to an end is more imperative than the end itself.

The prime intention here is not to generalise the outcome to other settings, as the study is specific to its social context.

The fact that the researcher selected a contextual design is motivated in the following description.

2.2.3 CONTEXTUAL DESIGN

Events cannot be understood outside their own context, and it is precisely for this reason that the researcher made an attempt to understand the phenomena under investigation, the setting or context, and the actions of the participants from their own perspective (cfBabbie and Mouton, 2008:272; Brink *et al.,* 2006: 64). The researcher acknowledges that several external social and environmental factors influenced both the implementation and the results of the study (cf Burns and Grove, 2009: 178).

Qualitative and quantitative researchers follow different investigative approaches. Following a quantitative approach means that researchers seek to analyse variables and to scrutinise the relationships between them, in order to increase generalisability. The qualitative researcher takes a holistic or global view of the event with the intention to understand it from its natural perspective (Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 272; Polit and Beck, 2008: 235). As far as the contextualist paradigm is concerned, the researcher needs to understand a phenomenon against the background of its context (Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 272).

The School of Nursing selected for the study is located in the Free State, namely, the Matjhabeng Municipality in the Lejweleputswa district. Most of the students who are selected for training are from this town and its diaspora. The students hail from a low socio-economic background as their parents work or used to work in the surrounding gold mining industries and most of these mines have either closed down or employees have been retrenched. Because of their poor economic background, the Free State Department of Health is providing bursaries to students in order to ease their financial burden.

Considering the characteristics of the design, the researcher was satisfied that the selected design fitted the purpose of the study. The intent was to gain insight into the perceptions of the tutors and the student nurses at a School of Nursing on the factors that influence academic performance. It is through the description of their perceptions that the researcher was able to gain insight and to formulate strategies that could possily improve academic performance.

2.3 RESEARCH TECHNIQUE

A research technique is chosen for the purpose to gather data. It is common knowledge that observation, document analysis, conversations, journaling, focus groups, case studies, questioning and measurements could, for example, be considered (Burns and Grove, 2009:44, 649; Armino and Hultgrencited in Botma *et al*., 2010: 290). Botma *et al*. (2010: 205) suggested one-to-one interviews and focus group interviews as principal methods in qualitative research.

Both the advantages and disadvantages of group or focus groups were studied by the researcher. Two advantages of group interviews described by De Vos *et al*. (2008:312) that were considered in order to select a suitable technique included the fact that:

- Group dynamics affords participants the opportunity to share their thoughts,experiences and ideas which might not be the case in a one-to-one interview.
- Rich in-depth data on the topic under study could be produced.

In case of the disadvantages of focus groups, it was mentioned that:

- Group interviews could be counter-productive for individuals who are not at ease talking in a group.
- This type of exercise could prove to be futile if the researcher is not experienced and sufficiently equipped to conduct the interviews.
- The outcome may not be generalised to larger populations as it is unique to the phenomenon.
- The participants may wish to be kind and fit in with the norm and this is referred to as social posturing.

The purpose of the research and the characteristics of the focus group interviews described below provided a stronger theoretical foundation on which the researcher's decision to use this method was based.

2.3.1 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Smith (cited in Steward and Shamdasani, 1990: 10) defines focus group interviews as restricted to circumstances where the selected group is small enough to enhance the authentic deliberations among all the elements of the group. Denzin and Lincoln (cited in Lewis, [n.d.]: Online) says it is a phenomenon wherein the researcher asks members of the group specific questions pertaining to the title after a reasonable inquiry has been rounded up. It could also be referred to as a group discussion guided by a facilitator (Healey, 2009: Online). Krueger (1994: 6) states that focus groups entail carefully planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a relaxed, non-threatening environment. It also involves the interactions of about 5 to 15 people whose opinions and experiences are requested simultaneously (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 152).

2.3.1.1 The focus group interview as a tool

The focus group interview is a useful tool that can be employed not only to explore people's knowledge and experiences or what people think, but also how they think and why they think the way they do (Kitzinger, 1995: 229). In qualitative research focus group interviews deal with words and observations in an effort to express reality (Lewis, [n.d.]:Online). It is used to describe people in their natural settings where their environment, input, ideas and disclosures are encouraged, and the environment in which the interviews happen is conducive and nurturing (Lewis, [n.d.]: Online).

To launch focus group interviews as a research method the following should, for example, be considered by the reseacher (Botma *et al*., 2010: 210-211):

- Careful planning in terms of a “collective activity” and group discussion as believed to be important by the researcher.
- Designing the focus groups interviews based on the purpose of the study.
- Structuring the focus groups based on the nature of the questions or questions and the skills of the interviewer.

- Selecting the participants based on common characteristics, including a wide scope of experiences and viewpoints.
- Balancing the number of participants included in each group in order not to have limited time for feedback or involvement of individuals.
- Appointing a skilled facilitator in case of high numbers of participants. The more the number of participants, the more skilled the facilitator should be.
- Recruiting at least 20 percent more participants to fill gaps in the case of no-shows.
- Aligning the number of focus groups with the purpose of the study, the saturation requirement, the richness of data needed, and the quest for trustworthiness, as there is no set rule.

In this study, some participants might have been reluctant or felt intimidated when interviewed individually, therefore the researcher implemented the sugestions described above and utilised group dynamics and interaction produced by each focus group to minimised feelings of isolation (cf Kitzinger, 1995: 229; Botma *et al*., 2010: 210-211). The idea was that members of the focus group interviews should interact freely, share thoughts and ideas, thereby producing inputs which would otherwise not be possible if other methods of data collection were used (cf Burns and Grove, 2009: 51; Kitzinger, 1995: 299). Saturation of data was an important indicator of the number of focus group interviews needed (cf Burns and Grove, 2009:361).

Formulating suitable questions form part of the careful planning and design of focus group interviews. Several options, that is, broad questions to obtain information about “lived experiences”, a set of well formulated questions or an interview guide, or lastly, semi-structured questions, are available. It is important to note that all types of questions are piloted before the main study is executed. Feedback from experts is essential to ensure quality (Botma *et al*., 2010: 212). Burns and Grove (2009: 720) describe the research question as a “concise, interrogative statement developed to direct studies that are focused on the description of the variables, examination of the relationships amongst the variables, determination of the differences between two or more variables”.

The researcher formulated two questions to address the purpose of the study. The questions were stated in the research proposal and critiqued by expert, evaluation, and ethical committee members. The questions, that were the same for tutors and students, read as follows:

- What do you think are the factors that influence the academic performance of nursing students at the college?
- How could the academic performance of nursing students be improved?

The research strategy and questions were considered when the population for the study was identified.

2.4 POPULATION

A population is that whole ensemble of situations,occasions, articles or phenomena about which the researcher would like to collect data (Dallal, 2008:Online). It can also be referred to as all persons or objects sharing common defining attributes. In addition, the population is a wholesome aggregated phenomenon which invokes researchers' inquisitiveness and inspire interest to study it further; an aggregate of situations, actions or events about which the inquirer would like to generalise (Polit and Beck, 2008: 67, 337 and 338). Botma *et al*. (2010:200) highlighted the fact that the population is defined by both inclusion and exclusion criteria. Stating the inclusion criteria is necessary to ensure that the participants have the knowledge and experience required. In this study, two populations were applicable. Firstly, the 26 tutors employed by the college, and secondly, the 213 first-year students registered for the Diploma in Nursing Science (General, Psychiatric and Community Nursing) and Midwifery at a School of Nursing.

2.4.1 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis entails the "what" of the study, namely, the phenomenon, event, object or process that the researcher would like to study (Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 84). Polit and Beck (2008: 33) refer to it as the most basic thing, element or event on

which analysis is centralised. It is the major entity that the researcher is analysing in the study and could include artifacts, individuals, groups, geographical units or social interactions (Trochim, 2006: Online). The analysis that the researcher embarks upon will determine what the unit is (Trochim, 2006: Online). The units of analysis were the tutors and students at a nursing college.

2.4.1.1 Sampling

Sampling is a process, a technique, an act, or an art to select participants from the population in order to obtain information related to a phenomenon in a way that is deemed representative to the population of interest (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 124; Burns and Grove, 2009: 34; Dallal, 2008:Online). On the other hand, it could also be regarded as an act of tasting or testing a small portion of the whole event with the intention to discover the attributes of the entire phenomenon where studying the entire population will be too costly (Lategan, 2005: 117). Dallal (2010: Online) defines sampling as the process by which units are selected from the population that forms the focus of research for studying it and finally generalise the outcome back to the theory formulated or to be formulated.

In qualitative research sampling is important as it will enable the researcher to understand the issues under investigation (Botma *et al*., 2010:199). A prerequisite to obtain a deep understanding of the phenomenon is to identify and select suitable participants for the study.

Sampling methods that are described in Botma *et al*. (2010:201) include, for example, the following: Convenience or accidental sampling that enable the researcher to identify participants who are conveniently available; Volunteer sampling in which participants know or are aware of each other and are able to motivate participation in the study; purposive or judgemental sampling that is based on the researcher’s knowledge of the population and is therefore able to choose suitable individuals.

In view of the nature of a descriptive qualitative enquiry and the purpose of the study, the researcher employed a convenience sampling technique (cf Burns and Grove, 2009: 355; De Vos *et al*., 2008: 202). The researcher was able to identify tutors and students who were conveniently available at a nursing college.

2.4.1.2 Sample

A sample is subset or a part of a whole and is made of units of analysis from a defined population (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 124). Studying the sample enables the researchers to better understand the population from which the sample has been selected and thus puts them in a better position to explain some facets of that population (De Vos *et al*., 2008: 194). Theseauthors state that the following reasons are important for using samples in qualitative research:

- ➢ Including all members of the population in a study could be costly;
- ➢ More accurate information could be obtained through using samples as opposed to the whole population;
- ➢ Rich, in-depth information could be obtained because more time, money and effort will be focused on a selected sample.

The nature of the research problem is such that it renders the question of including the entire population impossible taking into account time and the availability of resources (De Vos *et al*., 2008: 194). In this study, the students' academic performance as perceived by the tutors and students themselves was the phenomenon of interest.

2.4.1.3 Sample size

Lategan (2005: 117, 119) reiterates that the sample size:

- Entails the number of the units comprising the sample.
- Should be sufficient in number to minimise both the sampling error and bias.
- Depends on the size of the population, economics and variables measured.

Although it was mentioned in chapter one that the groups would range between seven and ten participants each on the day of the actual study, this is how the groups were constituted:

The first focus group comprised of 12 and the second of three tutors. One tutor who signed the consent form had important business to attend to and promised that she would finish quickly to be on time for the interview. However, she came back late, when the study was already in progress. Therefore, she could not participate. Despite the fact that the groups were unequal in numbers, the total of 15 participants was within the range of 14 to 20 tutors stipulated for the study. It must, however, be acknowledged that a better distribution of participants could have influenced the outcome of the study.

The first student focus group included 13, and the second 6 students. Although many of students signed the consent forms, some did not participate due to the fact that the interviews were not completed according to the planned time schedule by the time the school closed. The fact that 19 students participated was within the parameters that were stated.

2.4.1.4 Sampling criteria

The inclusion or legibility criterion depicts characteristics that participants must possess in order to be considered for inclusion in the study (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 124; Burns and Grove, 2009: 344). This criterion is developed from the research problem, the conceptual and operational definitions, the purpose, the variables and the design (Burns and Grove, 2009: 344). Researchers should be cautious to avoid restrictions and limitations when defining the sampling criteria as this will reduce the sample size and minimise the value of the outcome (Burns and Grove, 2009: 344). The inclusion criteria for this study were:

- English-speaking tutors employed at a School of Nursing;
- English-speaking students on first year level of the General Nursing Science and Arts diploma at the same institution;

- The tutors and students who were available at the time of data collection and were willing to participate in the research. This availability and willingness ensured that the stated sample size was maintained.

2.5 EXPLORATORY OR PILOT STUDY

Testing of the research question was an important criterion that had to be met by the researcher. To test the research question, two concepts are mentioned in literature. Brink*et al.* (2006: 54,116), Babbie and Mouton (2008:244) and De Vos *et al*.(2008: 206) refer to a pilot study and describe this type of study as a pacifier or a dummy run investigation conducted on a smaller version prior to embarking on a main study; a pretesting of a research question or questionnaire to eliminate ambiguities prior to commencement of the major study; and pretesting of a measuring tool which comprises a dress rehearsal or preliminary inquiry on a handful number of events, objects or persons displaying attributes similar to those of the target population.

The second concept, namely an exploratory study, is described by Botma *et al*. (2010: 290-291) as necessary to test the question formulated to meet the purpose of the research. The same author stresses the fact that if the question or questions are not changed during the study, the data may become part of the study. If the question is changed, the study needs to be repeated. Brink *et al*. (2006: 166) mentions that the time spent on the pilot study minimises frustration and disappointments that could be experienced with a major study discrepancies and failures. De Vos *et al*. (2008:210) support the above statement by referring to the pilot study as valuable because it enhances the successful execution, efficiency and effectiveness of the inquiry.

This study was conducted in exactly the same manner as the actual study in the sense that the researcher used the same criteria to select the participants, the same setting and data analysis technique (cfBurns and Grove, 2009:103). The moderator conducted focus group interviews with 12 tutors at the college, and 13 student nurses who are registered as first year students in the Diploma in Nursing Science (General, Psychiatry and Community Nursing) and Midwifery at the School of Nursing.

The focus group interview conducted by the moderator was recorded and thereafter transcribed in exactly the same manner as proposed for the actual study. No changes to the questions were indicated and the moderator and researcher decided that the results of the explorative interview could be included in the main study. Although it was indicated in the previous chapter that the moderator and the researcher would meet immediately after the interview session to critique the process, it did not turn out that way. In the end, this was not done at all and it could be considered as one of the limitations of the study.

2.6 DATA COLLECTION

Burns and Grove (2009: 43-44) define data collection as the precise, systematic gathering of the information relevant to the research purpose, the specific objectives, questions or hypothesis of the study. The same authors, however, state that for quantitative studies this entails the utilisation of numerical data to deal with the research questions, objectives and hypothesis. Various data collection methods are available, for example, in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, observations, scales, questionnaires, audio-visuals and physiological measurements (Burns and Grove, 2009: 44; Brink *et al.,* 2006: 54). For the purpose of this study, focus group interviews were ideal. The group interviews were supported by techniques such as observation, field notes and interviews were utilised (cfBurns and Grove, 2009: 514; and De Vos *et al.,* 2008: 327).

The data collection process was managed as follows:

2.6.1 ACCESS TO THE SETTING

Permission to execute the study was obtained from the following stakeholders: The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of the Free State (ECUFS).A letter of consent containing the ECUFS number was issued by the committee (refer Annexure A: Letter of Approval). The researcher also submitted letters of request to the Dean of the School of Nursing selected for the study, and the Head of Department of Free State Health (refer Annexures B and C: Letters of

request). Permission to access the setting and to obtain written consent from participants indicating their willingness to take part in the study was granted (cf Brink *et al.,* 2006: 54; Burns and Grove, 2009: 44; Polit and Beck, 2008: 70). The letter to participants stated, for example, the purpose and the type of study, the research method that will be used, how the results will be disseminated, their rights and responsibilities, and assured them of confidentiality (cfPolit and Beck, 2008: 70; Burns and Grove, 2009: 190). Lastly, the participants were assured that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences (refer Annexure D: Letter to participants).

2.6.2 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Sampling and screening of the participants were done according to the process described in section 2.4.1.1. Participants who took part in this study were firstly informed verbally that they will be invited to take part in a study. They included tutors and students at the college were the study was to be conducted. Each participant was given a letter which stated the topic to be discussed; the date, time and venue within the college were the study would be conducted. They were told that participation is voluntary and that each one of them is free to withdraw anytime should he or she feel otherwise thereafter. The researcher took it upon himself to constantly remind the participants, as all of them are either tutors who are his colleagues who he interacts with on a daily basis and students whom he teaches daily in class. He is also in possession of tutor's cellular telephone numbers and he constantly reminded them by simply communicating with them telephonically from their respective offices. No transport arrangements were required as both categories of participants were at the college and thus easily accessible. They were further informed about the consent form that they would all sign and that they would not be remunerated, but only refreshments would be served after each session. All participants were furnished with the researcher's cellular telephone number for them to contact him should the need arise. The researcher and the moderator agreed on the date and time that suited all the stakeholders and for the purpose of this study the focus groups were compiled according to the different roles, namely, that of tutors and students. The study was conducted, guided and supervised by an experienced moderator who is considered an expert in qualitative research, who facilitated

numerous focus group interviews, and has a Ph.D. in nursing (cfWaterson *et al*., 2006: 57). Before commencement of the focus group interview, the moderator clarified the aims of the focus group and communicated this to the researcher and the participants (cfBurns and Grove, 2009: 214). It was important that participants noted that the role of the moderator was not to contribute to the discussion, but to facilitate it. The moderator also ensured the participants that their viewpoints are important, and that they need not defend their position.

For the data collection purposes, the moderator seated the participants in a U-shape, and then occupied a place that allowed eye contact with the group (cf Burns and Grove, 2009: 514) (refer Figure 2.1: Seating of participants, moderator and researcher).

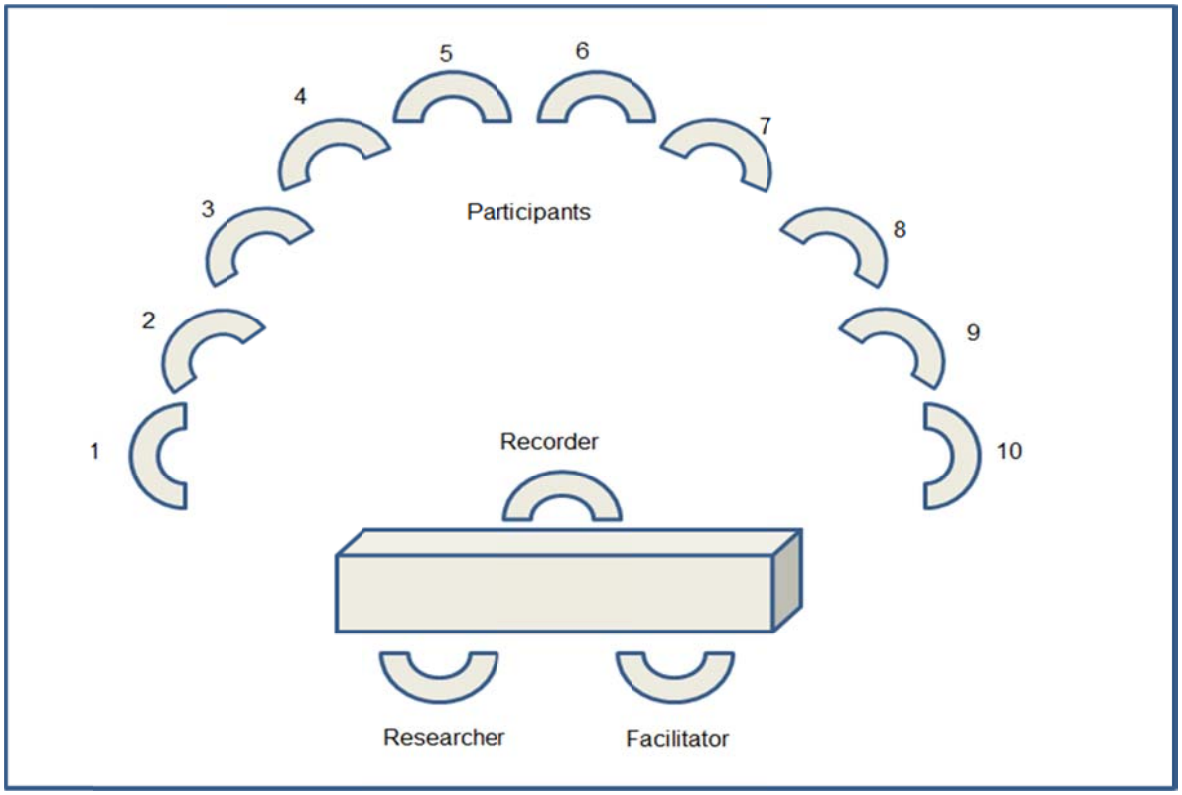


Figure 2.2: Seating of participants, facilitator and researcher for focus group interviews

To ensure that the moderator draws rich in-depth data from the participants (cfPolit and Beck, 2008: 394), the moderator utilised a variety of communication techniques, namely:

❒ **Probing**

Probing is used to tap more data in a specialised area of the interview and should be conducted in such a manner that the participant does not feel pressured to respond (Burns and Grove, 2009: 405). The moderator used probes such as:

- "Can you please explain what you mean by behaviour?
- "Could you please explain or expand on what you have said?
- "What happened next?"
- "When that happened, how did you feel?"

❒ **Paraphrasing**

Paraphrasing entails a clear and concise expression of the participant's ideas in the moderator's own words (Burns and Grove, 2009:712). The moderator read back the basic message of participants using her own words, but not changing the meaning thereof. She drew data from participants by stating the following: "It sounds like you are saying that professionals should look at themselves as well".

❒ **Reflection**

Reflection is a process through which the moderator or assessor starts a continuous programme of combining the art and science of good assessment practice (Dreyer, 2008: 24). Reflection needs a considerate and cautious breaking down of elements of assessment practice, philosophy and experience. It involves a production of likeness upon which to contemplate as well as a mirror imaging that helps to gain a clear glimpse of a picture or image (Reflection, 2012: Online). Through reflection the moderator repeated the key words or concepts addressed by participants in order to encourage them to further explain the meaning or meanings thereof. Examples of reflection used by the moderator are described below:

- “You feel that when the third year lecturer goes in there (clinical area) she only looks at her third year students and staff?”
- “And you said they are bored by the old ways of teaching. Ok?”

❒ **Clarification**

For clarification purposes, she asked questions such as:

- “When you talk about the young ones, do you specifically talk about the young in years or first years?”
- “I just want to clarify here. Do you think they do not budget well, or do they have to give the money to the family?”

Throughout the data-gathering process, the researcher took the role of the observer, and took field notes of the verbal and non-verbal messages projected by participants during the interview. It was important that the researcher took field notes, as tape recorders do fail sometimes (Zelna, 1998: Online; Lewis, [n.d.]: Online). If for any reason the researcher did not take field notes, he would have typed those notes immediately after the session and *requested participants to review them in order to ascertain their accuracy (cf*Lewis, [n.d.]*:* Online). In this case, the researcher took field notes for every focus group interview session and later invited four participants, one from each focus group, to review the transcribed notes and agree with the content.

Waterson *et al*. (2006: 57) suggest that two quality tape recorders be used to ensure that all data is captured in case of unforeseen technical problems. A tape recorder with a built in memory was also used to ensure that no data could be lost through malfunctioning equipment. It was advisable that the researcher kept batteries on standby for the tape recorder to ensure that the recordings continued in case of a power failure (cfBurns and Grove, 2009: 514). The acoustics of the room allowed the researcher to obtain a quality tape recording of each group interview.

In general, the sessions lasted for two hours. Making notes on the dynamics of the groups and how the members interacted with one another contributed to the richness of the collected data. Contrary to the time limit, namely, one hour per question that

was specified in the research proposal, the moderator rather applied the principle of saturation of data as an indication to conclude a question. Refreshments were served after completion of each focus group interview.

2.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS OR RIGOUR

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are rejected in favour of trustworthiness or rigour which entails being careful and paying great attention to detail when conducting evaluation on four levels, namely, true value/credibility, applicability/transferability, consistency/dependability and confirmability/neutrality, according to Lincoln and Guba's model as cited in Babbie and Mouton (2008: 276).

2.7.1 TRUE VALUE/CREDIBILITY

Credibility refers to the confidence that the researcher has in the authenticity of the findings of the study and the interpretation thereof, taking into account the participants and the context (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 118; Polit and Beck, 2008: 539). In qualitative research, credibility entails internal validity (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 118). De Vos *et al*. (2008: 346) assert that credibility demonstrates beyond any doubt that the study is carried out in a way that ascertains that participants are accurately identified and described.

The researcher ensured credibility by soliciting the assistance of the experienced moderator, who is also an expert in qualitative research, to conduct focus group interviews while the researcher took field notes, observed and noted verbal and nonverbal messages projected by participants as this also contributed to the richness of the collected data (cfPolit and Beck, 2008: 412).

2.7.2 TRANSFERABILITY/APPLICABILITY

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of the study are not unique to the original setting, context, groups or circumstances but can be transferred to other samples (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 119; Polit and Beck, 2008: 202). Lincoln and Guba

(cited in Polit and Beck 2008: 202) state that transferability refers to the degree to which qualitative outcomes can be transferred to other settings. In qualitative research, no generalisations of the findings can be made because every research project is conducted by a specific researcher in specific interactions or relationships with specific participants (Polit and Beck, 2008: 202). These researchers merely endeavour to yield knowledge and findings that could be of help to other researchers elsewhere involved in similar situations, hence rich descriptions of the models and findings (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 119). The decision to transfer lies entirely with the person who wants to transfer the findings to other settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 316).

Tutors in different settings and colleges may utilise these findings and strategies to improve the academic performance of students. They may also use the data from the students to better understand their needs and views and this will enable both parties to better understand one another (cfWaterson *et al.,* 2006:58).

2.7.3 CONSISTENCY/DEPENDABILITY

Consistency refers to whether the processes of the study are consistent, reasonably stable over a lengthy period of time and across researchers (Burns and Grove, 2009: 431). Dependability ensures that the data remains stable over time and throughout situations and conditions (Polit and Beck, 2008: 539). To ascertain dependability, two tutors who are knowledgeable about qualitative research and who were not involved with the study were requested to do an audit trail, namely to observe and scrutinise methods, procedures, designs and processes utilised by the researcher in the study to determine how acceptable or dependable the process was*(*cf Brink *et al.,* 2006: 119). The two tutors were satisfied with the process followed and supported it.

2.7.4 CONFIRMABILITY/NEUTRALITY

Confirmability embraces the principles and traditions of objectivity and addresses the question of whether the outcome of the inquiry could be confirmed by another inquiry (De Vos *et al.,* 2008: 347). It is achieved by taking evaluation away from any inherent characteristics of the researcher and putting it entirely on the data itself (De Vos *et al.,* 2008: 347). Qualitative studies look at the degree to which the data is in harmony

with the outcome and leads to implications; or whether there is congruency between the outcome, findings, conclusions and the collected data and that there is an internal accord between the meaning that the researcher attaches to the data and the evidence itself (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 119; De Vos *et al.,* 2008: 347). Confirmability determines the extent to which the research findings are drawn from the characteristics of the participants, phenomenon and objects, and not manipulated to suit the researcher's biases (Polit and Beck, 2008: 196). The researcher ensured confirmability through “bracketing”, which is the identification and setting aside of the preconceived beliefs and opinions that he might have about the phenomenon under investigation (cf Brink *et al.,* 2006: 113).

In this study, both the researcher and moderator set aside their views on academic performance although they deal with student education, but rather allowed both categories of participants to fully furnish their views and opinions uninterrupted. To ensure that bracketing was sufficiently achieved, the researcher employed the “audit trail” by Lincoln and Guba (cited in Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 278) which entails storing the following information:

- Raw data-recordings, written field notes documents and survey results;
- Data reduction and analyses products, summaries and condensed notes; theoretical notes such as working hypothesis, concepts, and hunches;
- Data reconstruction and synthesis products notes showing how different themes relate, including structures of categories and themes;
- Process notes: methodological notes, trustworthiness notes and audit trial notes;
- Instrument development notes, observation formats, surveys; and
- Material relating to intentions and dispositions: inquiry proposal, personal notes, and expectations.

All the above-mentioned steps were adhered to by the researcher.

The moderator was an expert in qualitative research and in conducting focus group interviews, and was not involved with this study, apart from conducting the focus group interviews and assisting with co-coding at the time when thedata analysis was done.

2.8 DATA ANALYSIS

This section is two-fold, namely data analysis and analysis process (Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 646; Botma *et al*., 2010:220; Brink *et al.,* 2006: 55; Burns and Grove, 2009: 45):

2.8.1 DEFINITION OF DATA ANALYSIS

Babbie and Mouton (2008: 646) define data analysis as the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. Furthermore, data analysis entails integrating and synthesising the narrative, non-numerical information that has been reduced to categories and themes by means of a coding process (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 55).The mentioned views could be linked to that of Burns and Grove's (2009: 45) description of data analysis as the organisation and reduction of information in such a manner that it becomes meaningful. In qualitative research, data analysis and data collection are carried out at almost the same time (Botma *et al*., 2010:220).

2.8.2 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The researcher analysed the data obtained through focus group interviews by means of theeight steps of data analyses (Tesch 1990 in Cresswell 1994: 153-155; Burns and Grove, 2009: 522).

Step 1: Preparation of data

Data collected by audio tapes were transcribed verbatim - that is, retyped word for word by the researcher.

Step 2: Data coding

Coding is the process of reading carefully through the transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units. Thus, meaningful data segments are coded.

The shortest, most interesting transcript was then selected from the rest and was re-read several times whilst asking the question “What is it all about”, namely, the underlying meaning of the content that was transcribed, not necessarily thinking about the substance. Ideas that came to mind were carefully jotted down in the margin (Botma *et al*., 2010: 224). Stated differently, Tesch (cited in Botma *et al*., 2010:224) recommended the following eight steps of the data coding process:

a) Getting a sense of the whole by reading all the transcripts carefully.
b) Select one interesting document to search for the underlying meaning.
c) Annotate the selected document in the margin formulating topics into columns.
d) Check for any emergence of new codes and categories.
e) Combine categories that are associated to each other.
f) Shorten each category and put codes in alphabetical order.
g) Bring together the data material fitting in each category in one place and perform an initial analysis.
h) If necessary, recode the existing data.

Thereafter, each transcript was read several times to become familiar with the content. More ideas were then added to those already listed in the margin.

In this study, ideas listed were, for example, problems with budgeting, poor conditions regarding student accommodation, and the lack of commitment to studies. Numbers were then allocated to the ideas, namely, budgeting = 1, accommodation = 2, and commitment = 3.

Step 3: Establishing themes or categories

The transcribed data has now been coded. The next phase of the data analysis process was to organise or combine related codes into themes or categories. Each category was assigned a label or identifying name, for example, category 1 = accommodation. Data belonging to the same category was assembled, and redundant information was identified and eliminated (cfBotma *et al*., 2010:224).

Step 4: Structuring the analysed data

The researcher has to examine the categories and identify how each category is linked or related to other categories. This approach can also be achieved by the process of diagramming. Diagramming is the process of making a sketch, drawing or outline to show how something works or to classify the relationships between the parts of a whole.

Step 5: Interpreting the data

In interpreting the data, the researcher aims to come to terms with findings and draw conclusions. Each conclusion is based on substantiated findings from data that are reported in relation to what is already known so as to reveal possible new insights or corroboration of existing knowledge.

It is clear that the process of immersion in the data is very important in each and every step of the process listed above (Burns and Grove, 2009: 520). Immersion refers to getting to know the data inside out. Phrased differently, immersion refers to reading the transcribed data several times. Also, immersion is accompanied by writing down any impressions the researcher has as he goes through the data. This activity is called memoing. Memoing refers to the writing of reflective notes. These reflective notes are informed by the field notes.

2.9 ETHICAL ISSUES

Bak (2008: 28) asserts that it is important for researchers to take into account ethical implications when dealing with humans or animals in a research study in order not to violate their rights. Ethical conduct of the research commences with the identification of the research topic and progresses through to its publication (Burns and Grove, 2009: 184). It is also worth noting that research requires not only expertise and diligence but also honesty and integrity on the part of the researcher. To ensure that the researcher and moderator adhered to this, the following was fulfilled:

- Expertise or competence of the researcher and co-coder
- Respect for people
- Voluntary informed consent
- Confidentiality
- Protection from harm or beneficence
- Benefits
- Dissemination of results
- Justice
- Fair selection

2.9.1 EXPERTISE OR COMPETENCE OF THE RESEARCHER AND CO-CODER

The researcher has undergone formal education in research methodology and has successfully completed it. He holds a BA degree in nursing and a diploma in Nursing Education and is a lecturer who interacts with nursing students from time to time and isinvolved in nursing education. In addition, the expertise of an independent external co-coder was obtained to analyse and critique the collected data (cfWatson*et al*., 2006: 58). This was done in co-operation with the moderator and the supervisor.

2.9.2 RESPECT FOR PEOPLE

Botma *et al*. (2012: 277) declare that the principle of respect for people is to acknowledge when the researcher obtains permission to execute the study from all stakeholders. Permission to access the site and conduct the study gave the researcher an opportunity to interact with participants and built rapport whilst describing the study, promising confidentiality, anonymity and reminding them that any of them could withdraw without any fear if he/she decides against their former decision (Burns and Grove, 2009: 44).

2.9.3 VOLUNTARY INFORMED CONSENT

Informing involves disseminating the necessary ideas and content from the researcher to the participant-to-be. Consent entails the prospective participant's agreement to be involved in an inquiry as a role player or actor after digesting all the necessary data. Informed consent requires that the researcher should furnish would-be participants with sufficient data pertaining to the research study and ascertain that they fully understand it and that the decision to partake or not, lies with them (Polit and Beck, 2008: 176). Informed consent is intended to curb human rights violations as enshrined in the Nuremberg Code of 1947 (Brink *et al.,* 2006: 30; Polit and Beck, 2008: 168).

Full disclosure concerns the researcher's complete description of the character or nature of the study, the participants rights to partake or withdraw, the researcher's role, as well as the risks and benefits of the study (Burns and Grove, 2009: 201;Polit and Beck, 2008: 172; Pera and Van Tonder, 2005: 47). These authors are unanimous that obtaining informed consent is prudent to ensure the ethical conduct of the study.

To ensure informed consent the following factors that address the rights to full disclosure or to know, as stipulated in Burns and Grove (2009: 200-202), were looked into (refer Annexure D: Letter of consent):

- Explanation about the purpose of the research study;
- Expected duration of participants' involvement in the inquiry;

- Mechanisms that would be employed to examine or measure study variables;
- Any risks, harm or discomforts as a result of the study;
- Any benefits for participants or others that will emanate from the research findings;
- Contact information of the researcher if participants needed to get hold of him for any reason;
- No remuneration, apart from refreshments after each session; and
- Participants were informed that the focus group interview will be conducted by a moderator and that an external co- coder will later revisit the whole process.

2.9.4 CONFIDENTIALITY

The researcher adhered to the principles of confidentiality by ascertaining that any records and data obtained from participants were kept secure and that no identities were made public (cf Burns and Grove, 2009: 202; Pera and Van Tonder, 2005: 37). In addition, the letter to participants clearly stated the purpose of the study and assured them of confidentiality. The researcher, in consultation with the moderator, allocated numbers to participants in order to avoid using their names.

For the purpose of this study, only the researcher, the moderator, the supervisor and the external co-coder had access to the data and field notes. The researcher was the only person who could access the audiotape materials. Audiotape materials were kept locked in a safe room and would be erased after completion of the study. The researcher was the only person who kept the key to the safe room where audiotapes were kept and this exercise enhanced participants' rights to privacy.

2.9.5 PROTECTION FROM HARM OR BENEFICENCE

It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that participants are not subjected to harm, discomfort or risks of any kind (Polit and Beck, 2008: 170). These risks could be physiological; economic or physical, for example, fatigue and discomfort; emotional, for example, anxiety; or a feeling of embarrassment associated with intrusive questions (Burns and Grove, 2009: 198). The principle of beneficence that

ascertains maximisation of benefits for participants themselves or society in general should be adhered to (Burns and Grove, 2009: 198).

In this study, the researcher ensured that there was no undue harm, discomfort or embarrassment which participants were subjected to from commencement to completion of the study. The participants were furnished with the researcher's contact numbers if any of them wanted to contact him for any clarification, counselling or questions. Participants who later decided to withdraw were not coerced or intimidated.

2.9.6 BENEFITS

The researcher indicated in his letter of consent that the next intake of students might benefit from this study, if the recommendations are implemented.

2.9.7 DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

The results will be published in a scientific journal through the School of Nursing, University of the Free State.

2.9.8 JUSTICE

Botma *et al*. (2010: 347) reiterate that in order to ascertain the ethical principle of justice, equals should be treated as equals. To fulfil this, the moderator created an atmosphere where all participants were treated equally and afforded a fair hearing by ensuring that each participant was given a chance to speak, and not allowing only the talkative participants to steal the show. The researcher saw to it that all the participants understood the purpose of the study, that no one was coerced to take part, as well as their right to withdraw fromparticipation should anyone be so inclined. In all four focus groups, interviews conducted.Each group consisted of equals, namely, students at first year level in the General Nursing Science and Arts, and tutors at the same college. Sessions were conducted separately.

2.9.9 FAIR SELECTION

Botma *et al*. (2010: 353) stipulate that the principle of justice brings forth the moral requirement that fair procedures and outcomes ought to be adhered to when the selection of the research participants is conducted. These researchers further attest to the two levels of justice that are appropriate in the selection of the research participants, namely, individual and social. Individual justice departs from the premise that researchers should display fairness in the selection of participants of research and should refrain or resist the temptation of awarding potentially beneficial research exclusively to some patients who are favourably disposed to them or select only unfavourable participants for risky research. For the purpose of this study, selection was fair as it was done on first year students who obtained below 50 percent in tests, written and clinical examinations, and who were willing to take part. All eligible participants, both tutors and students, were given a fair chance to contribute to the discussion.

2.10 VALUE OF THE STUDY

The study will be valuable to the School of Nursing, participants, the student nurses and tutors. If recommendations are implemented this could lead to an improvement in the academic performance of the students. Although the study is qualitative and the findings cannot be generalised, other nursing schools or colleges in other parts of the province or country may implement the same recommendations if confronted with academic performance.

2.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The researcher used convenience (accidental) sampling in order to include participants in this study. The setting provided only African lecturers and students. This resulted in the unintended exclusion of other population groups. However, the sample size ensured that the saturation of ideas was reached soon.

- The transcription of tape-recorded interviews from instances of Sesotho gestures to English may have resulted in the loss of valuable information. For example, a participant may use a Sesotho concept to emphasise a point and to indicate how horrendous the situation might be. The facilitator, who might not understand Sesotho, might miss the true meaning of the concept.

2.12 CONCLUSION

The research methodology described in the first and second chapter guided the researcher to study the tutors and student nursesperceptions pertaining to factors that influence academic performance at a nursing college. Each step in the research process was followed as meticulously as possible. The focus group interviews proved to be the ideal method of data collection to address the purpose of the study. The ethical requirements were considered and applied as stipulated. Furthermore, the researcher strived to ensure that strategies that were described to ensure trustworthiness were followed. Deviations from the methodology were acknowledged and motivated. It is the researcher's view that the research process was properly executed. The following chapter will focus on the data analysis and literature control.

CHAPTER 3
DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research design and methodology used in this study were discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter focused on the data analysis, results, and literature control, based on the verbatim transcriptions of the different focus group interviews. The first purpose of the study, namely, the exploration and description of the perceptions of tutors and student nurses regarding factors that influence academic performance formed the foundation for the depth and magnitude of the analysis. The second purpose, namely, to identify strategies that could be implemented to improve academic performance of the students at this college was also addressed.

3.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis entails the organisation and reduction of data in order to give it meaning (Burns and Grove, 2009: 44; Brink *et al.,* 2006: 170). Botma *et al*. (2010: 220) assert that the data analysis process entails making sense or obtaining an in-depth understanding of the text and image data. In qualitative studies, as opposed to quantitative studies, data collection and analysis are conducted at the same time (Polit and Beck, 2008: 507).

3.3 RESULTS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

Once the data were obtained from the different groups of participants, verbatim transcriptions were made by the researcher. Thereafter, the researcher confirmed the accuracy of the transcription with the participants as indicated in section 2.7.2 under clarification. Eventually, after reading the transcription several times in order to become familiar with the content, as discussed in section 2.9.2., the data were classified into themes by using codes, for example, “T & L” to indicate issues related to teaching and learning, or “Fin” to refer to finances (cfPolit and Beck, 2008: 507).

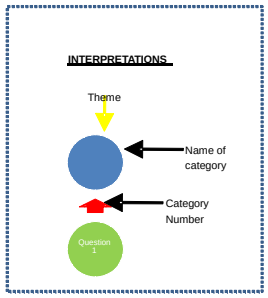
As indicated in chapter 2, the codes were then used to group the themes into categories. Burns and Grove (2009: 45) and Brink *et al.* (2006: 170) state that categories and subcategories are used to make sense of the reality. The categories can be seen as a map that assists the researcher in understanding what has happened, what is happening, and also what will happen. Categories demonstrate that any reality, in this case the academic performance of students, has some structure. The researcher opted to present the structure identified for the academic performance of students, as perceived by tutors and students, in the form of tables. Each table consist of categories, themes and statements by participants (refer Table 3.1). The categories and themes are discussed according to the way they are linearly listed in the table. Thereafter, statements per theme are presented and then supported with relevant literature. To maintain the structure, the categories and themes supported by statements from participants, as well as by the literature, were discussed in the same sequence as indicated in the tables. It is important to note that the researcher edited the statements, for example, by taking out comments made in Sesotho or the repetition of words. The inclusion of literature to support the statements can be seen as an effort by the researcher to improve the trustworthiness of the findings.

The first category, “commitment to theory”, included six themes, namely, absenteeism, attention span, boredom, focus, hurried, and priorities. The second category, “commitment to practica”, included punctuality as the only theme.

3.3.1 CATEGORY: COMMITMENT TO THEORY

Commitment reflects the extent to which an individual is involved in whatever he or she is doing. Committed people have a sense of purpose and do not give up under pressure because they tend to invest themselves in the situation (Legend, 2011: Online). In this study, students’ commitment toward theoretical or class sessions was listed as a subcategory. Six issues that portrayed students’ commitment were identified. These issues included absenteeism, attention span, boredom, focus, hurried, and priorities.

TUTORS CATEGORIES AND THEMES



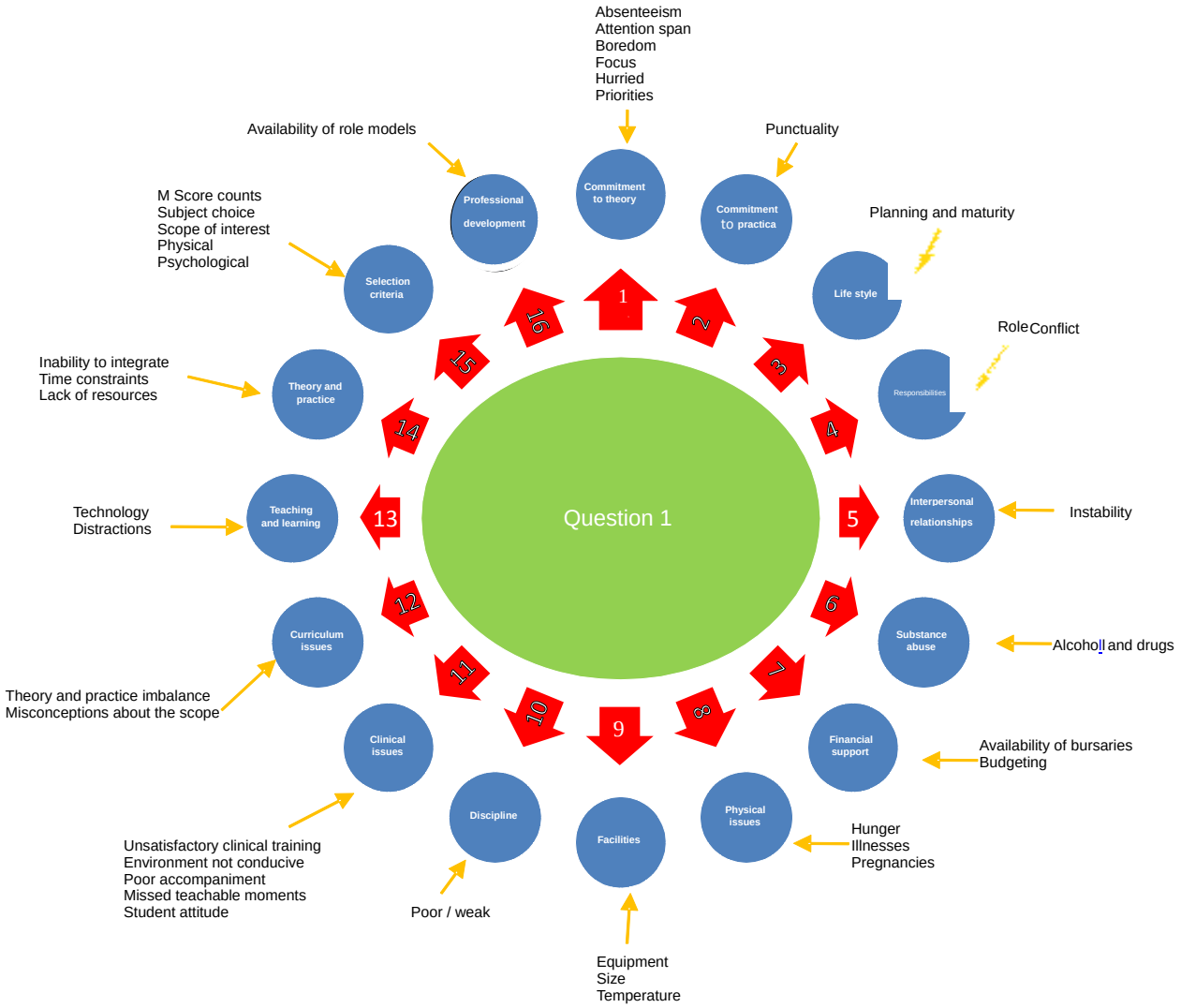


Figure 3.1: Tutors categories and themes

Table 3.1: The categories, themes and statements based on the feedback of tutors

CATEGORY	THEMES	STATEMENTS
Commitment to theory	Absenteeism	• The other problem is absenteeism, our students have a tendency to absent themselves from school, maybe it is because there are actually no proper disciplinary measures.
	Attention span	• They got very little attention span, when they are in class they listen, but for a very short time and then after that, his mind is switched to something else.
	Boredom	• They are bored with old ways of teaching - so most of the time they get bored in class and they become restless.
	Focus	• They are not focused. I think according to my observation, most of the students that we get nowadays, are just here for the bursary.
	Hurried	• They are always in a hurry.
	Priorities	• I think also what makes them not to perform very well is the lack of commitment with their work and also to prioritize their work. As you are here, you have to do one thing at a time. You can't make a baby or anything else.
Commitment to practicum	Punctuality	• Our students, they lack the commitment in a sense. If they are in the ward, for example, then point number one, they report late on duty so they miss the part of the report taking and miss out on other opportunities.
Lifestyle	Planning and maturity	• It is the lifestyle, their lifestyle you know. They don't plan their time ahead to study and things like that because they are still young. They want to do their things their own way.
Responsibilities	Role conflict	• Many times one is absent from class because she is the mother, she is the father, she is everything in the home.
Interpersonal relationships	Instability	• They must go to court, there is a divorce and there is this, there is that.
Substance abuse	Alcohol and drugs	• They are using alcohol in the nurses' home, as well as drugs.

CATEGORY	THEMES	STATEMENTS
Financial support	Availability of bursaries	• They don't get the bursaries on time, and they are three, four months without anything, (pause) obviously starving. • The intention was for him to pass and go to university, but because of his background at home, there are no finances for him or her to go over there. So most of them they come here because there is financial assistance.
	Budgeting	• Most of them don't know how to budget well. When the money comes they spend it recklessly. • They do have bursary, but they don't know how to use it. They misuse it.
Physical issues	Hunger	• I think the problem is with our present students. If they are not having the money, they have to come to school with empty stomachs, so that influence how they learn.
	Illness	• Others I think due to illness can't perform well.
	Pregnancy	• I was going to discuss this high rate of pregnancy. You will find that in a class there are about eight, ten or twelve who are pregnant and then during the course they are, they must go and deliver.
Facilities	Equipment	• I mean look at our classroom and see what we have, you know, you know nothing of even modern technology to impart knowledge.
	Size	• The classroom it takes about 87 students at a go, but you find that we make use of the auditorium, and then students are sitting together.
	Temperature	• It is very cold like now, it was very cold during the winter - or the "air con", when you put it on it is making a noise and they can't hear you, and if a student does not understand what you said, they cannot correlate what they were taught.
Discipline	Poor/weak	• I also think the school is kind of weak when it comes to the issues of discipline of students. I have learned that students have that thing like they have the power to control everything, we can have rules and regulations but they will not act according to them.

CATEGORY	THEMES	STATEMENTS
	Unsatisfactory clinical training	• I am concerned with the clinical area. I am not satisfied with the way their training is conducted at the clinical area.
	Environment not conducive	• First of all, the environment itself is not conducive; if they are going to learn but there are no resources, how do they learn because we teach them to put into practice what we have taught them in the class.
	Poor accompaniment	• Then us, the lecturers, like I said there is too much work for us, we are not available for them, to teach them; we only go there after we have placed them for some time to go and check how do they do the work, unlike in the olden days when there used to be a clinical teacher, who teaches them the correct way of doing things then go and assess, even go to check. • The clinical practice – there is not enough, support by the lecturers or from the sisters.
	Missed teachable moments	• The registered nurses nowadays are not like those in our days, they don't have the instincts of teaching. They are not using the teachable moments - come I'm giving medicine, come with me and see, or here is an interesting case, come let us discuss it.
	Student attitude	• It's first year students, I don't know whether to say they lack interest, or it's ignorance - they never say the sister show them how it is done.
Curriculum issues	Theory and practice imbalance	• Because of the lack of supervision in the clinical area and a lot of theory in the class, that's why they are not performing well. • Too much theory - they cannot remember it hence they are not performing well.
	Misconceptions about the expectations of training	• They are here thinking that nursing is just a light course, they don't realize that it is a true course, a four year program; they think it is a first aid like thing.
Teaching and learning	Technology	• These students when they come from matric, most of them are computer literate. • Most of the youth of today they are more IT minded than us; you will find that they rather work with the computers than stay and listen to

CATEGORY	THEMES	STATEMENTS
		the lecture given to them, so our method of teaching is a bit outdated, compared it doesn't match with the kind of generation that we are going to put the culture of readiness.
	Distractions	• Most of the time when the lecturer is talking they are busy with the Face book and whatever communicating with friends outside.
		• Playing with their cell phones while you are you are busy with the lesson, and when you ask the student she will say: “No mam, keep on talking, I am listening”, but after that when you ask her a question, she can't answer.
Theory and Practice	Inability to integrate	• They compartmentalise the subjects; they are unable to understand that each subject is built on another.
	Time constraints	• Inability to, I think, inability to correlate theory and practice because of lack of resources; for instance on our side as lecturers we lack the time to be with the student throughout.
	Lack of resources	• On the other side, is the lack in the facilities where the professional nurses - there is shortage, so nobody is actually doing that teaching.
Selection criteria	M score counts	• It is just 24 points that you take, irrespective of the subjects.
	Subject choice	• It just mentioned that biology and physical sciences, it’s a recommendation, but when the students apply it you find that those students don’t have the background.

CATEGORY	THEMES	STATEMENTS
	Scope of interest	• Lack of interest in another subject, and even the very thing we want these subjects, but when they come in the other subjects that they should do, for instance midwifery, so you find that they really lack interest.
	Physical	• It is very cold like now, it was very cold during the winter - or the 'air con', when you put it on it is making a noise and they can't hear you, and if a student does not understand what you said, they cannot correlate what they were taught.
	Psychological	• Does the person have the passion in the course?
Professional development	Availability of role models	• I think also that is due to a lack of role models among students themselves because even though from the first year to the fourth year, at the third year there must be change, a difference, but the behaviour sometimes just looks the same. • They should also learn from us professionals in the wards, clinical, so the question is, is the ideal role models from the professionals.
	Generation gap	• I think as professionals somewhere somehow we are trying hard you know to be role models to our students, but it is just that our students are the so-called latest generation; they don't actually want to look upto older people. • We don't understand them, they don't understand us, we want them to come for us but we are unable to bridge the gap to go to each other; we want them to go so fast that they understand what is expected of them.

Tutors expressed their concern regarding the commitment to theory by stating that students “have a tendency to absent themselves from school” and assumed that is was due to a lack of “proper disciplinary measures”. Tutors were also concerned about the students’ “little attention span” and the fact that students will listen for a short time and “then after that, their minds is switched to something else”. Furthermore, tutors’ feedback reflected some concern that “the students that they get nowadays, are just there for the bursary”.

Anderson (2004: 74-76) asserts the following regarding commitment:

> *A student who will prioritize by putting his or her work first and forget about other problems, be it family, social or financial will cherish the dream of achieving his goal and turn a blind eye to any negative situation that could tamper with his attention span or interest to his studies. A student who is motivated to succeed in his studies will ignore all negative influences both at home and school and remain committed to his academic goals as he sees academic success as a license to a good life and an escape route from all situations and circumstances that block his commitment to study. A committed student knows that bunking classes will lead to poor performance and this will spoil his chances of achieving his future career ambitions and making it in life.*

3.3.1.1 Theme: Absenteeism

The view of the above researcher concurs with a statement made by a tutor that absenteeism is a problem: ***“****The other problem is absenteeism, our students have a tendency to absent themselves from school, and maybe it is because there are actually no proper disciplinary measures”.*

A Review on Effects of Student and Teacher Absenteeism on Academic Performance of Elementary and Secondary School Students (2012: Online) suggests that absenteeism on the part of the student leads to a reduction in academic performance. In this review, poor health status and a poor educational environment are mentioned as antecedents for a decrease in academic performance. Certainly, the above review on the effects of student and teacher absenteeism on academic

performance of elementary and secondary school students emphasises the fact that students' absence from school undermines the chances of him or her benefiting from the instructional relationship between him/her and the teacher (Review, 2012: Online).

3.3.1.2 Theme: Attention span

Attention span refers to the amount of time given to an activity and the effect of destructibility on the activity (Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe, 2012: 182). Regarding the students, a tutor said: *"They got very little attention span, when they are in class they listen, but for a very short time and then after that, his mind is switched to something else".*

Jacobs *et al.* (2012:182) advise tutors to develop different modern techniques to capture the attention of students for a prolonged period of time. These techniques, in addition to the textbook and chalkboard, should include an overhead projector, a tape recorder or CD player and slide show presentations (PowerPoint). Furthermore, ruined, outdated class equipment does not only have an adverse effect on the teacher's capability, but also has a negative impact on students' academic performance (Akpan and Mbaba, 2012: 44).

3.3.1.3 Theme: Boredom

One participant remarked that the students are always bored in class. Boredom can be explained as turning away from experiences that repeat themselves or any type of dull and boring encounters that one cannot easily be avoided (Watt and Vodanovich, 1999: 304).A participant reported that students are always in a hurry to finish what they are doing: *"They are bored with old ways of teaching – so most of the time they get bored in class and they become restless".*

Apart from the fact that boredom is linked to many social and psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, loneliness and hopelessness, Watt and Vodanovich (1999: 304) also indicated that it has a negative effect on student academic performance. It seems that the boredom that students experience could be

addressed through the knowledge of technology and a technology-friendly environment that requires students to pay attention to the learning process.

In addition, Jacobs (2012: 218) and Shalem and Pendlebury (2010: 124-127) state that teaching media can be powerful tools in the hands of a skilled teacher. Teaching media can keep the students focused. The correct use of educational media can be conducive to a participative-teaching approach, and have the following benefits for participative teaching:

- Increased motivation of students by introducing visually attractive, interesting and challenging material into otherwise boring lessons increased student participation. Boredom is an enemy that educators constantly fight which results primarily from a lack of involvement. The educator that follows a participative approach knows that effective teaching media present stimuli to which students will react.
- Provision for the learning needs of individual students. Variation in media used during a contact session enriches the students' learning experience. Since students differ intellectually and in learning styles, they do not benefit equally when only one medium is used.

3.3.1.4 Theme: Focus

One other important theme is focus. Focus is synonymous with attention. Focus refers to the process through which we select what we look at, listen to, smell, taste or feel (Van Vuuren, Kruger, Guse, Harper and Netshikweta, 2012: 103). Again, it is crucial to take note that we should be selective of what we focus on, failing which the information coming in from the world around us, together with data from inside our bodies, will overwhelm us and render us unable to remember anything properly (Van Vuuren *et al*., 2012: 103).Tutors remarked that:*"They are not focused. I think according to my observation, most of the students that we get nowadays, are just here for the bursary".*

3.3.1.5 Theme: Hurried

The penultimate theme is that students are “hurried”. Middleton, Nicolson and O’Neill (2012: 140) describe Personality A as individuals who always suffer from a sense of urgency or impatience, they move, walk and eat rapidly and are angered by delays. They display a high degree of irritability whenever the pace slows down. The characteristics described here appear to suit the type of students the participant is referring to by stating that: *“They (the students) are always in a hurry”.* Middleton *et al*. (2012:140) warn that these individuals are susceptible to elevated heart rate, high blood pressure and heart problems. In order for these students to cope with their studies, they should be composed, stress-free and tolerant.

3.3.1.6 Theme: Priorities

The last issue that was mentioned under commitment to theory was students’ ability to prioritise. In focus group number two it was mentioned that students did not re-assess their priorities before coming to the nursing college: *“I think also what makes them not to perform very well is the lack of commitment with their work and also to prioritize their work. As you are here you have to do one thing at a time. You can't make a baby or anything else”.*

Jacobs et al. (2012: 349) and Shalem and Pendlebury (2010: 122-124) state that effective planning assists students to avoid interferences and delays. Students must be given enough work to avoid problems arising and spreading, which may happen easily if they are idle or disturbed. Educators or tutors can avoid disorder during contact sessions by ensuring that sessions are well planned and organised.

3.3.2 CATEGORY: COMMITMENT TO PRACTICUM

On the one hand, commitment entails the art of devoting oneself to a course of action where loyalty and dedication feature prominently or a characteristic of genuine and persistent focus with a purpose (Legend, 2011: Online). Committed people always look forward to a rewarding outcome for their perseverance.

On the other hand, practicum involves a school or college module in a specialised field of study that is developed to provide students with supervised practical application of previously studied theory (Bruce, Klopper and Mellish, 2011: 255). It can also entail the ability to apply knowledge. The practical is at the heart of the learning process because it is the point where the learner begins to use his/her knowledge in new situations. Applying an idea means that one puts the idea into practice (Jacobs, *et al.,* 2012: 83).

To teach students a skill is to teach them how to do something, such as reading, writing, drawing, multiplying, and researching. For a person to master a skill, he/she needs knowledge and practice.

3.3.2.1 Theme: Punctuality

In this study, commitment to practicum is evidenced by punctuality:

> *"Our students lack commitment in the sense. If they are in the ward, for example, then point number one, they report late on duty so they miss the part of the report taking and miss out on other opportunities."*

Jacobs *et al.* (2012: 181) advise lecturers to be on time for their classes. Tutors should be in the lecture hall before the students arrive. This is critical to the successful achievement of lesson objectives.

The third and fourth category is "lifestyle" and "responsibilities". Lifestyle has further been divided into planning and maturity, while role conflict was the theme for "responsibilities".

3.3.3 CATEGORY: LIFESTYLE

Lifestyle is defined as a way of life and long-term behaviour that could be difficult to change; it includes enjoyable habits like cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption and eating habits (Potter and Perry, 2009:917). Regarding lifestyle and academic performance, Levis, [n.d.]: Online) found that research on student academic

performance shed little or no light on the individual attributes or the lifestyle itself. Now of late there is a growing awareness that lifestyle has an enormous influence on physical and psychological wellbeing and that it can either enhance or undermine focus, class attendance, mental agility and learning. A negative lifestyle by the student, which is characterised by not taking one's studies seriously, is manifested in a lack of focus and poor class attendance which leads to unimpressive academic performance.

The findings above support the concerns expressed by the participants regarding students' lifestyle.

3.3.3.1 Theme: Planning and maturity

> *"It is their lifestyle you know, they don't plan their time ahead to study and things like that. Because they are still young, they want to do their things their own way."*

In reference to the above statement, time management entails the best utilisation of time at one's disposal whilst ensuring that assignments are accomplished within the anticipated time schedule and that there is sufficient time for unanticipated occurrences (Meyer, Naude, Shangase and Van Niekerk *et al*., 2009: 230).Quinn and Hughes (2007: 236-237) state that studying, just like any other life event, is enhanced by proper planning.

A continuously prepared study schedule can minimize the somewhat disorderly approach that is so prevalent among students. For studies to be genuinely effective, students have to regard it as an integral part of their student life in the same way that they regard meal times and other routines. When students plan their studies it is important to include regular breaks so as to avoid fatigue; this should comprise an hourly break as it improves concentration.

Lastly, some thought should be given to maturity. Maturity refers to becoming older, more sensible and intelligent, stronger or more skilled and knowledgeable during the learning process (Burns and Grove, 2009:222).

3.3.4 CATEGORY: RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility refers to the conduct that permits corrective action and imposition of a penalty where mismanagement took place. Responsible managers will, were the need arises, formulate policies that will ensure the smooth running of processes in their institutions (Muller, Bezuidenhout and Jooste, 2011: 12).

3.3.4.1 Theme: Role conflict

Role conflict was the only theme that was identified as part of responsibilities. The statement below gives an indication of the multiple responsibilities that are sometimes faced by students:

> *"Many times one is absent from class because she (the student) is the mother, she is the father, she is everything in the home."*

Du Toit and Van Staden (2010: 86) define role conflict as roles of two or more statuses that are opposed or irreconcilable. These authors assert that professional nurses who are married have two statuses and each has many roles linked to it. For these professional nurses to avoid role conflict, they will have to cautiously schedule their work and responsibilities in such a manner that they do not clash. On the same issue, Ola and Marakinyo (n.d.: 169-177) observed that the students who were also parents experienced anxiety emanating from role conflict as they had to cope with the dual responsibility of learning and parenting. Subsequent to this, assignments are either not done or submitted late which ultimately impacts negatively on academic performance.

3.3.5 CATEGORY: INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The concept interpersonal relationships could be described by, for example, referring to social relationships. The term social is formed from the Latin word *socius* which means companion, fellow, colleague, companionship or society (Du Toit and Van Staden, 2011: 2; Umar, Shaib, Aituisi, Yakubu, and Bada, 2010: Online). Du Toit and Van Staden (2010: 2), and Umar *et al*. (2010: Online) stipulate the following

pertaining to the effects of social factors on academic performance of students.

Much as life at the college could be a memorable encounter, there are other aspects of it that could create a stressful environment for the student. The students could either be at late adolescence or young adults and at the height of romantic relationships. The important factor here will be how students strike equilibrium between academic accomplishments and social activities.

3.3.5.1 Theme: Instability

"They must go to court, there is a divorce and there is this, there is that."

The college environment, which could be social, physical and interpersonal, consists of conditions that play a role in student academic performance or that could either impact positively or negatively. A sudden change of daily routine at the college where students' sleeping and eating patterns, as well as social interactions, change drastically, coupled with an increased workload and new responsibilities poses a new challenge to them. The students must adapt to new roles at the college, familiarize themselves with being away from home (maybe for the first time ever) and strike equilibrium between increased levels of academic success and social life.

Umar *et al*. (2010: Online) indicate that love, romance and support from back home will enhance the students' academic performance while stress triggered by mistrust, lack of sensitivity and commitment by the partners at home or at the college could impact negatively on their academic performance. Love and romance could have beneficial effects on emotional health, but over-indulgence in dating can also have undesirable consequences on the psychosocial functioning and health of the student which will ultimately affect academic performance.

3.3.6 CATEGORY: SUBSTANCE ABUSE (ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE)

Substance abuse was named as one of the factors that influence academic performance: *"They (the students) are using alcohol in the nurses home as well as drugs".*

Two studies on alcohol abuse and the effect thereof on academic performance were considered. Firstly, a study conducted by Rickwood, George, Parker and Mikhailovich (2011: 34-35) with students at an Australian university revealed that students who drink alcohol at harmful or dangerous levels experienced serious personal problems like assault, sexual intercourse that is not consensual, fondling, unprotected sexual intercourse, and were involved or indulged in activities that they later regret.

The problems emanating from excessive alcohol consumption did not only affect students who abused it, but the whole university community as a drunken student may use vulgar language or be violent and intimidate other students - either in class or in the campus residence. Damage to property because of drunken behaviour, as well as trouble with the law enforcement agencies, are common problems which could lead to the student being arrested and losing out on valuable time in class which will definitely impact negatively on academic performance.

Secondly, Savorock (2009:1-2) suggests that there is a tendency amongst students who indulge in excessive drinking to perform poorly in their grade point average. The research conducted at Penn State by the Center of The Study of Collegiate Mental Health clearly indicates that there is a distinct connection between alcohol abuse, mental health symptoms and academic performance. Even though collected information does not permit researchers to do cause and effect correlation it is evident that among students who solicit assistance from the university counselling centres that those who report excessive levels of alcohol consumption perform below par academically.

3.3.7 CATEGORY: FINANCIAL OR FISCAL

The financial or fiscal was divided into three important themes, namely, availability of bursaries, budgeting, and mismanagement of funds. Finance deals with the study of money and how is utilised. It takes into consideration the association between money, time and risk. It also concerns corporate issues; such as how an individual or factory accrues the money it requires to “kick-start” certain activities. Fiscal on the other hand pertains to economic issues such as revenue, debt and budgets.

Tutors at the nursing college under study were concerned that students cannot budget well and misuse bursary money on items not related to their studies. These concerns are substantiated by research conducted by Cude, Lawrence, Lyons, Metzger LeJeune and Marks (2006: 102-104). Cude *et al*. (2006: 102) state that financial literacy on the part of the student is crucial as it affects financial decisions that the student embarks on at the college; it also influences how he will handle financial matters during life after the completion of his studies. The students' financial position at the college has an effect on their academic performance. One out of every three students that these researchers talked to indicated that their financial positions has a direct bearing on whether they will be able to complete a degree or not.

3.3.7.1 Theme: Availability of bursaries

The statements by the participants regarding availability of bursaries were both positive and negative. On the one hand, a statement was made that:

> "*The intention was for him to pass and go to university, but because of his background at home, there are no finances for him or her to go over there. So most of them come here because there is financial assistance."*

On the other hand, the concern was voiced that:

> "*They (the students) don't get the bursaries on time, and they are three, four months without anything, obviously starving."*

The study by Cude *et al*. (2006: 102) also revealed that the students receiving partial funding for tuition and books from parents are more likely to fail courses, as compared to their counterparts who enjoy adequate financial assistance from financial institutions.

In the same study, it was mentioned that financial literate students are better equipped to handle financial matters more professionally and responsibly and are not prone to financial risks that financial illiterate students are predisposed to.

3.3.7.2 Theme: Budgeting

Participants concluded that poor budgeting skills or mismanagement of funds were a definite factor that influenced academic performance: *“Most of them don’t know how to budget well. When the money comes they spend it recklessly”, and “They do have a bursary but they don’t know how to use it, they misuse it”.*

In an effort to empower students with budgeting and the proper management of funds skills, several states have recognised the importance of including financial literacy in classroom courses, as well as personal finance as a portion of economics graduation requirements (Cude *et al*., 2006: 102). Georgia (cited in Cude *et al.* (2006:102), for instance, has in its curriculum revision ensured that personal finance concepts are incorporated and taught at every grade level commencing from grade 6 up to grade12.

Contrary to what was said by Cude *et al*. (2006: 102), Harvey (2011: Online) reports that statistics provided by the Center for Investigative Reporting's California Watch indicates that even though the reduction in school funding subjects school districts to financial strain, the reduction in money spent per student does not of necessity lead to impoverished test scores. Although some districts spent more than twice the amount of money per student than other districts, some of the districts that spent more produced academic performance statistics that are lower than those that spent less money per student.

3.3.8 CATEGORY: PHYSICAL ISSUES

Physical issues are also referred to as physiological issues or needs; these include food, water, sleep and air. When a student is hungry or tired, that comes to dominate his/her thoughts and behaviour (Middleton *et al*., 2012:92).

3.3.8.1 Theme: Hunger

Subsequent to the statements in section 3.3.8, a participant mentioned that students come to school hungry: *“I think the problem is with our present students. If they are*

not having the money they have to come to school with empty stomachs, so that influences how they learn".

Allington (2012: Online) agrees with the participant and states that optimal academic performance of students in tests and examinations cannot be stressed whilst turning a blind eye to the deteriorating quality of their diets as the two go together. Some students come to school on empty stomachs, whilst others have breakfast of low nutritive value. Thestudies conducted by the researcher mentioned above indicate that this tampers with student learning, knowledge and understanding.

A three year Universal School Breakfast programme pilot study carried out at six Minnesota elementary schools revealed that students' mathematics and reading skills increased remarkably and that their general behaviour improved, whilst their trips to the clinics also dropped. Coles (2012: 2-3) reports that there is a direct link between poor nutrition and developmental problems like bad behaviour and social skills impairment. The same author asserts that students from "food insecure" households are susceptible to missing school days, repeating a grade, obtaining poor results, and are likely to be involved in fights with other students. A statement made by a participant regarding students who are expected to perform well academically while they are hungry can be linked to the above findings.

Hildenbrandt (2010: Online) in his study discovered that hunger and nutritional deficiency have a negative effect on students' academic performance. The author elaborated that in today's lifestyle, where people are conscious of the fact that time and tide wait for no man, it is increasingly becoming a trend that families, communities and society in general have become less health conscious and meals from fast foods outlets are consumed frequently. This replaces the values attached to proper and healthy nutrition. As the present generation learns from their elders, our children and adolescents copy these unhealthy eating practices and this predisposes them to all types of risks, including impaired cognitive development.

Research indicates that proper nutrition is crucial for cognitive development and healthy brain development; as a matter of fact, a proper selection of food stuff with a high nutritive value is vitally important to a student's academic performance. Proper

nutrition affords the energy that the student requires to successfully accomplish both simple and complex tasks. Studies conducted by the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition (1994: Online) on Nutrition-Cognitive Initiative, clearly demonstrate that even a moderate lack of nutrients can have adverse effects on children's cognitive developmental process, such as learning and academic performance. Hunger leads to decreased academic performance and there is a belief that breakfast is crucial because it is associated with improved academic performance.

The Nutrition Cognitive Initiative shows that the prolonged decrease in nutritional intake impacts negatively on motivation, attention and focus, which in turn will negatively affect developmental processes such as learning. In addition, malnourished children are prone to irritability and infections due to their lowered resistance. There is an increased likelihood of these children to be ill and absent from classes thereby lagging behind with their studies. Reduced physical activity because of poor nutritional status leads to decreased energy levels which ultimately suppress cognitive functioning. Unhealthy eating habits could predispose students to obesity which also exacerbates cognitive functioning impairment. Studies by Hildenbrandt (2010: Online) have shown that obese students find it difficult to master reading and mathematical skills and this is counteracted by placing these students in special educational programmes.

3.3.8.2 Theme: Illnesses

Two participants raised the concern that students fail to do well in their studies because they are either in poor health status or some are pregnant when they arrive at the college. Health is defined in the WHO constitution of 1948 as: A state of complete physical, social and mental wellbeing, and not merely absence of diseases and infirmities (Definition of health, 2011: Online).

The aforementioned study further indicates that from a health promotion perspective, health is considered more as a means to an end which allows people to lead individually, socially and economically viable lives, rather than a disengaged state which can be expressed in functional terms. It further purports that it is not a mere object of living, but an everyday life resource which positively stresses social and

personal resources together with physical capabilities. This study further explicates that in keeping with the concept of health as a basis of human right issues, the Ottawa Charter emphasises certain preliminary or requisite conditions which include peace, adequate economic resources, food, shelter, a stable economic system and sustainable resource use. Taking into cognizance these precedent requirements throws into focus the inseparable marriage between socio-economic conditions, physical environment, individual lifestyles and health. These associations afford an answer to the holistic comprehension of health which is focal to the definition of health promotion. Taking into account the definition of health and other factors inextricably related to it, it is the view shared by both the researcher and the participants that it is imperative for our students to be healthy in order for them to produce good academic performance: *“Others I think, due to illness, can’t perform well”.*

3.3.8.3 Pregnancies

The term teenage pregnancy refers to a girl whose age ranges between 13 and 19 years when she falls pregnant (Hofferth, Reid, Mott and Frank, 2001: 1).Different reasons could be the cause of this sad state of affairs, but teenage pregnancy,despite the circumstances leading to it, is a result of sexual intercourse which could be consensual or not (Hofferth *et al.*, 2001: 1).The above-mentioned researcher also reasons that teenage pregnancy has a direct influence on high dropout rates, academic performance, repeating a grade and inability to complete one’s studies.

Even though not all the students in this study are teenagers, high dropout rates, poor scores, and the inability to graduate are very common among them. Pregnancy with all its complications makes it difficult for students to perform well. The above findings by the researcher concur with concerns raised by participants in this study concerning pregnant students whose class attendance is interrupted by admission to hospital for delivery:

> *“I was going to discuss this high rate of pregnancy. You will find that in a class there are about eight, ten or twelve who are pregnant, and then during the*

course they must go and deliver."

3.3.9 CATEGORY: FACILITIES

Facilities are discussed under three themes: equipment, size and temperature. In a classroom set up, Jacobs *et al*. (2012: 110-111) describe items such as libraries and laboratories as facilities. Photocopy machines, whiteboards, overhead projectors, computers, television and monitors, video players and recorders are some of the equipment that teachers in different learning areas like Natural Science, Languages, and Social Sciences can use to teach students (Jacobs *et al*., 2012: 111)

3.3.9.1 Equipment

Furthermore, equipment refers to materials needed to enhance teaching and learning in a school or classroom, namely, laptops and palmtops (Jacobs *et al.*,2012: 249). One participant remarked that they do not have the skills to manage modern technology: *"I mean, look at our classroom and see what we have, you know, you know nothing of even modern technology to impart knowledge".*

Jacobs *et al.* (2012: 111) observe that institutions with well-resourced facilities offer teachers more possibilities to allow groups of learners to carry out their investigations or practicals more effectively than schools where equipment is inadequate.

3.3.9.2 Class size

The studies entitled Class size and Student at Risk: What is Known? What is next? - April 1998, and Reducing Class size, What Do We Know? (Pritchard, 1999: Online) attest to the fact that the reduction of class size, especially to below 20 students, increases student academic performance. In addition, these studies also indicated that employing more qualified teachers in an effort to enhance students' academic performance and reduce class size might deplete the supply of teachers. A participant that was concerned about the number of students in the classroom said:

"The classroom takes about 87 students at a go, but you find that we make use of the auditorium, and then students are sitting together".

3.3.9.3 Class temperature

"It is very cold like now, it was very cold during the winter - or the 'air con', when you put it on it is making a noise and they can't hear you, and if a student does not understand what you said, they cannot correlate what they were taught."

This statement clearly conveys a participant's concern about the cold classrooms and the dysfunctional air conditioners as such an environment is not conducive to proper learning.

The All Science Fair Project (2012: Online) connotes that classroom temperatures should not be too cold or too warm because any of the two extremes affects students cognition differently and negatively. If the classroom temperature is too high, students' concentration deteriorates and they feel tired and drowsy. Classroom temperatures should be kept low and ventilation stepped up as this will keep students alert, awake and ready to learn. Also, the All Science Fair Project (2012: Online) confirms that classrooms that are cool and well-ventilated lead to animprovement in students' academic performance of between 10 and 20 percent, both in tests and examinations.

3.3.10 CATEGORY: DISCIPLINE

Angela, Duckworth and Seligman (2005: 939) note that adolescent students who place a high regard on discipline outclassed their counterparts, who attach little value to discipline, in tests and examinations as well as class attendance. The outcome of this research showed that self-discipline has a greater impact on student academic performance, as compared to intellectual talent. Studies conducted by Luiselli, Putnam, Handler and Feinberg (2005: 183-185) on the effects of students' discipline problems on academic performance indicate that unbecoming conduct, such as burglary, intimidating other students, as well as disturbing a tranquil classroom

environment, is some of the unfortunate behaviour that is displayed by students in most public schools today.

This type of behaviour is not a concern for the department only, but for parents and educators alike. This dysfunctional behaviour gives rise to a climate that is not conducive to proper learning and ultimately impacts negatively on students' academic performance. Students who are predisposed to antisocial behaviour at a tender age are more likely to display this aggression in adulthood than their counterparts who were not exposed to such an environment.

Mahlo and Taole (n.d.: Online) note that effective management and supervision lay a solid foundation for the success of any institution or organisation. Managers should solicit inputs and assistance from communities and the business sector in their effort to improve students' academic performance. The school management must have policies and procedures to deal with poor discipline from students and tutors alike.

A zero tolerance approach to poor discipline and non-commitment on the part of the students should be the order of the day. Managers should create a climate that is conducive for proper learning to take place. They can ensure this by constantly monitoring and evaluating programmes put into practice at the college and assessing the performance of the tutors and other staff members. Studies have shown that involving parents and families in their children's education goes a long way towardsimproving students' academic performance. This refers to management involvement and discipline in the workplace.

3.3.10.1 Theme: Poor or weak discipline

It seemed thatill-discipline at the nursing college where the study was conducted was a concern, according to the following statement from a participant:

> *"I also think the school is kind of weak when it comes to the issues of discipline of students. I have learned that students have that thing like they have the power to control everything; we can have rules and regulations but they will not act according to them."*

Jacobs et al. (2012: 182) advice tutors to see to it that nursing students stick to the rules by seriously talking to students who are ill-disciplined. The nursing college should have a stable practice procedure of how to deal with nursing students with unruly behaviour. A group of dependable student nurse leaders should be appointed in big classes who will assist tutors to maintain discipline

3.3.11 CATEGORY: CLINICAL ISSUES

The main category “clinical” has been divided into fivethemes. First, unsatisfactory clinical training; secondly, an environment that is not conducive; and thirdly, poor accompaniment. The last two themes addressed are missed teachable moments and student attitude. All five themes indicated that the clinical training of students was viewed as negative.

The concept “clinical” is derived from the Greek word *klinikos* which refers to “a bed”. This means that the patient will receive this type of care whilst being nursed in bed (Bruce *et al*., 2011: 253).

3.3.11.1 Theme: Unsatisfactory clinical training

Clinical training intends to create a capable professional nurse able of providing nursing care based on sensible knowledge and problem solving, practice skills and professional values. The care usually involves relations between two or more human beings – the health care consumer, the relatives or community, and the nurse or nursing team (Bruce *et al*., 2011: 254). Therefore, unsatisfactory clinical training is unacceptable in that it impacts negatively on the competent student nurse.

A participant voiced concern regarding the quality of clinical training: *“I am concerned with clinical area. I am not satisfied with the way their training is conducted in the clinical area.”*

Clinical teaching or clinical accompaniment is an integral and vitally important part of the education and training of nurses. Accompaniment entails conscious and yet purposeful supervision, guidance and support given to students, taking into

consideration the uniqueness of their needs by creating a context that is conducive to learning and enhancing their growth from passiveness to independent involvement and critical practice (Bruce *et al*., 2011: 255). For effective accompaniment to take place the direct involvement and physical presence of tutors and nurse educators is important and they should augment their work with learning resources like procedure manuals, study guides, policies and other learning materials (Bruce *et al*., 2011: 255). Nurse educators should have the time to physically present themselves in the clinical area in order to teach, guide and check if students are doing things in the correct mannerin the field of practice and not confine them to classroom work (Bruce *et al*., 2011:255).

Waldock (2010: Online) articulates the following regarding the facilitation of students' learning in the clinical practice: many clinical registered nurses are of the view that they are either not fully trained or not adequately supported to guide and supervise students in the clinical area. These registered nurses feel that having been overburdened with work, inadequate support by the education faculty and health provider, as well as not having been sufficiently trained and prepared for supervising student nurses impacts negatively on their interaction and relationship with students. It is very important that these issues are dealt with so as to help registered nurses in the clinical area to better execute their roles as facilitators of student learning in clinical areas.

Much as it is evident that the teaching and facilitation of student nurses has become an integral part of registered nurses routine, uncertainty still exist as to whose responsibility it is to teach students on a daily basis in the clinical area and what the routine involves. This unfortunate scenario creates a certain degree of discontent for many registered nurses precisely because of their belief that they are not suitably prepared and lack experience in student supervision, especially through clinical teaching. Having said this, it does not come as a surprise that the quality of student supervision and the dissatisfaction associated with the teaching role for both registered nurses and students in the clinical area cannot be allayed through the current practices -hence, the need for facilitators' participation in order to remedy the situation.

Furthermore, Waldock (2010: Online) stipulates that clinical facilitators come in handy here as they are viewed as having a crucial role to play and should give positive support to student nurses. They should be involved in factors pertaining to students' achievement and performance. They should give feedback on an on-going basis to registered nurses on their experiences and abilities to supervise students as this constitutes a crucial part of the clinical facilitator's role which enhances registered nurses growth both as a person and a professional. In cases were registered nurses are dealing with more challenging students, it now becomes the facilitator's responsibility to handle the situation and come up with strategies to support the students. Again, Waldock (2010: Online) mentions that facilitators' involvement has been found to minimise frustration and enhance attitudes and behaviours that lead to successful outcomes.

3.3.11.2 Theme: Environment not conducive

According to Quinn and Hughes (2007: 202), the perfect learning environment is one that caters for the educational needs of the students. The environment in which students are taught should be encouraging, without any prevalence of a threatening atmosphere. Preparation and planning on the part of the teacher, clinical tutor or manager which does not take into cognisance the conduciveness of the environment in which learning will take place, can serve as a recipe for its own futility. A participant referredto the scarcity of resources that lead to an environment that is not conducive to learning:

> *"First of all, the environment itself is not conducive; if they are going to learn but there are no resources, how do they learn because we teach them to put into practice what we have taught them in the class."*

3.3.11.3 Theme: Poor accompaniment

Two participants mentioned work overload in the clinical area and lack of support by the tutors:

"Then us, the lecturers, like I said there is too much work for us, we are not available for them, to teach them, we only go there after we have placed them for some time to go and check how do they do the work, unlike in the olden days when there used to be a clinical teacher, teaching them the correct way of doing things, then go an assess, even go to check."

Another participant stated:

"The clinical practice – there is not enough support by the lecturers or from the sisters."

Kotzé, Armstrong, Geyer, Mngomezulu, Potgieter and Subedar (2008:34), in their study, posit that clinical areas should not be overcrowded with students so as to ensure that there is enough clinical exposure and time to practice clinical skills. The educators should at all times be present in the clinical area to offer the necessary support and supervision which students require, in order for their learning experiences to be improved. The number of tutors allocated on night shift should be sufficient to ascertain that students on this shift also receive sufficient supervision and support.

3.3.11.4 Theme: Missed teachable moments

Lawson and Flocke (2009: 1-2) refer to teachable moments as conditions or situations which give rise to desirable changes of conduct in individuals. Teachable moments are almost similar to the creation of a context that gives rise to more than the anticipated change of behaviour. This process is brought about by the interaction of the clinician and the patient and it is commended for bringing about the health behaviour change and reducing the unhealthy behaviour in health care settings. It is sometimes described as a set of specific events that lead people into changing their health behaviour favourably. These teachable moments have been taken as a prudent focal area for clinicians, as well as researchers, whose interest is the promotion of health and wellness.

A participant in this study expressed concern about todays registered nurses who, unlike in the past, do not show any eagerness to teach and do not utilise teachable moments at their disposal to teach nursing students in the wards:

"The registered nurses nowadays are not like those in our days, they don't have the instincts of teaching. They are not using the teachable moments; come I am giving medicines, come with me and see, or here is an interesting case, come let us discuss."

3.3.11.5 Theme: Student attitude

Attitude could be referred to as an organisation of an individual's beliefs pertaining to an object, phenomenon or situation which could be positive or negative and consist of three components, namely, cognitive, affective and behavioural (Gualdron and Mendoza, 2011:295).Even though a person could be competent enough to complete an assigned duty, this alone does not mean that he has the required mind set or attitude to perform it perfectly. This simply shows that competency affords us the capability to perform, whereas attitudes provide us with the strong wish to perform (Attitude and Performance, 2011: Online).A concern was voiced by a participant that first year students lack the required attitude or the strong desire to perform, maybe because of ignorance or lack of interest on what is going on around them as they never bother to ask nursing sisters to demonstrate the execution of procedures to them:*"It's first year students, I don't know whether to say they lack interest, or it's ignorance, they never say sister show me how it is done".*

The category "curriculum" is divided into two themes, namely, theory and practice imbalance and misconceptions about the scope.

3.3.12 CATEGORY: CURRICULUM ISSUES

The concept curriculum has its origin in the Latin word *curere*, which means "to run" and it refers to a track or a course to be run (Bruce *et al*.,2010: 166). Curriculum development is an on-going programme of interaction, co-operation and change that results in the establishment of a curriculum. It consists of four stages of interaction, namely, curriculum design, curriculum dissemination, curriculum implementation, as well as curriculum evaluation (Bruce *et al*.,2010: 166). Jacobs *et al*. (2012:32) asserts that some teachers are of the view that curriculum design pertains only to long-term planning, like for example one year or three year planning, and

whereasothers feel that it entails short plans like a one month unit in Business Studies. Jacobs *et al*. (2012: 32), however, embraces Rowntree's (1982: 20) description which states that it covers anything beginning from a four-year programme of studies down to a lesson lasting for 40 minutes or even shorter episodes of planned teaching.

3.3.12.1 Theme: Theory and Practice Imbalance

The concept theory is taken from the Greek word *theoria*, which means "vision" (Bruce *et al*., 2011: 43).Last and Fulbrook (2003:452) state that the theory and practice gap or imbalance has been identified as the prime causes of students dropping out and not completing training. Of the student nurses that underwent exit interviews, that is, students that dropped out of the course, 97 percent cited excessive volumes of theoretical work in class, and 91percent felt that therewereinadequate clinical teaching skills. These students are concerned that they lack clinical practice skills and that the theoretical part of the programme is the one that is allocated more time. Eighty-five percent of the students are of the view that they have not yet accumulated the required know-how and expertise to become fully fledged staff nurses on completion of their training because of the existing perception of theory and practice in equilibrium.

As this study was conducted using not only nurses, but other health care professionals, doctors agreed that as much as newly qualified students have a wealth of theoretical knowledge, their clinical skills are not up to standard. Both qualified nurses and tutors who took part in the study concurred that newly qualified student nurses find it difficult to link theory and practice; this mismatch between educational priorities and real life situations in the practice was identified as the predisposing factor to the mismatch between educational priorities and the practice: "*Because of the lack of supervision in the clinical area and a lot of theory in the class that's why they are not performing well,"* and *"Too much theory, they cannot remember it, hence they are not performing well".*

In their study on factors influencing theoretical knowledge and practical skills, Corlett, Palfreyman, Staines and Marr (2003: 183) highlighted the fact that the theory and

practice gap or imbalance entails a detachment of theoretical knowledge from the actual doing between what students are taught in a classroom setting - the theoretical aspects of nursing - and what students experience whilst on clinical areas. Participants involved in the Corlett *et al.*(2003: 183) study identified various ways in which they felt theory and practice imbalance could be decreased. They suggested that preceptors should be involved in the teaching of theoretical elements that are linked to their field of specialisation within the education system. Furthermore, communication, collaboration and co-ordination between the clinical area and thenursing college should be improved. A better succession of theory and practice, which ensures that practica follows immediately after the theory has been taught, was also proposed.

3.3.12.2 Theme: Misconceptions about expectations of training

Professional practice is governed by laws and regulations that are intended to protect the public and help the professional to grow and not limit him/her (Searle, Human, Mogotlane, 2010: 116). Meyer *et al*. (2010: 9) stipulate that practice should be reflective of theory and that it should be guided by its purpose, point of departure, leading principles and the obvious, conspicuous interrelatedness of all these factors.

The fact that misconceptions regarding the expectations of training do exist is evident in a statement made by a participant that the students perceive nursing as a “light course” and that “they don’t realise that it is a true course, a four year programme; they think it is a first aid like thing”.

3.3.13 CATEGORY: TEACHING AND LEARNING

Van Vuuren et al. (2012: 139) refer to learning as a permanent change in one's behaviour that takes place because of what one hasexperienced, while Bruce *et al*. (2011:254) define it as acquisition of knowledge, skills and values. Teaching and learning has two approaches namely, the teacher-centered approach and the learner-centred approach. The former is where the teacher wields direct and overall control regarding presentation and teaching of the content to the student, while with the latter there is direct involvement of the student with the learning content while the

teacher becomes the lesser medium through which learning takes place (Bruce *et al.,*2011: 194).

In addition, Bruce *et al*. (2011: 194) state that for teaching and learning to effectively take place, teachers should consider the utilisation of different teaching methods, including modern technology which today's youth are enamoured with.

3.3.13.1 Theme: Technology

Studies were conducted by Pudi (2009: 286-288) on understanding technology from a South African perspective. From the findings it appears that institutions of learningand families alike are faced with the huge task of assisting children to assess, transmit and utilise data on technology. The International Society for Technology Education has considered developing standards pertaining to educating all children in the utilisation of technology so as to ensure the creation of products in the classroom, communication facilitation, problem solving and decision making.

Technology as a new learning area has been made compulsory in the South African national curriculum 2005. It encompasses a variety of internationally accepted principles that are sketched out - from learning outcomes, learner-centred, hands-on facilitation to on-going assessment. It is imperative that students from a young age are taught the "language of technology" as a subject as this will enable them to comprehend the concepts associated with Technology Education.

Kahn and Volmink (cited in Pudi, 2009: 287) reiterate that "technology" education should constitute an integral part of education of every boy, girl, educator and adult learner by the year 2005 in order for them to be fully equipped with creativity, adaptability, critical thinking, autonomy, as well as entrepreneurial skills. This will enable them to be optimally employable citizens who can productively, effectively and efficiently make a valuable contribution to their respective communities. Teachers should also do introspection, which entails reflecting on their teaching styles and check if these do not create barriers between themselves and students, and eradicate them if they exist. The findings of the studies above support the concerns raised by participants that educators should be Information technology literate and update themselves inthe use of modern media to be on par with their

students.

Two statements that describe the participants' view on technology and the impact thereof on teaching and learning were identified. Firstly, a statement was made on students' computer skills or literacy, and secondly, the challenge to adjust teaching methods to students' needs:

> *"These students when they come from matric most of them are computerliterate".*

> *"Most of the youth of today they are more IT minded than us; you will find that they rather work with the computers than stay and listen to the lecture given to them, so our method of teaching is a bit outdated compared it doesn't match with the kind of generation that we are going to put the culture of readiness."*

The second theme, namely, distraction addresses issues such as Facebook and cellular telephones.

3.3.13.2 Theme: Distractions

Kirschner and Karpinski (2010: 1237-1239)in their study connoted that there is a widely held assumption that today's children have acquired multitasking skills and are capable of learning, chatting on Facebook or Twitter, listening to radio and handling all these effectively and efficiently without compromising their information processing mechanism.Unlike students from previous generations, those born in the 1980 and 1990's spent their time soaked in a "media diet" such as Twitter, Facebook and other sophisticated electronic genre. These students talk and walk as if they are an embodiment of all wisdom and advice from parents and predecessors who have walked that walk before is viewed as stupidity, primitive, and not in keeping with modern trends.

The truth is that familiarity with modern electronic devices does not of necessity turn them into smart utilises of these media at their disposal. Thus, excellence and dexterity in using this technology does not entail smart utilisation. People tend to

think that today's generation has through practice acquired a repertoire of skills and capabilities to swiftly switch between various tasks and competently execute them all without cheating on the other. This view is enriched by the belief that the present generation, unlike the previous one, has a unique evolution of the brain that permits this multitasking. Contrary to this widely-held view, research indicates that juggling responsibility or tasks leads to poor accomplishment of each, simply because many unnecessary mistakes are committed as compared to when one task is done at a time. It has further been found that a student who is chatting on Twitter or e-mail whilst solving an arithmetical problem like algebra is prone to reduced efficiency, as opposed to if he/she focused on the algebra problem until completion. In a nutshell, it is impossible for the human brain to process information efficiently and without hindrances during multitasking. So it goes without saying that distractions caused by cellular telephones impede students' academic performance.

The findings above corroborate the statements made by participants who are concerned about students who are occupied with their cellular telephones and chat to friends on Twitter while the tutor is busy teaching. A statement with regard to Facebook reads as follows**:**

> *"Most of the time when the lecturer is talking, they are busy with the Facebook and whatever communicating with friends outside."*

In reference to cellular telephones, it was stated that students are: "Playing with their cell phones while you are busy with the lesson, and when you ask the student she will say, 'No mam, keep on talking I am listening', but after that when you ask her question, she can't answer".

The main category: Theory and Practice is divided into the sub-category: integration and this sub-category are further divided into three themes, namely, inability, resources and time constraints.

3.3.14 CATEGORY: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Studies conducted by Last and Fulbrook (2003: 452) on why student nurses leave nursing found that most students, namely 97percent, concur that institutions emphasise the academic section of their education, whilst 91percent are of the view that they did not acquire sufficient clinical teaching during their training. They feel that a great deal of time is devoted to the theoretical component of their educational programme and this leads to a lack of confidence and knowledge in practical nursing skills. In addition,the majority of these students, namely 85 percent, felt that due to the theory and practice imbalance, they lack the required knowledge and skills to become staff nurses when they have completed their training.

3.3.14.1 Theme: Inability to Integrate

The inability to integrate theory and practice is an issue as other professionals, including doctors, share the view that although newly qualified students are equipped with theoretical knowledge that their clinical skills lag behind. Both nursing educators and qualified nurses also acknowledged and attested to the fact that students lack the ability to integrate theory and practice (Last and Fulbrook, 2003: 452):

> *"They compartmentalise the subjects; they are unable to understand that each subject builds on another."*

3.3.14.2 Theme: Time constraints

A participant mentioned that they spent a great amount of time either in class with students or in the office busy with office-related duties and end up neglecting the student placed in the clinical area who need their supervision. Also, the scarcity of resources required to enhance the acquisition of skills in the clinical area such asintake and output charts contribute to the neglect of the clinical area: *"Inability to, I think, inability to correlate theory and practice because of lack of resources for instance on our side as lecturers, we lack the time to be with the student throughout".*

Muller *et al*. (2011: 286) state that time management entails the efficiency and effectiveness of utilisation of time. It is considered as the successful planning and

scheduling of work time to as certain that the most crucial work is finished timeously and that there is enough time remaining for any unforeseen emergencies that may arise*.*

3.3.14.3 Theme: Resources

In their study on Teaching and Learning Resources and academic performance, Yara and Otieno (2010:126 and131) indicate that education as a basic human right is an important aspect that opens doors to an individual's success. These researchers encourage the government to pump more monetary support into education in order to facilitate provision such as textbooks, classrooms, laboratories and advanced technological equipment that will enhance proper learning.Furthermore, the government should also employ competent, compassionate and highly trained teachers to ensure adequate deployment to all schools and colleges as this move will ascertain anacceptable teacher-student ratio. Teachers should be encouraged to attend in-service training in order to empower them so that they in turn will be equipped to empower the students. To boost teachers' morale their salaries should be improved in order for them to focus exclusively on teaching and student support. A living wage means that there will not be a need for them to do extra work, but only to pay full attention to the students' needs.

The aforementioned findings are in agreement with the concerns raised by two participants. They were of the opinion that because of scarce facilities and resources, (especially human resources or tutors), proper teaching does not take place. Thus, students find it difficult to integrate theory and practice because of the lack of facilities and the unavailability of tutors to support them in the clinical area (Yara and Otieno, 2010:126 and 131).

3.3.15 CATEGORY: SELECTION CRITERIA

The definition of selection for this purpose will be the mechanism utilised for resolving who will be accepted for training as a student nurse at a health care institution (Bennet and Wakeford, 2012: 6) It is the ethical obligation of institutions of learning and educators alike to ascertain that the criteria they employ to recruit and

admit students is of such a nature that it attracts and sifts candidates who are efficiently equipped with knowledge and skills that are necessary in this discipline (Ali, 2008:128-131). Ali (2008:128) further states that in order to ensure sustained competitiveness and accountability it is crucial that nursing programmes should have effective, efficient and reliable admission criteria that ensure that selected students have the knowledge and skills needed for their chosen discipline.

Admission criteria have to be revised and modified in a manner that will enhance nursing educators' selection of students who will successfully complete the nursing programme. This endeavour will facilitate the reduction of human and material resources misuse that is brought about by student failure and despair. Other variables identified in the above study as predictive of good student academic performance are:

- Test and examination scores;
- Admission test scores, interviews and the system of education in which the student was previously educated;
- Students with previous science background; and
- Entry qualifications of the student at the time of enrolment in the general nursing diploma programme.

Wilson, Roberts, Flynn and Griffin (2012: 1-2) emphasise that personal qualities, especially those of entry-level professionals, such as empathy and good communication skills should be considered as very important characteristics to select students. Previous academic achievement should also be taken into account. In an effort to ensure that schools include candidates from different socio-economic backgrounds, cut-off scores for matriculation and the Grade Point Average has been reduced and instead methods such as aptitude tests are considered.

In Australia, for instance, a combination of medical schools in conjunction with the Australian Council for Education Research bought selection equipment designed at the University of Newcastle and developed an Undergraduate Medicine and Health Science Admission Test for admission into undergraduate medical schools programmes. This Australian Council of Education Research designed the Graduate

Australian Medical School Tests for graduate-entry into schools which compares to the Medical Admission Test utilised in North America.Many of Australian medical schools utilise interviews in order to evaluate attributes and skills that are non-academic. Throughout these interviews they ensure that interviewers try very hard to guard against bias which could be brought about by the characteristics of the interviewer which are similar or different to those of the interviewee.

3.3.15.1 Theme: M score

University of Pretoria (2013: Online) states that students have toobtain anAdmission Point Score of 24, and should have also obtained a Senior Certificate with a pass on higher grade in English and Life Sciences or Physical Sciences. For students who completed their National Certificate in or after 2008 the following requirements will be applicable for admission in 2013: A National Senior Certificate having an endorsement of a bachelor's degree which comprises four subjects passed with atleast a score of 4 in the subjects or an equivalent qualification passed with a score of 4 at least in English, a pass rate of 4 points for Mathematics and 4 in Life Sciences or 4 in Physical Sciences. Selection is conducted according to the South African Nursing Council Guidelines as follows: Applicants who obtained an Admission Point Score of 27 and above will receive an invitation to come for an interview with the departmental selection panel. Those applicants who are successful in the interview will be invited to write an academic placement test in January 2013 and this test establishes the programme for which they will be enrolled: *"It is just 24 points that you take irrespective of the subject".*

3.3.15.2 Theme: Subject choice

To qualify for nursing at least two subjects should be on higher grade. English should be one the Higher Grade subject and the student must have obtained a symbol D or better (higher) in this subject. Preference will be given to students with Science subjects, namely, Biology, Physiology, Physical Science and Mathematics (University of Pretoria, 2012: 1). A participant stated that students are not prepared for nursing: *"It just mentioned that biology and physical sciences it's a recommendation but when the student apply it you find that those students don't have the background".*

3.3.15.3 Theme: Scope of interest

Andrew and Vialle (1998: Online) state that besides learning particularly nursing courses, student nurses could also learn courses derived or acquired from other branches of learning at the university such as Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Psychology and Physiology. Combining Sciences, namely, Physics, Chemistry and Bio-Natural Sciences have posed a difficulty in nursing programmes and student nurses have experienced problems with this field of their programme, no matter the kind of course or institution offering the programme. Students' perceptions of the extent to which science is relevant to the course, together with their previous background of it, as well as their previous experience with it at high school will determine or influence their interest in this course. In the study a comment was made that the students are attracted to nursing as a career, but lack interest in other courses or subjects that constitute nursing:

> *"Lack of interest in another subject and even the very thing they want these subjects, but when they come in the other subjects that they should do, for instance midwifery, so you find that they really lack interest."*

3.3.15.4 Theme: Physical

Regarding the expected qualities for success in a Nursing Associate Degree, Trochim (2006: Online) advise that the nursing abilities or qualities are imperative in order for an individual to successfully handle or complete the nursing programme. In addition to nursing abilities, Trochim (2006: Online) mentions reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation is adaptation that makes it possible for a qualified nurse with a handicap or disability to have the privilege to receive a similar grade of duty execution or enjoy equal advantages and opportunities that are at the disposal of an individual without a handicap.

The definition of reasonable accommodation differs from one situation to the next but considers disabilities and limitations to functionality and precise functional requirements of the nursing programme. This physical functioning should permit activities such as sitting down and standing up, stooping and walking distances from time to time without any difficulty, and the ability to bend one's back with ease in

order to pick something up. The nurse should also be able to push or pull trolleys and beds, have enough strength to support patient when assisting him/her to get into or out of bed and havegood physical wellbeing that permits him/her to help to put the patient in a wheelchair or on a bedpan without hindrances from physical limitations. The nurse must be capable of moving up and down stairs when carrying out different procedures on patients.

Dexterity in the utilisation of both limbs when executing the responsibilities in his/her line of duty is also crucial. Also of importance is good perceptions, namely, sight, hearing and smell that will enable the nurse to perform duties with accuracy like the taking of blood pressure, listening to chest sounds, bowel sounds, peristalsis and cardiac sounds during physical examinations and the taking of vital signs. Sight is also crucial in observations of skin colour, dyspnoea, jaundice and cyanosis. Ability to differentiate between colours, smells, and the correct interpretation of non-verbal communication like gestures is also crucial. Physical wellbeing should be optimally maintained. It was remarked by a participant that students' health is not considered during selection:*"It is very cold like now, it was very cold during the winter - or the 'air con', when you put it on it is making a noise and they can't hear you, and if a student does not understand what you said, they cannot correlate what they were taught."*

3.3.15.5 Theme: Psychological

Trochim (2006: Online) asserts that the individual should be able to work under pressure and deal with stressful situations tactfully and flexibly. Ability to effectively and therapeutically communicate with patients and members of the professional team is also important. The nurses should show utmost respect and no discrimination for people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, demonstrate cleanliness, neatness and passion for their work, as well as accountable and sincere, empathic relations to clients and patients in their care.They should also be mentally sound, watchful, vigilant and well orientated with surroundings, place, people, time and maintain optimal mental wellbeing. A participant questioned the passion of students: *"Does the person have the passion in the course?"*

3.3.16 CATEGORY: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The word “profession” is derived from the Latin word *profiteri* which means to make an open or public statement of one's beliefs and intentions and of one's acknowledgement of a certain way of life (Searle, et al., 2010: 3).A professional is an individual who, because of his/her intellectual empowerment, education and moral outlook, is capacitated to exercise intellectual and moral judgment at a high level of responsibility (Darley cited by Searle *et al*.,2010: 3).

Development, on the other hand, involves patterns of mobility or alterations that commence when conception takes place and continue throughout the life cycle (Van Vuuren *et al*., 2012: 63). Professional development is the ongoing enrichment and broadening of the nurse’s knowledge, as well as the assistance she offers other nurses to enable them to do the same in an effort to improve theprovision of quality comprehensive care that they render to patients (Searle *et al.*, 2010: 54).

Searle *et al*. (2010:182) state that a variety of nursing activities and duties cover a large area of responsibilities and it is increasing steadily. All areas of health care that deal with the human mind and body are the nurse’s concern. They have to work hand in hand with other members of the health care profession and establish a multi-disciplinary rapport in order to ensure growth in medical science, as well as development of concurrent nursing science. The nurses’ scope of practice as stipulated by the South African Nursing Council offers registered nurses an extensive role to play in health care in order to develop the profession.

3.3.16.1 Theme: Availability of role models

Searle *et al*. (2010: 52-53) state that role modelsare individuals who occupy a particular status in a certain social system and conducts themselves in a manner befitting persons holding such a portfolio and execute their roles in a clearly observable manner (Searle *et al*., 2010: 52). Role models should be available for students and patients, and students should be able to render nursing care within the legal framework or the scope of nursing practice. The care should be given in a competent and compassionate manner. Role models have specific role expectations,

rights, responsibilities, obligations and opportunities and acquire the experience and expertise of executing their role by positioning themselves precisely in the social structure. The skills or competencies of role models are numerous. They should, for example (Searle *et al*., 2010: 52-53):

- Be superb teachers who are able to handle stressful situations with dignity and self-belief;
- Be ready to create a context that is conducive to student learning and patient recovery;
- Learn to make their patients and students a top priority. The safety and security of his/her patient and his belongings, as well as patient's general wellbeing must be his/her major concern; ensure proper record keeping of all activities under their jurisdiction such as treatment given, the dosage, patient's condition and any administration of the scheduled drugs, if applicable; and be the type of person that the patient and the community feel that they have not misplaced their faith by entrusting them with their care and the care of their loved ones.

Looking at the above requirements or characteristics of role models, it becomes evident that participants' concerns voiced in the current study are real. The impact is stated below:

> *"I think also that is due to lack of role models among students themselves because even though from the first year to the fourth year, at the third year there must be change, a difference but the behaviour sometimes just looks the same."*

> *"They should also learn from us professionals in the wards, clinical, so the question is, is the ideal role models from the professionals?"*

3.3.16.2 Theme: Generational gap

Most of the tutors at the institution under study are in the twilight of their careers with the bulk of them going on pension. By virtue of their age, they are not as abreast as

they should be with the latest teaching technologies and this creates a gap between them and today's students who are so immersed in technological developments.

Freedman, Schrimsher, Michael and Kendrach (2006: 1) in their study on students' perceptions regarding online lectures and quizzes discovered that online tutorials are becoming the order of the day in different fields of study and workplace. Students are advised to familiarise themselves with computerised testing as part of the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination and a number of state board examinations are conducted solely via computer. Freedman*et al*. (2006: 1) recommend that technology should be utilised in order to permit pharmacists to be well informed regarding the new data that they are anticipated to excel at. A number of pharmacy schools have incorporated online lectures and use the Internet to enhance student learning and these measures have remarkably improved student performance.

At the institution utilised for this study, it was clear that tutors were lagging behind as far as modern technological teaching methods are concerned as they hail from the pre-technology era, hence the gap that makes it difficult for the two parties to find one another. Two participants addressed this issue:

> *"I think as professionals somewhere somehow we are trying hard you know to be role models to our students but it is just that our students are the so-called latest generation; they don't actually want to look at us older person."*

> *"We don't understand them, they don't understand us, we want them to come for us but we are unable to bridge the gap to go to each other, we want them to go so fast that they understand what is expected of them."*

3.4 TUTORS RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Throughout this process the researcher will commence the discussion with the main category, then themes, and lastly participants' statements.

Table 3.2: Tutors recommendations on how to improve academic performance

CATEGORY	THEMES	STATEMENTS
Selection of students	Quality	• I think it can be improved, by the quality of the student we get during our admission of the students or our selection. • If we get people who are really serious, who really mean business. Because if you look outside there is a thousand people who want to become nurses.
	Capability	• Those nurses, the ENA's, who are taken in to do the four year programme, and this becomes too difficult for them. It is painful to see them struggling.
	Communication	• To me I think it is the difficulty with the language. Communication is poor, they cannot express themselves, and it needs to be addressed.
	Career guidance	• I also think we have to influence career guidance at schools because as it has been pointed out, most of them come, and when they get here it is a shock they never expected. They didn't know what nursing involved.
Institutional resources	Availability of staff	• Like I said, with our clinical area, I think we should start with the college itself. It must have enough staff so that we can have enough time to go and supervise our students in the hospital. • Availability of enough resources to create an enabling environment.
	Bursaries	• Actually I am saying this bursary system is not working for them, because they are being given a large sum of money at the same time, if it can just be spread.
	Counselling	• Support can be given by the student counsellor also. They must be encouraged to use the student counsellor or advisor more often.

CATEGORY	THEMES	STATEMENTS
	Involvement of management	• Management must come out of their offices sometimes and come to classrooms to go and check as to what is happening there.
	Living conditions/accommodation	• The nurses' home needs to be controlled for there is no control at all there.
Teaching and learning approaches	Diversity	• I think another thing is the change in terms of us as lecturers you know, using other methods more than the lecturing, facilitation, and also giving those students most responsibilities.
	Orientation	• I think if you can look at the issue of the orientation itself when they start here.
	Study skills	• They lack study skills. Even the language it itself it's a problem, when you say define they don't know what you mean by this, so that this is impacting negatively on their studies.
	Student evaluations	• The other thing we are not doing is to give students a chance to tell us how we are performing. We are evaluating them, assessing them, this and that, and we never ask for feedback from the services.
Financial and social issues	Empowerment	• Bringing of other people from outside to come and empower them regarding the social problems they may be having. How to manage your finances, how to do with that so that they can at least know that we do care. So that they can know that if I need this, then I can solve this so that it does not come and affect my studies.
Motivation	Strategies	• They also need constant motivation.
Theory and practice integration	Continuity in clinical settings	• Ok, another thing can be continuity, in the sense that there must be clinical tutors. In the theoretical portion we are here as lecturers but most of the time you find that when they are in the

CATEGORY	THEMES	STATEMENTS
		practica we are lacking.
	Mentorship	• Previously when the four year programme was starting we had these things called mentorship.
	Responsibility of appointed staff	• If appointed for maternity that person will be responsible for every student who is there in the maternity.
	Alignment of learning opportunities and outcomes	• If she (clinical tutor) is there, the student will be having all the learning opportunities because she (clinical tutor) will be having all the learning outcomes for the first years; she knows what the first years need, the second years need, and whatever learning opportunities she is going to be able to co-ordinate all those things.
	Collective responsibility	• Us as lecturers we believe that a student should be a student, for instance, if I am teaching the third years, she is teaching the first years, when she gets into the wards it shouldn't be about I am teaching the third years, I am going to look at the third years, and the students themselves should understand that as lecturers we are all responsible for them.

3.4.1 MAIN CATEGORY: SELECTION OF STUDENTS

Ali (2008: 128) found that there is a link between selection criteria and the consequent academic performance of the students in the General Nursing Diploma at the School of Nursing at Aga Khan University.

3.4.1.1 Theme: Quality

There are certain factors which if taken into consideration will assist to ensure that only quality students are selected and these factors include amongst others gender, age, entry qualifications and previous academic performance (Ali, 2008: 128). Two comments by participants reflected their concerns about quality and how it should be addressed: *"I think it can be improved by the quality of the student we get during our admission of the students or our selection";* and *"If we get people who are really serious, who really mean business. Because if you look outside there is a thousand people who want to become nurses".*

3.4.1.2 Theme: Capability

When academic institutions confer a diploma or a certificate on a student this is an indication to society in general that this student has what it takes in terms of the capability, knowledge and skills in that specified field or discipline (Ali, 2008: 128).

Although not formulated as a recommendation, it was treated by the researcher as a hidden request to improve selection and through that action prevent students from suffering the consequences of a too difficult nursing programme. A participant noted that: *"Those nurses, the ENA's, who are taken in to do the four year programme, and this becomes too difficult for them. It is painful to see them struggling".*

3.4.1.3 Theme: Communication

Du Toit and Van Staden (2010: 114) assert that communication is not only an important part of the means of interaction, but also the core of any relationship. Feedback has the benefit of enhancing reliance and friendliness (Du Toit and Van

Staden, 2010:115). Studies in the field of group dynamics have shown that one-way communication leads to hostility, irritation, frustration, confusion and doubt on the part of the receiver (Joubert and Stein cited in DuToit and Van Staden, 2010: 115). Poor language skills needed to be addressed*: "To me I think it is the difficulty with the language. Communication is poor, they cannot express themselves, and it needs to be addressed".*

3.4.1.4 Theme: Career guidance

A career is a way of making a living, the aim being solely on personal upliftment and succeeding in life (Kotzé *et al*., 2008: 216). Career guidance in the form of career counselling should be conducted as it constitutes an important part of career development. A career counselling programme should concentrate on helping with identifying career expectations and identifying specific self-development programmes which may lead to career goal achievement (Kotzé *et al*., 2008: 222).Workshops should be organised by nursing schools where management, subjects head and nurse educators will attend and engage in the discussions that are meant to deal with challenges and misconceptions about careers and jobs (Kotzé *et al.*, 2008: 222). Appointments can also be arranged on a one-to-one basis between nurse educators, the nursing student-to-be, the nursing student and head of departments in order to conduct career counselling on an individual level (Kotzé *et al*., 2008: 222).

The participants'recommendations have already addressed the type or quality of students who are selected for training at the college, especially regarding their seriousness about becoming nurses; the competitiveness of the enrolled nursing assistants who are taken into the four year programme; and recommendations to address language as a barrier. The last recommendation regarding selection criteria was that nursing schools should influence career guidance at schools in order to ascertain that people are admitted who understand what nursing is all about:

> *"I also think we have to influence career guidance at schools because as it has been pointed out most of them come, and when they get here it is a shock they never expected. They didn't know what nursing involved."*

3.4.2 MAIN CATEGORY: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

Institutional resources are items such as overhead projectors, chalkboards, transparencies and diagrams that the teacher will need in his intended learning activity and which will enable him to achieve his lesson outcomes (Jacobs *et al.*, 2012: 350).

3.4.2.1 Theme: Availability of staff

The nurse educator's presence in the clinical area is prudent as it affords her quality time to support the students and give them whatever guidance and supervision that they need (Kotzé *et al*., 2008: 34). These authors assert that practical placements are more difficult to take stock of. Kotzé *et al.* (2008: 157-158) also reiterate that the practical placements must be more suitable for the intended learning outcomes. This entails looking closely at agreements with service providers, scrutinizing patients' profiles in different units, and the situational analysis of the facilities being utilised for practical placements (Kotzé *et al.,* 2008: 157-158). Inthis regard, the participants made two recommendations: Firstly: *"Like I said, with our clinical area, I think we should start with the college itself. It must have enough staff, so that we can have enough time to go and supervise our students in the hospital";* and secondly, the importance of enough resources to provide the right environment was mentioned: *"Availability of enough resources to create an enabling environment".*

3.4.2.2 Theme: Bursaries

A participant indicated that students cannot budget properly and that the large sum of money that they are given in the form of a bursary should be spread throughout the year so that they do not struggle with finances as these impacts negatively on their academic performance. The researcher could not, however, find literature to support this finding. The participant's recommendation was that the funds should be divided and not given as one single payment. *"Actually I am saying this bursary system is not working for them, because they are being given a large sum of money at the same time; if it can just be spread".*

3.4.2.3 Theme: Counselling

Middleton *et al.* (2012:169) postulate that in the nursing profession the nurse comes into contact with different people who require assistance. The authors further state that these people often depend on nurses to obtain data, reassurance and comfort. In the process of caring for the emotional needs of these patients, nurses could be overwhelmed and could also need help. Professional counsellors and psychologists are specifically trained to efficiently handle emotional needs, so it is crucial to refer people to relevant professionals whenever this need is identified and if this service is readily available (Middleton *et al*., 2012: 169). The study above concurs with the participant's recommendation that the students should solicit help of the student counsellor as she is a trained psychologist who is equipped with the necessary know-how to support and guide students:

> *"Support can be given by the student counsellor also. They must be encouraged to use the student counsellor or adviser more often."*

3.4.2.4 Theme: Involvement of management

Managers should from time to time determine whether the goals have been attained by keeping an eye on the progress of goal attainment, supporting and empowering the employees to comply with performance strategies and indicators, and the on-going monitoring and assessment of organisational outputs and products (Muller et al., 2011: 21). Involvement makes it possible for managers to notice any divergences from the plans and to correct those (Muller *et al*., 2011:21). The participant suggests that managers should come out of their offices and see what is taking place in the classroom: *"Management must come out of their offices sometimes and come to classrooms to go and check as to what is happening there".*

3.4.2.5 Theme: Living conditions/accommodation

More on demand for student accommodation increases in South Africa (South Africa, 2012: Online) states that universities throughout the country are encountering an ever increasing predicament as their students find it difficult to obtain suitable

accommodation and many institutions have now reached student housing crises levels. According to this study, students are faced with a huge scarcity of safe, secure and affordable accommodation. Many other students end up accepting against their will unprotected, overpopulated and unhygienic accommodation which is not conduciveto studying (South Africa, 2012: Online). The living conditions in the nurses' home areunhealthy and there is no control or security to ensure safety of the students, according to a participant. This sentiment is corroborated by the findings in the aforementioned study. The participant's statement reads as follows:

"The nurses' home needs to be controlled for there is no control at all there."

3.4.3 MAIN CATEGORY: TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES

Teachers who make use of a participative learning approach establish a dynamic relationship between themselves and students (Jacobs *et al*., 2012: 3). In this type of approach,teachers and students' alternate in dominating the teaching scene as at one stage students are in the driver's seat while at another stage the teacher will lead the process. There will be instances where the teacher will take students on board and deliberate on the content of their learning with them (Jacobs *et al*., 2012: 3). Jacobs *et al*. (2012: 3) view the concept of teaching and learning as a meaningful two way process and not a separation that exist between two groups or things that are completely different and opposite to each other, which entails activities of teaching on the one hand and activities on learning on the other hand.

3.4.3.1 Theme: Diversity of methods

Students should know that the tutor or educator is not the only source of knowledge and should be advised to utilise different sources like textbooks, the internet or to be assigned projects that will necessitate that they engage with the community, families and events from their own experience as the sources of data. Group discussions can be effective especially when ground rules have been stipulated for students and the tutor ensures that the student adheres to them. Group discussions as a teaching method (Healey, 2009: Online) stresses the fact that students are talking; not only the tutor. Thiscall for firmness, which if not ensured, the discussion might lose

direction. A participant suggested that tutors should equip students with other methods of self-learning and self-knowledge acquisition, as well as giving students responsibility so that they can co-own their learning experience and not depend on the tutor to always give lectures or be the only source of knowledge. The aforementioned study attests to this. A participant's recommendation reads as follows:*"I think another thing is the change in terms of us as lecturers you know, using other methods more than the lecturing, facilitation, and also giving those students most responsibilities".*

3.4.3.2 Theme: Orientation

It is important for universities to employ interventions, such as a freshman changeover to help new students to adjust to college life and survive; it is also vital that such programmes are assessed to check if they are achieving their goals. (Cambridge-Williams, Winsler, Kitsantas and Bernard, 2007: 2). A participant stated that the orientation of new students should be taken into consideration; his statement is supported by the findings of the study above as the students will be able to adjust and fit into the programme. The participant's statement reads as follows: *"I think if you can look at the issue of the orientation itself when they start here".*

3.4.3.3 Theme: Study skills

Study skills should be an integral part of professional training in order that professionals could develop into lifelong learners (Quinn and Hughes, 2007: 440). Quinn and Hughes (2007: 316) indicate that students beginning a programme of study in higher education have two features in general: they are grown-ups with ahigher or lower amount of life familiarities, and they have the advantage of ten years of obligatory schooling. It would therefore seem safe to presume that they have accumulated different study skills over that period of time, but experience with higher education students reveal that they frequently have shortcomings in this sphere (Quinn and Hughes, 2007: 316). The incorporation of study skills training is now a significant trait of higher education. The diminishing resource base of teaching, together with the principle of student centred learning, has given rise to a rising self-directed learning in a great number of curricula for professional education

(Quinn and Hughes, 2007: 316).Again, many nursing students entering nursing education are adult individuals who may not have undertaken any learning since leaving school, and even those nursing students who enter with a previously obtained qualification may find that the teaching methods have changed remarkably since they qualified (Quinn and Hughes, 2007: 316). Without the help of the study skills workshops and advice, students may find it hard to engage in independent study efficiently and effectively. The findings above support the participant's suggestion that the nursing students admitted at the nursing college lack study skills and should therefore be assisted in this regard as they also lack language proficiency and cannot differentiate between terms such as "define" and "describe".

3.4.3.4 Theme: Student evaluations

Quality assurance is the main concern for providers of commodities and services in today's society, and this embraces the two big service industries of higher education and health care (Quinn and Hughes, 2007: 141). Consumers of goods and services are more enlightened today regarding quality issues and their legal rights, and this includes consumers of higher education and the health services. Evaluation is a common characteristic of people's daily life (Quinn and Hughes, 2007: 141). When buying or selling goods and services, our views are frequently required as part of the practice. Travel companies, for instance, give out questionnaires to seek out clients' views regarding the quality of their holiday preparation (Quinn and Hughes, 2007: 141). The extent to which this is acceptable or not, as far as the consumer is concerned,will depend on what use the provider makes of the feedback. The participant in this study, being the tutor, feels that it is important for them to obtain feedback from students regarding their teaching methods and the extent to which they are understood by those who consume directly from their services, namely students; this suggestion is supported by the literature above:

> *"The other thing we are not doing is to give students a chance to tell us how we are performing. We are evaluating them, assessing them, this and that and we never ask for feedback from the services."*

3.4.4 MAIN CATEGORY: FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Education and Socioeconomic Status ([n.d.]: Online) state that socioeconomic status is often evaluated as an amalgamation of learning, earnings and employment. It is commonly conceptualised as the social standing or status of an individual or group. When looked through a social class lens, rights, supremacy and power are given emphasis to (Education and Socioeconomic Status, [n.d.]: Online). Poor socio-economic status, its allies, poverty and ill health, affects the society. Unequal distribution of wealth and resources and deteriorating quality of life is on the increase in the United States and all over the world (Education and Socioeconomic Status, [n.d.]: Online). Societies benefit from the increased spotlight centred on the foundations of socioeconomic disparities and endeavours taken to minimise the deep disparities in socioeconomic status in the United States and elsewhere (Education and Socioeconomic Status 2011: Online). This study further indicates that the perception of family economic stress and personal financial pressures caused emotional disturbances in the students' lives and impacted negatively on their academic performance. Lastly, improving schools' organisations and priorintervention strategies might minimise these risks factors.

3.4.4.1 Theme: Empowerment

One of the participants acknowledged that to become independent, or self-reliant knowledge is needed to ascertain an individual's independence, self-reliance and boost self-worth.

The participant felt that bringing other knowledgeable people from other specialist disciplines and institutions,such asa well-known Bank's financial advisors will go a long way in equipping the students in dealing with financial matters and budgeting. The participant also felt that the students should attend conferences where social workers and psychologists can impart know-how on them on how to tackle social issues:

> *"Bringing of other people from outside to come and empower them, regarding the social problems they may be having. How to manage your finances, how to*

do that so that they can at least know that we do care. So that they can know that if I need this, then I can solve this so that it does not come and affect my studies."

3.4.5 MAIN CATEGORY: MOTIVATION

Muller *et al.* (2011: 30) state that a positive work climate gives rise to and prolongs employee motivation, increases functioning, and improves the outcome in healthcare delivery.

3.4.5.1 Theme: Strategies

Strategic planning looks at the vision and the mission statement of the organisation and is developed by top management led by the chief executive officer (Muller, *et al.,* 2011: 24). The participant suggests that: "students need sustained motivation and if this is not done they slowly deflate and lose focus and interest".

3.4.6 MAIN CATEGORY: THEORY AND PRACTICE INTEGRATION

Theory and practice integration reducethe theory and practice gap or disparity that is created between what is emphasised in the academic or classroom setting and the harsh realities of the clinical setting, which have been identified as the causes of either academic or clinical placement stress for students (Lindop cited in Evans and Kelly, 2004: 474).

3.4.6.1 Theme: Continuity in clinical settings

Continuity in the clinical setting by clinical tutors or nurse educators will reduce the theory-practice gap and thereby greatly minimise stress caused by the gap. The following are some of the measures as suggested by Evans and Kelly (2004: 479):

- Sufficient duration of time in clinical practice.
- Suitable succession of theory in relation to practice.

- Effective liaison and partnership between clinical and third level institution.
- Protected reflective time for every learner.
- Extending the responsibility of the clinical placement managers to incorporate formal teaching within the clinical and the classroom environment.

Last and Fulbrook (2003: 456) recommend the following factors in order to ensure theory and practice integration:

- Superb communication relations between the students, the university and the clinical settings;
- Students should have an identified personal tutor who will at all times be readily available and accessed with ease right through the programme whilst in the practical setting;
- In each clinical area there should be a named person who will act both as the resource and in the advocate capacity for the student; and
- Tutors should uphold and sustain clinical credibility.

Points deliberated by the researchers emphasise continuity in the clinical setting and support the suggestion made by a participant regarding the absence of tutors in the clinical area: *"Ok, another thing can be continuity, in the sense that there must be clinical tutors. In the theoretical portion we are here as lecturers but most of the time you find that when they are in the practica we are lacking."*

3.4.6.2 Theme: Mentorship

Pulsford *et al*. (as cited in Quinn and Hughes, 2007: 377) say that the qualities of a mentor and the type of the association between the mentor and the student are essential to the success of a mentorship programme. Mentoring grooms us throughout our lives. We grow up taking and receiving guidance from our parents, teachers and old friends (Meyer *et a*l., 2009: 160). Mentoring has emerged as a distinguished method for more experienced individuals to assist less experienced individuals.

In nursing, mentoring takes place when a professional nurse supervises, guides and offers support to a learner or a junior staff member. The mentor takes the role of a friend, guide or a teacher and plays an active part in the capacity building and professional growth of a junior staff member or a mentee (Meyer *et al*., 2009: 160).

A participant suggests that mentoring should be introduced,as it was previously done and where, because of it is utilisation, students' performance was good because more experienced and senior students who excelled in certain courses were used to help new and inexperienced students. The participant's recommendation is supported by the literature that also emphasises the crucial role played by mentorship programmes: *"Previously when the four year program was starting we had these things called mentorship".*

3.4.6.3 Theme: Responsibility of appointed staff

> *"If appointed for maternity that person will be responsible for every student who is there in the maternity."*

Clinical assignment of students is of particular significance in the quality debate. Clinical facilities must never be overcrowded with students to ascertain enough clinical exposure and opportunity to practice clinical skills. It goes without saying that the educator must be present in the clinical situation to provide his or her students with support and to help with the learning experience. This applies also to clinical placement during the night. Students should not be placed for clinical practice during the night for months on end. Moreover, ansufficient number of tutors should be available during the night to provide the required supervision and support (Kotzé *et al.,* 2008: 34).

3.4.6.4 Theme: Alignment of learning opportunities and outcomes

> *"If she (clinical tutor) is there, the student will be having all the learning opportunities because she (clinical tutor) will be having all the learning outcomes for the first years, she knows what the first years need, the second years need, and whatever learning opportunities she is going to be*

able to co-ordinate all those things."

Kotzé *et al*. (2008: 217) advise educators that education is necessary to update, educate and coach employees about current obligations in the organisation. It aspires to increase employee know-how and assist them to adapt to changes within the organisation and to keep abreast with new technology and procedures.

3.4.6.5 Theme: Collective responsibility

A participant recommended that a collective approach should be taken with regard to the accompaniment of students:

> *"Us as lecturers we believe that a student should be student, for instance, if I am teaching the third years, she is teaching the first years, when she gets into the wards it shouldn't be about I am teaching the third years, I am going to look at the third years, and the students themselves should understand that as lecturers we are all responsible for them."*

Kotzé *et al.* (2008: 36) agree that tutors should make their competence and wisdom available to render excellent education to the students. In addition, clinical know-how in the educator's field of teaching is therefore critical because the educator must be where the students are to help them with the settlement of problems and to develop a work ethic.

The discussion above addressed both the perceptions and recommendations of tutors regarding factors that influence the academic performance of students. The next section will be devoted to describing students' perceptions and their recommendations to improve their academic performance.

STUDENTS CATEGORIES AND THEMES

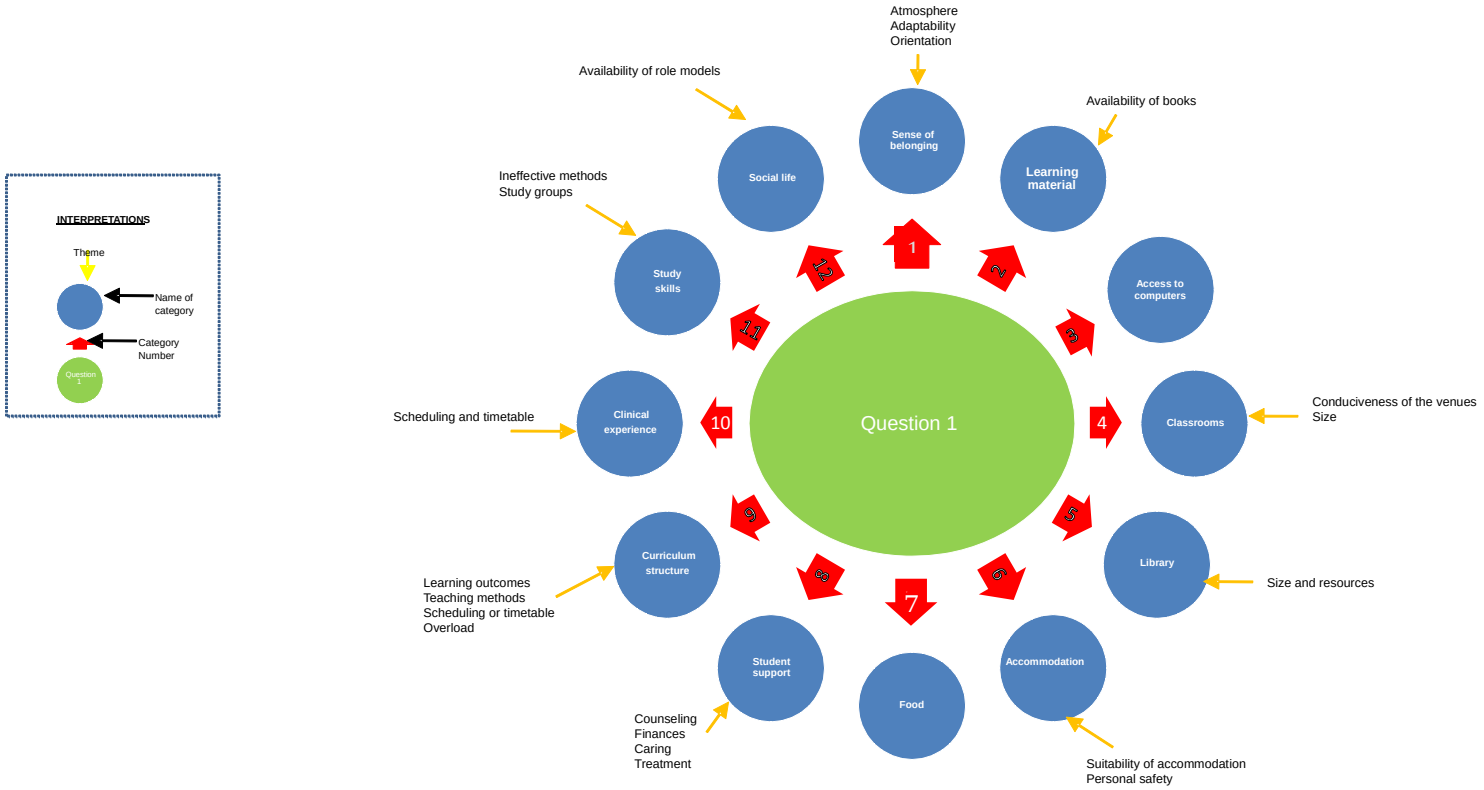


Figure 3.2: Students categories and themes

Table 3.3:Students' perceptions on academic performance

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
Sense of belonging	Atmosphere	• The first thing on arrival it's about anxiety. • The second year students or those who have been here, they told us that you must not fail those tests. They threatened us that if you have failed your test and you wanted to know your script or you wanted to make a query, for example, if I am not satisfied maybe, the management will hate us. • They (tutors) will gossip about us…this student he is so and so…he is political…full of complaints. • They (tutors) will after that treat you bad for the rest of the time...they will mark you. • We were afraid of that particular person of that subject. • I am afraid of you physically, and afraid that I fail this subject. • I think we should go back to the first thing that we came here as individuals. We are coming here because we want to be nurses. • I do agree with my colleague here that we shouldn't make money a major issue. • We have a passion for what we are supposed to do. That should come first. • And we come here for making money, our main focus when it should be nursing. • Nursing as a profession is what should be important to us and not the money.

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
	Adaptability	• It might be freedom and adaptability at the same time because you are coming from home and you are introduced to a tertiary institution whereby you meet new people. • You have been under the guidance of your parents and now you suddenly areall alone and then you start to want to socialise and do things that you havenever done before. • And then adaptability, you come to a new place, meet new people, you don't know how to operate. • They find it more difficult to adapt and get to know things.
	Orientation	• If we were given the correct information from the beginning, the correct study material. Correct ways of going about studying. • And interaction between lecturers and students. • If there is something you didn't understand from the beginning, by the time you get to the end you will not understand, you will have forgotten. • Things should be addressed from point to point. • I think because of its new exposure maybe they are not used to the whole thing.
Learning materials	Availability of books	• Some of the work that our tests and exams are based on is on textbooks we do not have. • When we get here, we are given forms to fill out and we are told which books to order but not all these books are ordered for us. • The other thing that I feel contributes negatively towards the results, we do four subjects and now it’s five with nutrition. Out of those subjects, two are majors. And in these two subjects we have prescribed books.

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
Access to computers		• The library has enough computers for us to surf through the internet to get information ourselves but the space is too small.
Classrooms	**Conduciveness of venues**	• When our classes are commencing maybe some classes will be too early in the cold winter mornings. • It is cold in winter, the mornings. • So some classes commence early in the morning, it is cold. • The environment where I study the classes are either very cold at times so we can't just come here.
	Size	• The classroom takes about 87 students at a go and you find that we use the auditorium; other students will sit right up there at the back.
Library	Size and resources	• I think the other thing our library is too small, if you want to study in a quiet place, the library is the only place and too small, it cannot accommodate everyone, I think the material as well, it doesn't have enough information.
Accommodation	Suitability of accommodation	• At the nurses home or the nurses quarters, lack of rest. Others, the third or fourth years, when we are writing they are not writing so they will do parties, all things so they will disturb us. • The noise and the situation for me there is very horrible. • I think the way that we stay, because when you are a first year you got to share a room. So you got to adapt to another person's way of doing things. • The other thing that I find to be a problem basically is sharing with a roommate because at times you are not seeing things with the same eye, and

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
		maybe she is not seeing that you are trying to be serious, she is trying to make all the obstacles for you to study and stuff so such things can make all the obstacles for you to study and… so such things can or might be other factors. • Our study methods are different; your roommate might be comfortable studying and talking whereas you are uncomfortable with that. It affects you because you now have to compromise. • Other factors like the people are so married, at nurses home, we get people like husband and wife living together, then instead of studying, I will be playing part of a girlfriend, so instead of studying I will have to cook, I will have to clean. • You are told the minute that you come here you are given a roommate you aregoing to stay with, whether you have problems with each other or not, it's your problem to sort it out. If you can't, sort it out. • You find that some people are forced to share the room. • The other lady is sleeping with her boyfriend. How do you study here and some people are having sex right next to you. You see everything, you hear everything. You can imagine how that guy is feeling, it's totally an abuse.

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
	Personal safety	• You find that someone has the lock, the master lock and open other rooms. They steal our panties, I'm a victim of those people, and we are frightened. • This thing again of crime, they don't do anything, it's like we are abandoned, it's an ongoing problem. It's like nothing is happening but it is happening, so we don't know who can rescue us or who can solve that problem.
Food		• So clearly they cannot study maybe without eating, they don't have a thing.
Student support	Counselling	• You don't feel free with the student counsellor. • If they can maintain confidentiality…(that means) avoid the question of stigma. If you go there… crying you find that,… maybe after… three days the others know… what was…(that thing)… your problem. • It's painful that you have a problem and your problem has been disclosed but you don't have… a solution. • If you are having a problem as a student, they (lecturers) are sweetening their tea with that (meaning discussing it as a gossip, rather than helping you). • If they OK discuss you but at the end of the day you going to get help…it's like, it won't eat us. • But now we are afraid if you go there they may teach about the things that you told them, it happened exactly like that last year, but I felt that these things were supposed to be treated as confidentiality. • Your status has been disclosed. • You feel fed up and say to hell with everyone because of devastation. • You feel demoralised and just say ag!How must I behave well… because already, I am known as A! This and that do you see that kind of a thing.

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
	Finances	• Sometimes you find out that as a student you come to tertiary and you find that back at home you have some problems, maybe family problems, financial problems, whereby there is not enough money to continue schooling. • Others, I think it is because they are not getting enough financial support from back home, so clearly they cannot study maybe without eating, they don't have anything, you know they can't buy material and stuff. • Others have been paid and…they bought books and paid tuition fees for themselves. • There must be good co-ordination between management. • It is not our job, somebody gets paid to do that job on our behalf but somewhere somehow the…link breaks. • Mam isn't books are expensive and we are you struggling. • We are given money but I'm travelling from Oranjeville and it is many kilos to come here. • You pay your transport from that salary that you are earning. • You still have children. You still have to eat here. You still have to do whatever at your place. • You don't get the bursary so you must depend on that salary. • You receive too little so if they pay for the other students there must not be any disparities. • If we start with classes…he students' money should be paid out. • Mam, there are other students who can't study with hunger…(I mean) starvation. • Because when you are hungry you cannot study, you start selling yourself. • You start doing housebreaking, stealing and all that things because you are

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
		hungry. • Students are knocking day and night at our doors of we who are having food, to ask for soap and for whatever. • It is up to them to stop lying to us, I am just going to put it like that. • Let's assume that you are there at the location applying to come here. You get a paper saying that in January of February you will get money. • But for saying that they don't know the background you come from. When you get here they say no you must see for yourself how to provide until April. • How do they know that your parents didn't ask for money from someone for you to cope from January to February. • Home is so far even if you think of calling home and asking for money. You know that when you left them there was nothing. • There are some students that go studying at other institutions, they don't get bursaries. They don't get money. We must come here not with that knowledge. That I am going to get money. • You don't get to focus on your main thing you want to achieve because you are thinking about: “I don't have money”. • In order for a student to focus on education and education alone, we need to eliminate all other surrounding problems that may take the focus from him studying. • Now the issue of finance is a major issue here,OK. It comes from how you were brought up, how you deal with things. But when you don't have money Mam, when you don't have money for certain things it will disturb you. What I'm saying is the money makes it easier, that's why it becomes an issue. Now they say you going to get your money, this idea we just don't get it from our

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
		head. They give us a time frame that by this time you will have been paid. • We are here to study, we are here with an ambition. Now you have a budget. You came here with money for only one month. • I knew I had to survive on my own for one month, then the next month money will be paid. They lied Mam, they lied, that money wasn't paid by February, it wasn't paid by March, it wasn't paid by May, by April, only late May and early May we were paid that money. Now it contributed a lot because you see I had to fight for survival. • I came from a poor family back home. I came here knowing that there were ways for me to survive. I did not come here to hustle with my next meals while I was studying, I did not come here to hustle for toiletries and clothes, but that's what I had to do from January till May. • I had to get a job with this work, there is so much work, compressed work at the same time on weekends. I went and worked on whole days from Saturday morning until early hours of Sunday morning. On Sunday, I still have to go to work because I had to eat. I could not study on an empty stomach. I could not go to class looking a mess. Give out the money to the student at the time they said they will give out the money. Have constancy in giving out the money. • They can't even study if no one is supporting them back at home.

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
	Caring	• Ahmm, you know if management, lecturers and everyone…, could care about students more than they care about…, their reproduction. • They don't care about the students. What they care about is their marks. How they pass and everything forgetting that in order for us to get there. They only care about what they want from us. That's why I say they don't care. • Then they care about the hours that we need to give back to SANC. • You fail because the lecturer doesn't care. • They care about us as a group. • So they don't care, a student is just a student and nothing more. • They only think about this student whose pass rate is so high. They only concentrate on him; if you are failing they don't care about you. Even if you go to that lecturer's office and ask for a question paper. He will tell you that I am busy, and after you have asked for that, the lecturer will come to the lecture hall and say, can you believe that, a student coming to me to ask for a question paper. How is that? Even if the lecturer doesn't say your name, but obviously you will know that this lecturer is talking about you.
	Treatment	• They take things easy like as if you are…joking whilst you are seriously ill… (you see). • They don’t even do the follow up. Ok, this student was suffering from one two three and they are changing treatment. Ok, you are on Tegretol and at the same time you are studying and they change that Tegretol, you are not even told… (that) now you are given this new treatment. This treatment is also… (messing you) up. At the same time you must cope with your studies, you wanted to study. I know in schools it is your baby to see how you become

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
		because now you are studying. If I'm working with students let us check that this one is suffering from one two three.
Curriculum Structure	Learning outcomes	• You might think that through the experience that you have passed, you think that you have overcome that and only find out that you are still studying and have not moved forward.
	Teaching methods	• The whole of the objective is done by student. Most of the subjects that we failed are the subjects we have done with group work. • The lecturer stands there and tells us that we're going to use these books and we going to do this and this…

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
	Scheduling or timetable	• I think one of the things that affect us is the way our allocation is done. After the block we go to the wards, after the wards it's a week of study and then it is exams. There is no time where we get some break to maybe calm down and relax. Away from the ward and the class. • The tests that we are writing are too congested, we can't focus, when like we are writing on Friday and Monday they think that they can't study for Monday, I think pressure also puts some strain on them. • Like now we are writing Fundamental Nursing Science 115 (study code) on Monday and there is two days left and you can't study forFundamental Nursing Science 115Saturday and Sunday because is too much and then you end up performing poorly by not making more time for block tests. • And then the thing is that after the block we are going to the wards and then there is exam and that's not good, that's the other thing. I think maybe if like from the block then we go straight to tests and exams because it would be better, but now it's block then tests and back to the wards. • What we have time for it's to study and to prepare for our practicals and that's like…scoring for us and it's stressful. It is stressful because you end up like telling yourself that you know I need my time as well. I'm going to attend this class. I'm going to skip this one. I'm not going to do this and do that. • I think the pace is too fast. We can't cope with the programme. I think, if they can maybe, if it is possible, lengthen the time of the theory.
	Overload	• The way things are compressed, we end up cramming everything and then get a mental block and that has an effect on us. • We only have like crack at one o'clock, you go there, you only have 3 minutes break you study, then 30 minutes break, you study. You don't have time so it's

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
		kind like overwhelming to us. We are aware of what is happening, we are aware that we need to prepare as much as we can, so it gets overwhelming to realise that you only get ten minutes of your time to go and chat with somebody...you don't have time for anything. • The other thing - our work is compressed. We do too much work within little time. You get two weeks to study. You get two weeks, two subjects to study and with the work of those two weeks you are expected to write two tests. And it's always four or more units…too much work, too little time. • You end up exhausted. We end up going for the sake of going. • You end up not having enough sleep and lack of energy because of all that stress. • They are like that to the point that they give us little time to study. • I think also pressure, the tests that we are writing are too combusted we can't like to focus. When like we are writing on Friday and Monday, they think they can't study for Monday. I think pressure also put some strain on them.
Clinical experience	Scheduling and time table	• Shorten the time of the practicum at the hospital. • At the hospital, again it's poor co-ordination. • The thing is there is a lot of…(this) abuse there. • You know most of the sisters in the hospital. Instead of helping you to do the practicum some are worse, they don't even orientate you as the first year student who went there to work,who went to study or explore first time in the ward. • And they are so stubborn and cheeky. You find that there is a lot of abuse. Of emotional abuse. • You find that sometimes you won't be able to finish you practicals there

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
		because of the sisters there. Isn't you are there to study and be showed. • You find that again, you are telling yourself that you are afraid that you will be sued if you are doing wrong things to the patient, and at that time you are expected to work especially you as a persal student. The others they don't, they are not the persals, they did not work first. • It is their first exposure to the patient or to the doctors. • There is not like monitoring or follow up. • We are afraid if maybe one of our tutors…go and look at us and ask "Are you still alright, we say yes, we are alright". But we are not alright, we are afraid of telling the truth that yogh!! It is chilly, it is not… alright here. • I don't know how could they treat this but with harmony and justice. And then again…you find that the instruments…when we are going to do the practicals they are broken, they are rotten. And then you fail to do, to get the marks that are expected. Because even if you understand what you are doing because of the faulty equipment that you are using. You cannot afford to buy yourself…equipment because you are getting less money. • Because the time the practical came we got lots of things to do. Like we have to go to the clinic. Then you have to write reports and you have to go and visit the ward counsellor. Sometimes when you are like from practical when you get to nurses home you have to do other stuff like your washing, your laundry, your what-what. So you don't get enough time to study. But then once from block then you go to exams, I think it will be better because the brain will be used to studying and stuff at the time. And then afterwards at least now it will be better than that gap that the mind, that you get into.

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
Study skills	Ineffective methods	• The system that they are using, believe me, it's not the system of someone passed with a high grade,it's someone who crammed. If you not cramming, you not going to make it. You get there, you write to cram,then you'll pass with high grade. • Studying to understand something is not used. Because of the time, the time is limited, you have to cram everything. But for others, we, before I write something I have to know it and my time is limited. So they (tutors) don't understand, even if you write something the way you understand it, it's still the way it is in the book but you write with the knowledge the way you understand it then it's wrong. • Lecturers want something that comes out exactly, that's how some of us we get or on my side that's how I got the problem. It means the same thing but the lecturer asks me, what does the book say? So practically we have to write something from the book. • Another thing that I think maybe some of us are used to certain types of study. If there are some other methods. Because maybe the methods that I, I am using do not get me anywhere. Because whilst I was a student I used this type of method and it worked for me. But when I come here it doesn't. So if they could give us other methods to cope with the study. • Others don't give themselves enough time to study and make research and things like that. Maybe they spent too much of their time doing other things not related to what they are supposed to do. • You don't know how to study the way people in tertiary are studying. You are used to old methods of studying for tests at school. So it is a bit difficult to change the style that you are used to.

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
		• Our study methods are different. Your roommate might be comfortable studying and talking like, this and this and this. And whereas you are uncomfortable with that thing, it affects you. Because you now have to compromise yourself and say no, even though I am used to talking when I study I am going to have to just keep quiet and just make this work.
	Study groups	• I think one of the factors is independency amongst students. You know if we met after class and make study groups, discuss what happened...because we have little time and study groups amongst us as students and not blaming all on the lecturersand the management but us as students we must look after ourselves. • I think like we used to do when we first got here, like study groups. We had study groups and I think then, we used to like get more time to study and share our views on the subject that we were doing in class. • Like we don't understand something, maybe someone else might come with a better meaning of something that we are doing. And also theSupplementary Instructionalclasses that used to happen. Now they are no longer happening. Now everybody goes their own way after class. Even when you like talk like let's have a group discussion later on they will say like yes but nobody will come.
Social life		• So it gets overwhelming to realise that you only get ten minutes of your time to go and chat with somebody. You don't have time for anything. • The is no time where we get some break to maybe calm down and relax away from the wards and the class. • Yes Mam, definitely per annum we need two weeks to break, Just to break, to go home and socialise and get off books.

3.5 STUDENTS' CATEGORIES, THEMES AND STATEMENTS

Data from the transcripts obtained from students has been analysed and classified according to categories, themes and participants' statements. The discussion of the results including the literature control was done using the same sequence. The first category, "sense of belonging" has been divided into three themes, namely, atmosphere, adaptability and orientation.

3.5.1 CATEGORY: SENSE OF BELONGING

A sense of belonging entails an imaginary feeling of being tolerated and respected in a setting such as a school class or institution (Anderman, [n.d.]: Online).

3.5.1.1 Theme: Atmosphere

In reference to education, the term atmosphere is defined as a climate that is warm and supportive of the interpersonal relationships that exists in classroom environments (Anderman, [n.d.]: Online). Anderman (n.d.: Online) reiterates that when students believe that educators are devoted to students' learning and training, and when they have their success at heart the students' sense of belonging grows much stronger. Devotion is demonstrated by educators when they render support when necessary, when they allow students to participate in decision making and development of rules and regulations pertaining to their behaviour in class. These strategies enhance students' sense of belonging, sense of inclusion and sense of being supported. Educators should create an atmosphere regarding the subject or subjects they are responsible for by involving students in the teaching environment and by utilising students' inputs and contributions like displaying their work in different ways (Jacobs *et al*., 2012:113).

Research conducted by Jacobs *et al*. (2012: 113) has shown that when students feels that they are liked and valued by the educators and authorities it has a positive impact on their academic success. The findings by Andermen (2012: Online) and Jacobs *et al.* (2012: 113) are supportive of concerns shared by participants that they perform poorly academically because tutors treat them badly on arrival at the

college: *“The first thing on arrival it's about anxiety”,* and: *“We were afraid of that particular person of that subject”.*

It seems that first year students’ anxieties are fuelled by second year students*: “The second year students or those who have been here, they told us that you must not fail those tests. They threatened us that if you have failed your test and you wanted to know your script or you wanted to make a query, for example, if I am not satisfied maybe, the management will hate us“.*

3.5.1.2 Theme: Adaptability

Adaptability is defined as an individual’s ability to successfully adjust to new situations, which include being accustomed to rules and regulations applicable in that area or institution (Osa-Edoh and Iyamu, 2012: 159). Pumilia (2010, Online) on the difference between high school and college or university said that in high school students are punished for not attending classes, whilst at some universities student class attendance is not taken into consideration; that educators are not worried whether the student avail themselves for classes or not. High school students who are still staying with their parents at home will be coerced by them to attend classes which mostly commenced at 07:30 or 08:00 daily, whilst at the college or university classes could be scheduled from 11:30, in the afternoon, or even at night, something which parents might find difficult to monitor.

Participants in this study were worried that failure to adjust to college life, which is different from high school, could be impacting negatively on their studies. One participant felt that at home supervision was done by her parents, but that she must now be responsible for her own discipline, and be able to strike a balance between her studies and her social life. Sudden exposure to freedom at the college, which she was not used, put strain onher academic performance.Reference was also made to the impact of both freedom and adaptability:

“It might be freedom and adaptability at the same time, because you are coming from home and you are introduced to a tertiary institution whereby you meet new people.”

“You have been under the guidance of your parents and now you suddenly all alone and then you start to want to socialise and do things that you havenever done before.”

3.5.1.3 Theme: Orientation

Orientation refers to endeavours made by an organisation to assist students to successfully transit from their former environment into the college environment (Peria and Upcraft, 1989; Cook cited in Hollins, 2009: 15-27). Studies conducted by Hollins (2009: 15-72) showed that students who participated in orientation programmes seemed to yield higher grade point averages than those who did not. The results of Hollins (2009: 15-27) study also showed that orientation led to higher retention rates, opposed to those students who were excluded from orientation; that students who were oriented were more likely to solicit help from tutors when the need for help arises because they are familiar with the programmes, the services, the tutors and that they have cultivated personal connectedness with the faculty, staff and other students. Furthermore, they can comfortably and confidently approach and interact with teachers without fear and anxiety.

The findings described above are crucial and address the concerns shared by participants who attribute their poor academic performance to the unavailability of correct information from the beginning. The fact that participants do not know the correct ways of studying, that they do not have the correct study material from the outset, and that they need someone to teach them the ropes could be added to the list.

Muller (2009: 309) refers to orientation as a formal process or activity through which newly recruited personnel is inducted and introduced to the unique environment and conditions of the nursing unit.

One participant stated that, *"Things should be addressed from point to point"* during orientation.

According to Muller (2009: 309), orientation should cover the following points:

- Outline job description, objectives and outcomes and the individual's responsibilities to be clearly stated.
- Duties and responsibilities that are expected of an individual employee on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.
- Policies, procedures, standards and taken rounds in order to customise him/ her with the geographical layout of the nursing unit.
- Socialisation into different communication structures and channels, especially relating to discipline, grievances and of raising burning issues and concerns.

Looking at this study and considering various participants' concerns it becomes clear that the failure of authorities to implementan orientation programme for students has a negative effect on their academic performance.

3.5.1.4 Category: Learning material

Learning material includes both print and non-print material that is meant to equip students with information in their learning process (Dahar and Faize, 2011: Online). Instructional material, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, pictures, recordings, slides, electronic media and online services are crucial in the teaching and learning process of the student (Dahar and Faize, 2011: Online).Finally, additional learning material is considered important to make the teaching-learning encounter more interesting (Dahar and Faize, 2011: Online).

In this study, the results revealed that the non-availability of learning material ultimately leads to low academic performance on the part of students.This sad state of affairs concurs with what a participant is concerned about when stating that they are expected to write tests and examinations but relevant textbooks or content are not made available to them:

“Some of the work that our tests and exams are based on is on textbooks we do not have.”

Participants highlighted the plight of unfulfilled promises where they are assured that relevant textbooks will be ordered, but this is not done:

“When we get here, we are given forms to fill out and we are told which books to order but not all this books are ordered for us.”

“The other thing that I feel contributes negatively towards the results, we do four subjects and now it’s five with nutrition. Out of those subjects, two are majors. And in these two subjects we have prescribed books.”

Shalem and Pendlebury (2010: 37) confirm the value of a good textbook for the teacher as well as the student because they are intended to enhance systematic learning. The view of these two authors are also that if textbooks are well selected by a suitably qualified, compassionate and committed teacher it will afford learners a route which leads them to their desired goal or destiny, namely, to be educated.

3.5.2 CATEGORY: ACCESS TO COMPUTERS

One participant mentioned that:

“The library has enough computers for us to surf through the internet to get information ourselves but the space is too small.”

On the other hand, the exposure to computers and the rate at which the students use them may not be a reliable telling sign of academic performance. It was found that students who on a daily basis make use of computers at school, outperformed those who use it once a week or a month. On the contrary, those who never utilised computers were found to have performed excellently in their test scores, as compared to the former two groups (Sun and Bradley, 2012: Online).

3.5.3 CATEGORY: CLASSROOMS

A classroom is a place at school in which classes are conducted (The Free Dictionary, 2012: Online).

3.5.3.1 Theme: Conduciveness of venues

Earthman (2002: Online) states that the thermal environment of the classroom is imperative for students to perform well academically. The author asserts that the correct classroom temperature creates a healthy environment for students to learn. This means that the appropriate control of the thermal environment in both the classroom and the workplace will ensure efficiency and effectiveness of these areas. The findings in this study corroborate the concerns raised by participants pertaining to coldness of classes in which they are expected to learn and achieve good results despite the highly unfavourable venues where learning takes place. Two statements painted a picture of the participants' environment: *"When our classes are commencing maybe some classes will be too early in the cold winter mornings."and "The environment where I study, the classes are either very cold at times so we can't just come here".*

3.5.3.2 Theme: Size

Jacobs *et al*. (2012: 112) assert the following relating to classroom size: Classrooms in most of the schools are overcrowded to the extent that only one pattern of arrangement of students in class is possible, and that is that of facing the teacher. This type of arrangement is common in most of South African schools because of fixed furniture. In such a setting, the teaching method is restricted to lecturing and other methods such as group discussions are not easy to conduct. Teachers can, however, overcome this impediment by arranging learners in such a manner that those seated in front turn around in order to face those sitting behind them. This act will alter the focus from a teacher-directed approach to a more learner-centered one. Overcrowded schools render it impossible for learners to learn effectively and this situation is common with students from low socio-economic status households (Earthman, 2002: Online). This study has also shown that reducing class size yields

higher student academic accomplishments as the teacher is able to reach all the students and be understood by them. Looking into these findings, it becomes evident that participants' concerns are genuine: *"The classroom takes about 87 students at a go and you find that we use the auditorium, other students will sit right up there at the back".*

3.5.4 CATEGORY: LIBRARY

Educators need to collect information regarding the availability of facilities at the school during context analysis to plan for an effective and efficient teaching program (Jacobs *et al*., 2012: 110).

3.5.4.1 Theme: Size and resources

Jacobs *et al.* (2012: 111) state that the facilities needed for effective teaching and learning to take place, such as enough classrooms and libraries well equipped with computers and other resources, should be readily available at schools. Looking at this assertion and considering the remark by a participant it becomes evident that at the institution where the current study was conducted the library is not well equipped and the space is too small to accommodate the number of students who would like to utilise it. A participant's comment addressed the issue: *"I think the other thing our library is too small, if you want to study in a quiet place, the library is the only place and too small, it cannot accommodate everyone, I think the material as well, and it doesn't have enough information*".

3.5.5 CATEGORY: ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation could be a housing option, residential area or a place of residence which on the part of the student nurse could be around or outside the school vicinity (Snyder, Kras, Bressel and Reeve, 2011: 1).

3.5.5.1 Theme: Suitability of accommodation

This relates to the appropriateness in relation to what the residence was intended for or its purpose. Paltridge, Mayson and Schapper (2010: 353-364) describe university accommodation as a residence that is situated at close proximity to the campus, and administratively run by the university or affiliated board. Paltridge *et al*. (2010: 353-364) mention that accommodation at Australian universities vary from fully-fledged to non-catered, from student staying communally, namely each one having their own private bedroom but sharing the kitchen, recreational areas, a dining room, a bathroom, to the type of accommodation where students live independently. These students who stay in communal and fully catered accommodation enjoy the provision of meals three times daily. Sometimes in some areas, kitchen facilities are provided in order to help students to prepare meals for themselves. More often than not facilities that these students utilise communally include television rooms, pool tables, music rooms and other social outdoor areas. At these residential areas social activities such as parties, sporting and cultural events are hosted which are meant to enhance integration and a sense of belonging for the students. The existence of residential committees comprising the head of the college and other residence advisors play a crucial role in creating an environment that is supportive and enriches the inhabitants' cultural, personal, social, recreational and, most importantly, academic issues.

The college head is responsible for any matters that relate to accommodation, while residential advisors take care of pastoral care and matters relating to student academic performance. These services enhance the student acclimatisation to residences, as well as successful completion of studies by minimising distraction and hurdles that the student might be confronted with. These entail the provision of suitable accommodation, maintenance of proper nutrition, affording conditions conducive to learning, and establishment of a social network.

The findings above, however, are the opposite to that of the current study. First year students are forced to share a bedroom and adapt to another student's study method: *"Our study methods are different; your roommate might be comfortable studying and talking whereas you are uncomfortable with that. It affects you because*

you now have to compromise".

At the nursing college under study there also seems to be poor control from authorities. Neither the head of the college or the residential committees interfere when students complain about a lack of rest due to partying, or noisy behaviour by students who are not writing tests, or those who are not taking their studies seriously: *"The third or fourth years, when we are writing they are not writing so they will do parties, all things so they will disturb us", and "The noise and the situation for me there is very horrible".* Other factors also contribute to students voicing their discontent: *"Like the people are so married, at nurses home, we get people like husband and wife living together, then instead of studying, I will be playing part of a girlfriend, so instead of studying, I will have to cook, I will have to clean".*

3.5.5.2 Theme: Personal safety

Paltridge, *et al.* (2010: 353-359) highlighted certain factors concerning the safety of international learners at university accommodation in Australia. For the same authors, residing at a university's accommodation not only increases international students' sense of physical security but their social security as well. A sense of security entails reduced probability of harm to acquired values that include physical, social and economic dimensions. Students living inside the campus stated that this living arrangement creates a sense of belonging, as the creation of new social networks and a sense of social security which constitute access to social support networks. Participants interviewed in thesame study indicated that they felt much safer inside the university residential area, and are of the view that it is the safest accommodation available. The presence of security personnel who patrol regularly also boosts safety. The experiences of participants in the study by Paltridge *et al.* (2010:253-359), were however not echoed in the current study. The researcher realised that thenurses' home at the college where the study was done does not comply with safety standards. Participants, for example, complained that thugs break into their rooms and steal their clothes, that they feel uncared for, and that they fear for their safety as the crime rate is high. Importantly, they described the authorities as ""reluctant" to combat crime: *"This thing again of crime, they don't do anything, it's like we are abandoned, it's an ongoing problem. It's like nothing is happening but it is*

happening, so we don't know who can rescue us or who can solve that problem"; "You find that someone has the lock, the master lock and open other rooms. They steal our panties, I'm a victim of those people, and we are frightened".

3.5.6 CATEGORY: FOOD

The human body requires a regular and balanced supply of food to remain healthy. The type and quality of food we consume affects our health and the process by which the human body is supplied with food is referred to as nutrition (Duma, de Swardt, Khanyile, Kyriacos, Mtshali, Maree, Puoane, Van den Heever, Hewitt, 2008: 229). Poor quality diets predispose individuals to malnutrition and susceptibility to diseases while proper nutrition provides the body with energy to do the work, growth, repair and healing of tissues. This energy acts as petrol that permits us to walk and facilitate chemical processes taking place in our bodies. Equally important is the cognitive processes that includes knowledge and understanding which are also possible thanks to the energy from the food that we consume (Duma *et al*., 2008:230). Research by NEA Health Information Network (2010: Online) indicated that the provision of breakfast at schools assisted children to perform better and revealed improved academic achievement in vocabulary, mathematics and standardised tests. The same study further showed that students on breakfast programmes have a good school attendance record and are less likely to be late for school or present with psychological or behavioural problems. The sentiment echoed in a statement made by a participant pertaining to the inability of the students to study on an empty stomach is corroborated by the studies above: "*When you are hungry you cannot study*"; and "*They are knocking day and night from our doors, we who are having food, to ask for food*".

3.5.7 CATEGORY: STUDENT SUPPORT

This is the guidance and co-operation that students receive from their teachers as they monitor the progress of individual students in accomplishing tasks allocated to them (Jacobs *et al*., 2012: 198).

3.5.7.1 Theme: Counselling

Counselling is regarded as the third force in education that is intended to address the physical, emotional, vocational, social and academic challenges that the student is confronted with (Eyo, Joshua and Esuong, 2007: 87-99).The same researchers highlighted the positive attitude and enthusiasm with which this service is received at secondary schools. Eyo *et al*. (2007: 87-99) are, however, quick to point out that predominantly female students prefer and make use of the services offered, compared to their male counterparts, and attribute this to the fact that females are good in interpersonal relationships, value self-disclosure, are more open, extroverts and flexible. The students'male counterparts are introverts, reserved and stiff in their relationships. The students' exposure and access to data pertaining to counselling services was also mentioned to be a factor contributing to a positive attitude towards counselling services.

Two documents that address issues regarding students were studied. The Guidance on Confidentiality in Student Health and Welfare (2012: Online) is a document that was developed to enhance consistency in the manner that issues that relate to students' physical and mental health are dealt with. This document is intended for all those who are concerned with the health and welfare of students both at colleges or departments where their confidentiality might be at stake.

Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights has the following rights enshrined in it which deals with respect for private and family life (The guidance on confidentiality in student health and welfare, 2012: Online): All students have the right to respect for both their personal and family life; public authority may not tamper with this right apart from only if it is according to the law and it is imperative in a democratic society and it serves the best interest of national security, public safety or the economic benefit of the country or for crime prevention purposes. Those dealing directly with students advice services should, as far as it is humanly possible, solicit the consent of the student before divulgence of any pertinent data to those whom there is a dire need for them to know it (The guidance on student confidentiality in student health and welfare, 2012: Online). The person entrusted with this confidential data should, where necessary, inform the student that there will be exceptional cases

where it might be necessary to divulge the data to others, whilst on the other hand making it explicitly clear that such a disclosure would strictly be on a need-to-know basis only and ascertaining stern adherence to confidentiality pertaining to any third party (The guidance on confidentiality in student health and welfare, 2012: Online).

In the light of the seriousness attached to confidentiality in the study conducted above and by considering the dissatisfaction of participants because of the lack of confidentiality at counselling sessions conducted by the student counsellor for students at the college under study, it becomes clear that measures should be taken to correct the situation. Participants' statements that reflected their dissatisfaction were as follows: *"You don't feel free with the student counsellor.If they can maintain confidentiality (that means) avoid the question of stigma. If you go there crying you find that maybe after three days the others know what was (that thing), your problem"; "It's painful that you have a problem and your problem has been disclosed but you don't have a solution"; and, "We are afraid if you go there they may teach about the things that you told them, it happened exactly like that last year, but I felt that these things were supposed to be treated as confidentiality".*

3.5.7.2 Theme: Finances

Participants exhibited strong emotions about bursary money that was not paid on time despite the fact that as people who hail from poor socio-economic backgrounds their parents cannot help or support them financially, and they struggle to buy food and study material. A participant felt strongly that if theywere told the truth from the beginning, namely, that they had to survive for four months on their own financially rather than being told that they will only have to cope for one month, they would have been better prepared for the situation. The participant also pointed out that at home there was nothing and that it was of no use to call home for financial assistance. Yet another participant reported that she had to get a job in order to earn a salary to be able to buy food and other necessities as she could not attend classes on an empty stomach, not looking presentable, but that working and studying at the same time put a lot of strain on her and left her with no time to study. To summarise, some of the statements made were that:

"Sometimes you find out that as a student you come to tertiary and you find that back at home you have some problems maybe, family problems, financial problems, whereby there is not enough money to continue schooling."

"Others, I think it is because they are not getting enough financial support from back home, so clearly they cannot study maybe without eating, they don't have anything, you know they can't buy material and stuff."

Consistent with the participants' concerns above are the findings on the effects of poverty on academic performance conducted by Lacour and Tissington (2011: 522-524) which states that poverty affects the provision of resources required for students to be able to learn effectively. However, even though studies show that students hailing from poor socio-economic areas score below average on assessment measures, intervention by implementation of instructional techniques, strategies at classroom, school, district and government level could go a long way in as far as narrowing the achievement gap between students from poor and high economic areas and boosting the performance of struggling students (Lacour and Tissington, 2011: 522-524).

A study confirmed that family income, more than family structure, has an influence on students' academic performance in the sense that the family income determines the family's involvement with their children's education (Lacour and Tissington, 2011: 522-524).

3.5.7.3 Theme: Caring

According to Meyer, Lombard, Warnich and Wolhuter (2010: 20-21), care could be individualised or managed but individualised care fits the notion of managed care. Individualised care entails the evaluation of patients' needs which could be physical, sociological and psychiatric,their response to any physical deficits, and then to attend to them by rendering the appropriate nursing intervention. For nurses to effectively render individualised care, they need to take into account the exact situation of the patients and not beyond the context of their sociocultural background.

The participants unequivocally emphasised the uncaring attitude of lecturers and management alike. They indicated that the tutors and managers could not care less whether students fail or not, and pointed out the fact that students are just students and nothing more, a mere statistic. The participants voiced their concern that: “Only students whose pass rate is high are the ones that lecturers care about”.

The type of managers and the tutors that the participants refer to sharply contrast a study done by Robinson (2009: 1-7) which stresses the roles and characteristics of the servant teacher which entails that they are humble, eager to serve and care for others. They are visionary; they set goals and are willing to capacitate others. They are role models, inspire team spirit, encourage the privileged and unprivileged to genuinely help and render a service to each other. They ensure that those they nurture develop and mature as individuals, become healthier, wise up, emancipated from any mental bondage, grow in autonomy, dynamism and graduate to reciprocate this servant attribute. In addition to these, they make sure that those disenfranchised members of the community are not alienated or sidelined further(Robinson, 2009: 1-7).

Through attentive listening and empathy they are able to discern, understand the students’ problems and this enhances their insight into the problem and the successful handling thereof. Servant teachers’ make the students feel loved, appreciated and cared for through their empathetic listening skills and students fears emanating from being new in the profession, unfamiliarity with medical jargon and the surroundings are allayed. They put the students’ growth, development and success high on their agendas and this formulates the basis of their relationship with the students. Wielding of power is minimal in their vocabulary as they prefer persuasion rather than applying authority bestowed on them by virtue of their hierarchical positions when helping students to achieve their learning objectives (Robinson, 2009: 1-7).

Servant teachers have rid themselves of cultural inertia and have displayed willingness by breaking out of their cocoons and comfort zones and ascertain that students acquire knowledge and skill inherent in modern practice. They offer their entire loyalty to the creation of a student-centered learning climate; a student-

centered approach is ensured by allowing students to air their views pertaining to how they would like their learning to be structured, utilisation of every opportunity available to involve them when dealing with content, and in designation of learning encounters where the students uncover the answers themselves. This move calls for a paradigm shift on the part of the teachers from instruction-centered lectures to a learner-centered approach (Robinson, 2009: 1-7).

Servant teachers' display a high degree of flexibility in as far as adaptation to individual student needs and helping students fulfil learning outcomes. They not only display willingness to change by responding to change only but by also looking forward to it and getting students ready for it (Robinson, 2009: 1-7).

Several negative and one positive statement were made regarding the caring attitude of tutors:

> *"They don't care about the students. What they care about is their marks. How they pass and forget that in order for us to get there. They only care about what they want from us. That's why I say they don't care."*
>
> *"Then they care about the hours that we need to give back to SANC."*
>
> *"So they don't care, a student is just a student and nothing more."*

The positive statement was that: "*They care about us as a group".*

3.5.7.4 Theme: Treatment

A drug or medication is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, cure, relief or prevention of disease (Potter and Perry, 2009: 687).Souma, Rickerson and Burgstahler (2012: 2-3) found that students with psychiatric disorders are candidates of reasonable accommodations as outlined by the American Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and 2008 amendments.

The effective and reasonable accommodation of students suffering from illnesses,such as psychiatric disabilities, provides them with equal access to academic activities and courses. The inclusion of such students enriches the diversity and representatively of the student population in these institutions. The prevalence of functional limitations induced by medication side-effects could impact negatively on students' academic performance thereby necessitating the institution of accommodation programmes in order to improve or reduce these functional limitations brought about by the undesirable side-effects (Muller *et. al*., 2011: 293).

This reasonable accommodation programme is aimed at eradicating barriers to effective learning and is achieved through providing students with disabilities equal access to the content of a course, but not of necessity guaranteeing their success. The lecturer will be responsible to offer reasonable accommodations while the student is responsible to meet the course academic requirements. The designed outcome is accomplished when the lecturer, the student and the supportive service work hand in hand. Collaborative effort by the group enhances a problem-solving course of action that may or may not be taken.

Reasonable classroom accommodation may include (Souma, Rickerson and Burgstahler, 2012: 2-3):

- Seating preferably close to the entrance to permit easy exiting of the class for break;
- Allocating a group mate who will volunteer to support the ill student with work;
- Regular breaks that could permit the student to take medication;
- Utilising photocopy or taking notes of another student;
- Consideration given to extending time for writing tests;
- Students being allowed to write examinations in hospitals and provided with an invigilator; and
- Allowed to write examinations separately and in rooms that arequiet and free from any disturbances.

A participant was specifically concerned about the tutors' carelessness to check those students who are ill and on medication. The medication that was prescribed to this student, namely, Tegretol® is a central nervous system depressant and has a negative effect on concentration. The same participant found it difficult to cope with studies and care or support on the part of a tutor could be helpful. The participant's statement reads as follows:

> *"They don't even do the follow up. OK this student was suffering from one two three and they are changing treatment. OK, you are on Tegretol® and at the same time you are studying and they change that Tegretol®, you are not even toldthat now you are given this new treatment. This treatment is alsomessing you up. At the same time you must cope with your studies, you wanted to study. I know in schools it is your baby to see how you become because now you are studying. If I'm working with students let us check that this one is suffering from one two three."*

3.5.8 CATEGORY: CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

Curriculum structure or design entails the way in which the major components of the educational programme are conceptualised and arranged in order to provide direction and guidance towards achieving proposed outcomes (Muller, 2009: 336)

3.5.8.1 Theme: Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes outline those needs that ought to be accomplished in accordance with the desired change that needs to be displayed by the students when completing aprogramme (Muller, 2009: 336). Literature illustrates that guidelines for the formulation of an educational program are to identify the title or program theme; describe the underlying educational philosophy; identify and describe the target group; formulate critical and specific outcomes related to the programme; identify, classify and describe the learning content; choose the most suitable method of education; and lastly, select the most suitable assessment method or tool (Muller, 2009: 337).

A statement made by one participant indicates that failure to provide students with specific learning outcomes contribute to them not performing well academically: "*The students do not progress - they are just stagnant"*, and*"You might think that through the experience that you have passed, that you have overcome that only to find out that you are still studying and have not moved forward".*

3.5.8.2 Theme: Teaching method

A teaching method is a mode of teaching that goes according to a certain plan, for example, discussion, lecturing and questioning (Jacobs *et al*., 2012: 156). With regard to teaching methods, the participants were concerned that in most of the subjects that they failed, the objectives where obtained through group work by students themselves, whilst the lecturers just stood there and told them which books to use for those objectives.

Jacobs *et al*. (2012: 348) justify the students' concerns by stating that the educator should talk to and agree with the students about how projects, group discussions and written class work will be dealt with. The students should also be kept on board in relation to how the work will be assessed throughout the year. The educator should provide the students with a broad overview of the aspects of the learning material that will be dealt with on their level of education and discuss it with them briefly. In this study, the participants complained that this is not the approach followed by their educators. They stated that: *"The whole objective is done by the students. Most of the subjects that we failed are the subjects we have done with group work" and "The lecturer stands there and tells us we are going to use this book and we going to do this and this".*

3.5.8.3 Theme: Scheduling or timetable

A timetable refers to a schedule listing the times at which events are expected to take place (The Merriam-Webster English Dictionary, 2012: Online).

3.5.8.4 Theme: Overload

Sansgiry, Bhosle and Sail (2006:6) articulated that test anxiety arouses two physiological reactions, namely, cognition and emotional. The students are preoccupied with test failing, concerned about poor performance in examinations, and this induces low self-efficacy and low self-esteem. The emotions aroused by test anxiety predispose students to tension, apprehension, nervousness and phobia for the examinations. Clinically this is evident by symptoms such as palpitations, nausea, sweating and insomnia. Students with high degrees of test anxiety are prone to making use of less effective strategies and more often than not procrastinating and indulging in repetitive memorisation strategies.

Students' perceptions regarding the course load trigger feelings of anxiety and psychological stress. A huge course load and comprehensive data in academic curricula require good time management and sound study strategies. The course load also has a direct bearing on students' mode of learning and can be utilised to formulate and evaluate the curricula. It is worth noting that students' perceptions of the teaching and learning environment, namely, assessment tools, relevance and applicability of the course as well as course load has a direct influence on students' approach to learning (Sansgiry, Bhosle and Sail, 2006: 6):

> *"I think one of the things that affect us is the way our allocation is done. After the block we go to the wards, after the wards it's a week of study and then it is exams. There is no time where we get some break to maybe calm down and relax. Away from the ward and the class."*

> *"The tests that we are writing are too congested, we can't focus, when like we are writing on Friday and Monday they think that they can't study for Monday, I think pressure also puts some strain on them."*

> *"The way things are compressed, we end up cramming everything and then get a mental block and that has an effecton us. We only have like crack at one o'clock, you go there, you only have 3 minutes break, you study, then 30 minutes break, you study. You don't have time so it's kind like overwhelming to us."*

3.5.9 CATEGORY: CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Clinical experience precedes and results in clinical competence which the student nurse will acquire through direct involvement and being physically present in the clinical area whilst being guided, coached and taught by the nurse educator (Bruce *et al*., 2011: 254).

Bruce *et al.* (2011: 255-256) define a clinical setting as an environment where the learners can learn and acquire clinical nursing practicum in a relatively safe setting. Through clinical accompaniment the learning opportunities are created that enable the nursing students to develop from passiveness to involvement to independent clinical practice.

This process requires that the tutor should be physically present so as to guide and oversee the learning experience of the learner whilst making use of various learning resources. For student nurses to gain the necessary clinical experience, clinical preceptors in the form of experienced nurses or midwives should be present who act as role models and learning resources for students whilst following and instilling strict rules and etiquette for them. These are formally qualified nurse educators who do not necessarily give formal lectures to students, but merely ascertain that students obtain enrichment and fulfilment from their practice setting. The role of the student is to observe and ask appropriate questions which will be addressed by the preceptor at the end of the learning experience or during his interaction with the student (Bruce *et al.,* 2011: 255-256).

Preceptors need to be abreast with the theoretical content that nursing students have reviewed, and they, together with educators should aim to equip students with skills and abilities that they need to acquire, and supervise them in executing those skills. The health care institutions where clinical training is conducted should have committees of preceptors established who will come together periodically to talk about students' problems and ways of resolving them (Bruce *et al.,* 2011: 255-256).

In the current study, participants voiced several issues. Firstly, they were concerned about “abuse” in the clinical area which is brought about by the professional nurses who do not seem to care to orientate them (the students) in the wards. The need was voiced that as a novice in the clinical area, supervision should be conducted by professional nurses who are caring and who are not cheeky, stubborn and/or abusive: *“The thing is there is a lot of abuse there. You know most of the sisters in the hospital. Instead of helping you to do the practicals, some are worse, they don't even orientate you as the first year student who went there to work. Who went to study or explore first time in the ward. And they are so stubborn and cheeky. You find that there is a lot of abuse - of emotional abuse”.*

Secondly, the fear of performing nursing actions that will lead to a medico-legal hazard, when they are exposed to the clinical area for the first time were also highlighted: “*You find that again, you are telling yourself that you are afraid that you will be sued if you are doing wrong things to the patient, and at that time you are expected to work especially, you as a persal student. The others they don't, they are not the persals, they did not work first”.*

Meyer *et al*. (2009: 124-126) maintain that the clinical setting could be a nightmare for newly recruited student nurses who are exposed to the nursing unit for the first time. It becomes the role of the unit managers to help them to adjust and familiarise themselves with the unit. The unit managers also need to equip students with the necessary know-how and skills, and guide them through this challenging period of running the nursing unit on their own by basing their conviction on the knowledge that experience is the best teacher.

In their effort to carry out this task, care should be taken to prevent harm to patients while ensuring quality patient care delivery. Unit managers should ensure that patients receive the best quality care whilst at the same time creating a safe environment for student nurses to render a service. This could be done through reviewing relevant literature and by utilising the newly acquired knowledge of the students.

Unit managers should design nursing care plans that seek to address identified patients' health care needs. By doing this, student nurses will be enabled to apply their knowledge in planning patient care, to close the theory-practice gap, to utilise relevant literature on an ongoing basis to handle problematic situations, and resolve problems by critically and analytically applying their reasoning within the framework of the patients' health care needs.

The unit manager furthermore should strive to build a good interpersonal relationship with the educators responsible for students allocated to the unit as both the learner and the patient could benefit from co-operative relationships. Teachable moments are important and should be used to the benefit of students, which in turn also benefit patients.

3.5.10 CATEGORY: STUDY SKILLS

Study skills are defined as those competencies that students should acquire in order to master the content of their texts (Tonjes and Zintz, cited in Mutsotso and Abenga 2010: Online).

3.5.10.1 Theme: Ineffective methods

Whether the study methods used by students will be effective or ineffective, will be determined by their learning styles (Bruce *et al.*, 2011: 122). A learning style is a distinguished and a habitual way of gaining know-how, skills and attitudes by way of study or experiencing acquisition. The individual student's learning style will to a greater extent establish his/her knowledge perception, processing, understanding and eventually his/her learning or study method preference (Bruce *et al*., 2011:122).

Quinn and Hughes (2007: 316) state that learners who enter a programme of study in institutions of higher learning are adults with a minimum or maximum quantity of life experience, and have been exposed to at least ten years of compulsory school attendance. An assumption might exist that they have accumulated a wide range of study skills over that period of time. However, an encounter with students at institutions of higher education reveals that these students lack study skills

considerably.One participant had the follow to say: ***"****You don't know how to study the way people in tertiary are studying. You are used to old methods of studying for tests at school. So it is a bit difficult to change the style that you are used to".*

Mutsotso and Abenga (2010: 808-811) assert that universities admit students with different learning and study styles, different levels of learning readiness, and different understanding of university education. Among these students, there are those who were previously spoon-fed, drilled, taught for examinations, or have entered the university for the wrong purposes and reasons. These factors will definitely have a negative effect on study skills, as well as academic performance. A participant stated that*: "Studying to understand something is not used. Because of the time, the time is limited you have to cram everything. But for others, we, before I write something I have to know it and my time is limited. So they (tutors) don't understand, even if you write something the way you understand it, it's still the way it is in the book but you write with the knowledge the way you understand it, then it's wrong".*

Mutsotso and Abenga (2010: 808-811), however, emphasise the following study skills strategies that the teacher might consider in an effort to improve academic performance, motivation of the students, and identification of the students' interest during selection of the material. Educators should permit the students to select the tasks and the material to finish the task and let them set their own goals pertaining to what they would like to accomplish. Outlining and mapping will facilitate students' ability to organise data. Students can also be furnished with examples of the types of questions that will be asked in the tests in order to minimise their stress and anxiety levels. Educators should take into cognisance that students are unique and so are their information-processing methods, especially when assessing students.

A participant felt that his/her former method of studying is now obsolete and he/she is looking to tutors to teach them new ways of studying, but this does not happen: *"Another thing that I think maybe some of us are used to certain types of study. Maybe the methods that I am using do not get me anywhere. Because whilst I was a student I used this type of method and it worked for me. But when I come here it doesn't. So if they could give us other methods to cope with the study."*

The discussion above could be considered as supportive of the participants' dissatisfaction relating to study skills and ineffective study methods at the college under study as they complain that only students who are cramming will be able to score good results: ***"****The system that they are using believe me it's not the system of someone passed with a high grade, it's someone who crammed. If you not cramming you not going to make it. You get there, you write to cram,then you'll pass with high grade".* Another concernis that studentsare forced to write exactly what is in the textbook: *"Lecturers want something that comes out exactly, that's how some of us we get or on my side that's how I got the problem. It means the same thing but the lecturer asks me, what does the book say? So practically we have to write something from the book".*

Tuckman ([n.d.]: Online), discussing the enhancement of study skills and academic performance, on the other hand, says that students should begin to take responsibility and learn from texts, lectures and books. They should manage their own lives in such a manner that it does not hinder their core business, which is to learn. This author insists that students should thoroughly prepare for their examinations and their tests alike.

3.5.10.2 Theme: Study groups

Groups are formed and organised in a manner that allows students to work together in order to achieve a specific goal, deal with a problem, make a decision, or produce a product. Students assume responsibility for their own learning whilst assisting their group mates to also learn and practice skills. Co-operative learning enhances a healthy co-operative interaction and interdependence amongst members of the group. In this approach, the teacher monitors the individual as well as the group's progress and supports them (Jacobs *et al*., 2012: 197).

Participants in the study felt that they had not done themselves any justice by negating to come together, learning in a group, sharing their views and supporting one another, rather than working independently. Some of the statements they made were that:

"I think like we used to do when we first got here like, study groups. We had study groups and I think then, we used to like get more time to study and share our views on the subject that we were doing in class."

"Like we don't understand something, maybe someone else might come with a better meaning of something that we are doing. And also the supplementary instructional classes that used to happen. Now they are no longer happening. Now everybody goes their own way after class. Even when you like talk like let's have a group discussion later on, they will say like yes but nobody will come."

Jacobs *et al*. (2012: 203) state that co-operative learning boosts self-esteem in students, as well as positive interdependence and sharing. The feeling that their ideas and inputs are appreciated and welcomed, like those of their colleagues, boosts their self-image especially for those whose opinions and contributions were despised by parents, teachers, friends and colleagues. Study groups and participative learning make learners feel important as they feel co-ownership of the success that has been achieved. Working together also provides them with the opportunity to learn from others.

3.5.11 CATEGORY: SOCIAL LIFE

Social life is linked to the manner in which people go about living their lives in different communities (Osa-Edoh and Lyamu, 2012:15). Regarding their study on social life adjustment and academic achievement of adolescents in Edo State, Osa-Edoh and Lyamu (2012: 156-160) state the following:

The ability to successfully deal with a new situation and acclimatise to different rules and regulations of a society brings social life adjustments. But if the opposite is true, social life problems crop up. A social problem is referred to as a situation that affects a large number of people in a manner that is considered unfortunate where a feeling exists that something can be done through collective social activity (Horton, Leslie and Larson cited in Osa- Edoh and Lyamu, 2012:158). The same authors assert that an adolescent whose social life is problem-free will be well adapted. The notion of

adaptation is linked to what may be referred to as living systems, system of organs, psychological systems, personality systems, group of individuals that comprise social systems, and social organisations.

In an effort to adapt, there is a spontaneous maintenance of equilibrium between forces within the system with forces emanating from the environment. In general, adjustment is defined as individuals' general adaptation to the environment and the life demands, for example the way in which they relate to other people, namely interpersonal behaviour, how they manage their responsibilities and handle stressful situations, for instance inadequate learning, growing up, satisfying their personal needs and life fulfilments(Osa-Edoh and Lyamu, 2012: 159).

According to Osa-Edoh and Lyamu (2012: 159), adjustment is a reciprocal process where an individual is able to become himself, adhere to his/her own self and make reality by conforming to his/her requirements and needs. As life is dynamic, the individual's ability to revisit his/her own way of thinking, feeling and behaviour about situations is an important ingredient of adjustment. There are a handful of matters that one has to adjust to in life, such as academic, social life, marriage life, job experiences - to list a few - but for adolescents academic tasks is an important issue they need to adjust to.

Aguobosi (cited in Osa-Edoh and Lyamu, 2012: 160) outlined the causes of ineffective study that leads to poor academic performance in adolescent students. According to Aguobosi, the students are:

- Unable to handle stress;
- Rigid in their thinking and have poor study habits;
- Fail to plan their study which leads to haphazard studying;
- Fail to finish work timeously which leads to poor productivity; and
- Unable to use logic when reasoning.

The participants stated that:

> *“So it gets overwhelming to realise that you only get ten minutes of your time to go and chat with somebody. You don’t have time for anything.”*
>
> *“The is no time where we get some break to maybe calm down and relax away from the wards and the class.”*
>
> *“Yes Mam, definitely per annum we need two weeks to break. Just to break, to go home and socialise and get off books.”*

Adolescents whose social life is full of problems are inclined not to perform well academically and are antisocial, withdrawn and shy away from their counterparts. Their unfortunate behaviour leads to a situation where their truancy and absenteeism from school becomes the order of the day. These students cannot cope effectively with themselves and their environment, which is in a state of continuous movement or change. A person whose social and personal behaviour seems to be adequately well-integrated will seem to be adequately happy and his academic performance will be reflective of that state (Osa-Edoh and Lyamu, 2012: 160).

3.6 STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Table 3.4: Student recommendations on academic performance

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
Sense of belonging	Orientation	• If we were given the correct information at the beginning, the correct study material, the correct ways of going about studying and interaction between lecturers and the students. • If there is something you do not understand from the beginning by the time you get to the end you won't understand, you will have forgotten, so things should be addressed from point to point to point.
Accommodation		• We are staying in pigsty. We are not worried that we paying that R800 like as persals, even if you can go right now, our baths - we are staying in the pigsty. The hygiene is very poor, they contradict - we are taught hygiene here. The walls are cracked, they are full of cockroaches who stayed there years and years, there are spiders...when you are in the bath, the situation here is not alright, they need to extend and renovate a bit…
Curriculum Structure	Theory vs. practical	• ...time for theory should be more extensive than our practical time. The first semester we go to class about one month and two weeks and then the rest of the other weeks we are there in the wards, we need that time to be changed. • I think if they can maybe, if it is possible, lengthen the time of the theory and shorten the time of practical at the hospitals, because you find that, mostly at the hospitals again it's poor co-ordination.
	Teaching methods	• If they could give us other methods to cope with the study. • ...like when we have the tutor of community help us with the subject, like now, like some of the people who used to go to SI classes (supplementary classes), their marks have improved, some of them… going higher, if there are more of those classes like before, I think performance will be good.

MAIN CATEGORIES	THEMES	STATEMENTS
Student support	**Finances**	• If we start with the classes the students' money should be paid. • It is for them to stop lying to us (lying about money).
	Personal skills	• We struggle with coping, we need some coping skills and to be taught self-reliance.
	Study groups	• Study groups. We used to like, get more time to study and share our views on the subject that we were doing in class like when we don't understand something, maybe someone else might come with a bettermeaning of something that we are doing.
	Counselling	• It could be better if individual effort could be done with the counsellor. • I am not sure if I can trust the person that if I told her this and this and this that she won't go and talk to someone else about it. So, if maybe we could get someone, who does not have any interactions with both … the students and the lecturers.
	Mentoring	• Like when we have the tutor of community help us with the subject. • Like some of the people who used to go to SI classes, their marks have improved, some of them. Some are going higher. If there are more of those classes like before, I think performance will be good. • Maybe it was compulsory that, at a specific time, 9 o'clock until eleven o'clock whether we like it or not there's an SI class.
Professional growth	Focus and attitude	• I think we should go back to the first thing we are coming here as individuals, we are coming here because we want to be nurses. We have a passion for what we supposed to do, that should come first. There are some students that go studying at other institutions, they don't get the bursaries; they don't get the money. • I do agree with my colleague here, we shouldn't make money the major issue around an excuse so to say for poor performance. Also take into consideration the fact that in order for a student to focus on her/his education, and his education alone, we need to eliminate all other surrounding problems that may take away the focus from studying.

3.7 DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants made recommendations with regard to their sense of belonging, accommodation, the curriculum structure, student support, and professional growth. The researcher will describe the recommendations in the same sequence starting with the categories, followed by the themes, supported by the participants' statements. The theme of the category, sense of belonging, focused on orientation.

3.7.1 CATEGORY: SENSE OF BELONGING

The term sense of belonging entails the students' prejudiced insight of being acknowledged and respected in their particular school setting (Anderman, [n.d.]: Online).

3.7.1.1 Theme: Orientation

Bruce *et al*. (2011: 338) assert that nurses are from time to time in motion between the public and the private sector, disciplines and countries, or even a new occupation. This mobility has been brought about by the acceptance of the South African community into the global village, hence the influx from nursing and other health care professionals. Nurses fitting into these categories will require orientation in order to be effective in their new job environment and to cope with new job challenges. The earlier and quicker the preparation of new employees to enable them to perform their duties to optimal capacity in the new work setting, the lesser the expenditure to be incurred by the health care recipient or the community in need of this service.

Utilisation of up to date manuals, as well as two or three days in an orientation programme, will capacitate the students to execute their responsibilities with certainty, confidence, boldness, efficiency, and swiftly. The study above shows how important orientation of newly recruited nurses is to both nurses and the clients or patients that he/she will be working with.Unfortunately, it appears as ifthis important step is ignored at the college under study. Participants' requested to be given the***"****correct information at*

the beginning, the correct study material, the correct ways of going about studying and interaction between lecturers and the students". They also recommended that information be provided in a more structured way: *"If there is something you do not understand from the beginning by the time you get to the end you won't understand you will have forgotten, so things should be addressed from point to point to point".*

3.7.2 CATEGORY: ACCOMMODATION

A study conducted on the effects of living conditions on students' academic performance in schools states thus (January, 2012: Online):

The students' performance which is below the required standards on tests, written and clinical examinations is not conclusive evidence that they did not study hard or lacked focus in their work. Other external factors could be responsible for poor academic performance that is evidenced even among intelligent students. The different living conditions experienced by the students in nurses residences or nurses homes also impact either positively or negatively on their academic performance.

A participant that was appalled by the unhygienic conditions at the nurses' home recommended that extensions and renovations be done: *"We are staying in a pigsty. We are not worried that we are paying that R800 like as persals, even if you can go right now, our baths – we are staying in the pigsty. The hygiene is very poor, they contradict. We are taught hygiene here. The situation here is not alright, they need to extend and renovate a bit*".

The third category, curriculum structure, is discussed under two themes, namely, theory versus practice and teaching methods.

3.7.3 CATEGORY: CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

Meyer *et al.* (2010: 10) say that to put the teaching and learning plan in action, it needs to be decided how the course of action will proceed in a structured and consistent manner. Meyer *et al*. (2010: 10) further stipulate that the setting up and supervising of such a development will depend on successful curriculum design.

3.7.3.1 Theme: Theory versus practice

Research indicates that examinations, the degree as well as the intensive academic work overburden, the theory versus practice discrepancy, and deteriorated relationships amongst personnel in the clinical area were the prime causes of stress in the work situation (Evans and Kelly, 2004: 473). These authors are of the view that reaction to emotional stress yields feelings of exhaustion because of pressure in the workplace.

Evans and Kelly (2004: 473) advise practitioners and educationalists alike to scrutinise clinical practice and minimise situations that could subject students to stress in the clinical area as this impacts negatively on students' physical, physiological and psychological wellbeing. These researchers further highlight the importance of arming the students with the necessary skills to effectively cope with stress in the clinical area.

Again Evans and Kelly (2004: 474) made an effort to isolate unwarranted stress and in the end establish a curriculum structure that will greatly raise the educational encounter of student nurses to the optimum academically and clinically.

Two participants recommended the following:

> *"The time for theory should be more extensive than our practical time. The first semester we go to class about one month and two weeks and then the rest of the other weeks we are there in the wards, we need that time to be changed."*

“I think if they can maybe, if it is possible, lengthen the time of the theory and shorten the time of practical at the hospitals, because you find that, mostly at the hospitals again it's a poor co-ordination.“

3.7.3.2 Theme: Teaching method

Jacobs *et al*. (2012: 52) state that it rests entirely upon the shoulders of educators to select methods through which teaching could be conducted. Furthermore, Jacobs *et al*. (2012:52) emphasise that educators can freely utilise a variety of methods as they deem them appropriate, irrespective of whether these methods are recommended in the textbooks or they developed them themselves.The following study methods are recommended in Teaching Methods (2012: Online):group learning, guided discussion, and the demonstration-performance method.

Two participants requested that students should be introduced to other effective teaching and study methods that will help them to cope with their studies. These participants stated that supplementary instructional classes used to be very effective and that students used to pass well when these classes were offered: *“If they could give us other methods to cope with the study”, and “...like when we have the tutor of community help us with the subject, like now, like some of the people who used to go to supplementary classes (SI), their marks have improved some of them - going higher, if there are more of those classes like before, I think performance will be good”.*

3.7.4 CATEGORY: STUDENT SUPPORT

Student support covers a wide range of support services offered to nursing students, which include suitable or required academic assistance and guidance throughout the programme (Evans and Kelly, 2004: 480).

3.7.4.1 Theme: Finances

Studies conducted by Harvey (2011: Online) state that although there is no conclusive evidence suggestive of the fact that pumping extra financial resources as a form of student support into school coffers guarantee increased an Academic Performance Index, statistics released by the Centre of Investigative Reporting's California Watch reveal that reduction of school funding subject the schools districts to enormous strain. Kotzé *et al*. (2008: 158) reiterate the following regarding financial management at nursing colleges:

Quality auditors are expected to go through the financial audit reports as their role is not only to comment on bookkeeping, but also on the strong points and limitations of the financial management of an institution. To effectively keep track of the quality of the financial management of an institution it is vital to have a record of minutes were financial statements were dealt with. Also minutes of meetings held by the finance committee together with the minutes of meetings were budgetary issues and expenses are thrashed out. These measures will enable the team to scrutinise the reality of the financial management, which more often than not varies from the one perceived by students and other members of the staff who do not deal directly with finances.

Kotzé *et al*. (2008: 158) warn that the usual stumbling block in nursing colleges which are funded privately or by a college council is the reluctance on the part of the finance committee to use the money, whilst nursing the false hope that it will accrue interest which the school might utilise later on greater and better projects. Even though it is prudent to preserve funds for future times when they could be required the most, it is equally crucial to note that students' contribution to these funds at the college through the different fees that they pay, they feel entitled, and rightly so anticipate to benefit from these funds during their tenor as students at the college (Kotzé *et al*., 2008: 158). The students are not always in favour of the notion of preserving funds for future generation of students.

It is the view of Kotzé *et al*. (2008: 158) that college management should seriously consider inclusion of students' representatives on the finance committees in order to settle issues, misunderstandings and mistrust that emanate from perceived mismanagement of finances.

Participants who complained about bursary money that is being paid very late, and who appealed for honesty on the part of management, were adamant about these two issues: *"If we start with the classes the student's money should be paid", and "It is for them to stop lying to us (lying about money)".*

3.7.4.2 Theme: Personal skills

Evans and Kelly (2004: 480) recommend that every stakeholder concerned with the teaching of nursing students, together with clinicians, should be sufficiently equipped to effectively deal with students, and should be conscious of their own impact on students. The nursing curriculum should proactively capacitate student nurses with efficient and effective coping skills and mechanisms which they can retrieve and utilise in their future nursing careers.

Evans and Kelly (2004: 240) further reiterate that educators should put into operation teaching strategies that will empower and enhance the positive interpersonal and intrapersonal skills of the student nurses, as well as retaining of their personal identity and self-awareness skills. A recommendation made in the current study emphasises the importance of empowering students with coping skills that will enable them to perform well in their studies, and that will address their lack of self-reliance and poor coping skills: *"We struggle with coping,we need some coping skills and to be taught self-reliance".*

3.7.4.3 Theme: Study groups

Jacobs *et al*. (2012: 13) assert that small discussion groups and cooperative learning groups, if utilised accordingly ultimately assist learners to acquire social skills that empower them to perform effectively with others in a group, team and community. Jacobs *et al*. (2012: 13) further state that small discussion groups are valuable,although they are not the only route that could enhance effective learning. Clark and Starr (cited in Jacobs *et al*., 2012: 13) add that creativity in the student's problem-solving and decision-making process, together with application of critical thinking skills, could also be acquired by working through the entire class discussions supervised by the teacher.

The findings in the study by Clark *et al*. (cited in Jacobs *et al*., 2012: 13) corroborate statements by participants in the current study, namely that studying in a group is far more effective than working alone in the sense that through sharing ideas and views pertaining to the subject under discussion the student's horizons are broadened and a clearer picture is gained from listening to others: *"Study groups. We used to like, get more time to study and share our views on the subject that we were doing in class like when we don't understand something, maybe someone else might come with a better, meaning of something that we are doing".*

3.7.4.4 Theme: Counselling

The Centre for Academic Performance-Counselling Service stresses the importance and the maintenance of strict professional relationships by the counsellors when dealing with clients. Counsellors at this centre can only be the client's counsellor and not a friend or engage a client in any business relationships (Unit of Health Science Centre, 2012: Online). Whatever interaction of the counsellor with the client that involves records or data pertaining to client's identification, disease, treatment or reasons for the contact session or the visit at the counsellor's office is treated with the strictest confidentiality (Unit of Health Sciences Centre, 2012: Online).

Considering the above, and the statements by participants in the current study, it is evident that participants' recommendations are applicable. They pleaded for confidentiality, as well as for professional secrecy:

> *"It could be better if individual effort could be done with the counsellor."*

> *"I am not sure if I can trust the person that if I told her this and this and this that she won't go and talk to someone else about it. So, if maybe we could get someone who does not have any interactions with both the students and the lecturers."*

3.7.4.5 Theme: Mentoring

Kotzé *et al*. (2008: 206-207) stipulate that the word mentoring originates from the Greek concept mentor. In nursing literature, however, the word mentor is portrayed as an intelligent, knowledgeable, highly skilled and truthful advisor to an inspiring young professional in nursing. Ribera, BrckaLorenz and Ribera (2012: Online) assert that supplementary classes in academic support programmes are geared toward enhancing commitment and successful learning skills among students in high risk courses. There is little knowledge about how supplementary classes affect other patterns of effective studying, and what the student population does or does not have access to. However, it is known that there is a favourable relationship between supplementary instructional classes and achievement and retention (Ribera *et al*. 2012: Online).

Ning and Downing (2010: 923) say that the cognitive aspect of supplementary instruction concentrates on the improvement of creativity when dealing with problem solving and data processing strategies. Students construct knowledge by organising and processing data through linking it with their own understanding and apply it to the new setting. Lastly, the establishment of student study skills is a crucial component of supplementary instruction as the students can utilise the study skills acquired in supplementary instructions in other classes and in various future contexts (Ning and

Downing, 2010: 923). Supplementary instructional learning boosts students' boldness and confidence as learners and assists them to develop a dependable and self-regulative approach to data processing (Ning and Downing, 2010: 923).

Participants expressed their discontent with the cessation of the supplementary instructional (SI) classes, and were unanimous that these classes were very effective and necessary: *"Like when we have the tutor of community help us with the subject".* According to them, the test marks of students who used to participate in these classes improved remarkably. It was recommended that the supplementary classes re-commenced, but that the attendance be made compulsory:

> *"Like some of the people who used to go to SI classes, their marks have improved, some of them. Some are going higher. If there are more of those classes like before, I think performance will be good."*

> *"Maybe it was compulsory that, at a specific time, 9 o'clock until eleven o'clock whether we like it or not there's Supplementary Instruction classes."*

3.7.5 CATEGORY: PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Quinn and Hughes (2007: 435) in their study reported that continuing professional development has featured in numerous and various guises throughout the years comprising continuing education, staff development, professional development and lifelong learning. Irrespective of the terminology utilised, the intention is to ascertain that the wisdom and proficiency of educators is updated and continues to be relevant, both in as far as the subject as well as educational expertise are concerned.

3.7.5.1 Theme: Focus and attitude

Anderson (2004:74) found that students need to remain focused for them to succeed in the college access initiative programme. Anderson (2004: 74) further states that the correct attitude and motivation specifically are not only crucial in a college access initiative programme but also to enhance success in many spheres of life. Students are urged to always set their eyes on their future goals and stay focused and disciplined to accomplish their childhood cherished ambitions (Anderson, 2004: 74).

One participant was of the view that as students they need to put their priorities in order and know what they are at the college for. This participant recommended the following: *"I think we should go back to the first thing we are coming here as individuals, we are coming here because we want to be nurses. We have a passion for what we supposed to do, that should come first. There are some students that go studying at other institutions they don't get the bursaries; they don't get the money".*

However, another participant took a swipe at what the first participant said by stating that for them to be focused, problems that lead to disturbed focus such as the late payment of bursary fees should be dealt with first: *"I do agree with my colleague here, we shouldn't make money the major issue around an excuse so to say for poor performance. Also take into consideration the fact that in order for a student to focus on her or his education, and his education alone we need to eliminate all other surrounding problems that may take away the focus from studying".*

3.8 CONCLUSION

Tutors extracted sixteen (16) categories that could influence students' academic performance. These categories included commitment to theory and practicum; lifestyle; responsibilities; interpersonal relationships; substance abuse; financial support; physical issues; facilities; discipline; clinical issues; curriculum issues; teaching and learning; theory and practice issues; selection criteria; and professional development.

Students extracted twelve (12) categories, namely, a sense of belonging; learning material; access to computers; classrooms; library; accommodation; food and student support; curriculum structure; clinical experience; study skills and social life, as definite influences.

The conclusions and recommendations will be discussed in chapter four.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In chapter three, focus group interviews were analysed and integrated with literature control. In this chapter, the researcher will pay attention to the conclusion, the recommendations, as well as the limitations of the study

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

To determine that all the findings were taken into consideration, the researcher opted to utilise the same categories and sub-categories as in chapter three. The perceptions and recommendation of both categories of participants were taken into account to formulate the conclusion and to make the final recommendations to address the purpose of the study.

Tutors identified sixteen (16) factors that could influence students' academic performance. These factors include commitment to theory and practicum; lifestyle; responsibilities; interpersonal relationships; substance abuse; financial support; physical issues; facilities; discipline; clinical issues; curriculum issues; teaching and learning; theory and practice issues; selection criteria and professional development.

Students identified twelve (12) factors, namely, a sense of belonging; learning material; access to computers; classrooms; library; accommodation; food and student support; curriculum structure; clinical experience; study skills and social life, as definite influences.

A number of the factors were mentioned by both tutors and students but from different perspectives, for example, bursaries or finances. Tutors' concern was that students are not informed on how to manage their bursary monies, but agreed with students that bursaries were not available on time. With regard to curriculum issues, tutors were concerned about theory and practice integration due to lack of support and students' misconceptions about the scope of practice. Students complained about the lack of learning outcomes, teaching methods, scheduling of timetables and overload, as well as problems with clinical experiences. In the case of the students, it seemed that the quality of their accommodation on campus was unacceptable and that it was impossible for them to perform well in such an environment.

According to the researcher, the factors identified by both categories of participants could have an influence on the academic performance of students. Factors that were identified that, according to the researcher, could have a greater influence were finances in the form of abursary, the state or condition of the students' accommodation at the nurses home, timetable or scheduling, a curriculum that is congested, theory and practice imbalance, lack of supervision in the clinical area, and resources required by the tutors to enable them to perform their duties optimally.

The following recommendations made by the researcher are considered to be important in order to address the problems and to improve academic performance.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Tutors identified six (6) recommendations, namely, student selection, institutional resources, teaching and learning approaches, financial and social issues, motivation, and theory and practice integration. Students' recommendations included five (5) issues, namely, sense of belonging, accommodation, curriculum structure, student support, and professional growth.

The researcher recommends that the management of the nursing college should compile a strategic plan for the college, and that this plan be implemented and monitored throughout the academic year. The following issues should be addressed in the proposed strategic plan:

4.2.1 GUIDANCE DURING SELECTION

Career guidance should begin at school level. A specific strategy to inform schools about preferred subjects and staff responsible to drive this action should be put in place. The selection policy should take into consideration input by tutors, counsellors and psychologists to ensure the proper selection of candidates.

4.2.2 SELECTION CRITERIA

A policy on selection criteria should be formulated. The guidelines included in the policy should be aligned with criteria that are recommended countrywide.

Hughes (2002:18) insists on establishing the right policy for admission at medical schools as this will ensure that only suitable people with the necessary potential will be selected. Previous academic success, especially in science subjects, should be considered but this alone will not be sufficient. Other personality traits such as honesty, integrity, conscientiousness, passion for one's career, as well as willingness to assist and work as a team are also important. Medical schools are advised to invest in the selection process, even though this does not come cheaply, because through this they will be able to curb theunnecessary drop out of students, as well as the selection of poorly motivated and unhappy students.

This research supports the suggestions by the participants and Hughes (2002:18) on the quality of students who are admitted during the selection process.

4.2.3 COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Although a D symbol in English is required prior to selection for the programme, students still struggle to express themselves effectively thus management should consider the introduction of short English courses for the students, especially the Enrolled Nursing Assistants (ENAs) because most of them do not have matric, but qualified for selection because of recognition of prior learning.

The researcher recommends that the different programmes available for the development of language and study skills be investigated. A suitable programme should be implemented and evaluated after one year. The operational budget of the college should include funds for such a service. Staff responsible for this action should be identified and their names stipulated in the proposed strategic plan for the college.

4.2.4 BURSARY AMOUNT DISTRIBUTION

The complaints of tutors, and especially students, regarding the distribution of bursaries should be given priority. The following should receive priority:

- Stringent control over payment of bursaries.
- Payment of class fees, books and accommodation before dissemination of bursaries.
- Formalising an agreement with the Department of Health (DoH) with regard to a suitable amount for a bursary and frequency of payments (considering, for example, the cost of books and transport).

In an effort to assist students to be money wise, courses on financial management could be offered. Experts from financial institutions could be invited to conduct financial workshops for the students as this will also be an empowerment process that enhances financial freedom.

4.2.5 UTILISATION OF COUNSELLING

A policy or guideline that addresses disclosure of information, especially with regard to student issues, should be formulated, distributed and applied by management.

Information leaflets on counselling services should be made available to students, or posters should be posted in several areas, for example, at the college, at the student accommodation, or in the clinical areas.

4.2.6 MANAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT

The proposed strategic plan for the college should include actions to address tutors' concerns about management's involvement. Actions formulated should address visibility and transparency.

4.2.7 LIVING CONDITIONS AND ACCOMMODATION

The nurses' home of the college under study is not college property, but that of the regional hospital. The hospital management should be informed about the findings of the research on factors that influence students' academic performance. A task team from both institutions should address issues such as the maintenance of the building, environmental hygiene, discipline, and safety and security. A deadline for this action to be implemented should be stated, and the matter should be seen as very urgent.

4.2.8 RESOURCE AVAILABILITY

The Free State Department of Health should, through a motivation by the college executive management, be asked to allocate more funds for the institution's coffers to facilitate provision of infrastructure such as classrooms, modern equipped libraries, textbooks, computers and the recruitment of suitably qualified tutors who will be sufficient for the college and to follow up and supervise students in the clinical area. The

teacher-student ratio should also be addressed as it has been noted that large classes are not conducive to a proper learning environment.

4.2.9 TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES

The reinstatement of supplementary instruction (SI) classes should be investigated on request of students who participated in the study.

A variety of methods other than lecturing should be used. Therefore applicable training, for example, workshops, should be scheduled and budgeted for. It should be a requirement that all tutors be exposed to and become familiar with new teaching and learning approaches. Performance appraisals of tutors should include quality of teaching as performance criteria.

Students should be given the task and responsibility of acquiring information themselves, rather than being passive absorbers of knowledge as this leads to route learning. Active involvement of students in knowledge search enhances their computer skills and this improves active knowledge construction which students can remember for longer periods of time as opposed to passive knowledge recording, which is forgotten shortly after tests and examinations.

Group discussions, simulation and demonstration are other methods that could be used as they have proved to be effective in yielding good academic outcomes. Seminars and conferences are effective and students feel a sense of responsibility and co-ownership of the work, as well as the outcome.

4.2.10 ORIENTATION

The school should have a good orientation programme that spells out explicitly what is expected of a student as this will not only help the school, but also the student, especially when making a decision of whether he would like to study there or not.

The importance of time should be emphasised to both the students, tutors and staff members in general. Proper planning and time management for both tutors and students should be stressed as it has proven to yield the desired results. The workload at the college triples from high school; therefore time management should be the order of the day.

Strategies to involve both the tutors and the student counsellor to act in concert in their effort to empower students with study skills should be decided upon, implemented and monitored.

4.2.11 STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Tutors should be willing to receive feedback from students about their teaching style. They should encourage students to feel free to comment about how they present the lecture or lesson as this will produce a mirror imaging or a reflective interaction through which the tutor will learn and readjust or modify his/her approach to the course or content to the mutual benefit of the student, tutor and the institution.

4.2.12 FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

The college should invite financial experts and economists from recognised financial institutions such as Old Mutual, Capitec and other institutions to teach the students how to deal with financial matters. Social workers could also be invited and arrangements made for them to hold sessions or workshops with students. These agents could also be provided with space at the college or on the hospital premises where they can interact

with students on a one-on-one basis. Their contact numbers should also be available if a student needs to see them in private.

4.2.13 MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

Motivational speakers of note should be invited to give pep talks to the students. The ceremony that is held annually at the nursing college to honour top achieving students should be revisited and measures put in place that ensure that it is more inclusive, open and more transparent than it is now. Monetary rewards could also be considered as students today understand money talk much better than their predecessors. This could be accomplished by asking for a sponsorship from financial institutions through the college top management if they buy into this idea. Rewards such as floating trophies, certificates and recognition of some sort as a token of appreciation should also be considered.

4.2.14 CLINICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

The college management could approach the Free State Department of Health and request them to come on board and assist the college with the provision of preceptors who could render the necessary support which the students require in the clinical area. Collaboration between college management and the Health Department will be crucial as this move will not only benefit the college but the department, the province and the country in the long run.

Strategies on a sustainable way to accompany students in the clinical areas should be formulated. Sufficient clinical tutors and preceptors should be available (ratio 1:15-20) according to SANC requirements to facilitate theory-practice integration. These strategies should include actions regarding the preparation or training of preceptors, and extensive collaboration with DoH to support clinical training.

4.2.15 MENTORSHIP

Mentorship should be revisited in the sense that senior students who happen to have mastered certain courses should be utilised to assist new students who struggle with these courses as this has proved to have been effective in the past, though for unknown reasons it has been stopped. Junior students understand better when assured by senior students that grappling with the content is normal at the beginning, but with perseverance matters turn out favourably. The relationship with mentors could be less formal and friendlier, as compared to that of the student and the tutor.

4.2.16 LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The clinical tutors should combine the outcomes stated for all levels, namely, first, second, third and fourth year students in a guideline for clinical practicum. Proof that clinical outcomes were made available to clinical areas should be filed. In this way, all involved will know exactly what is expected at each level of training and be better positioned to effectively co-ordinate students' training needs.

4.3 SUMMARY

The researcher is of the opinion that the most important factors that influence students' academic performance were addressed, and that the implementation of recommendations should make a difference with regard to academic performance and student throughput at the college.

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ANNEXURE A

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: FREE STATE HEALTH

A

health
Department of
Health
FREE STATE PROVINCE

17 June 2011

Mr MG Jafta
Free State School of Nursing
Northern Campus
THABO MOFUTSANYANA

Dear Mr Jafta

Subject: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A STUDY AT FREE STATE SCHOOL OF NURSING NORTHERN CAMPUS

The above mentioned correspondence bears reference.

Permission is hereby granted for the above – mentioned research on the following conditions:

- Written and informed consent to be obtained from the subjects.
- The subjects should be protected from all forms of harm.
- Study should not interfere with service delivery.
- The results of the study should be communicated to Head: Health in writing.

Trust you find the above in order.

Kind Regards,

Dr S Kabane
HEAD: HEALTH
Date: 24/06/2011

Head : Health
PO Box 227, Bloemfotein, 9300
4th Floor, Executive Suite, Bophelo House, cnr Maitland and, Harvey Road, Bloemfotein
Tel: (051) 408 1107/8 Fax: (051) 408 1055, e-mail: hodpa&fshealth.gov.za@fshealth.gov.za

www.fs.gov.za

ANNEXURE B

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

DEAN: SCHOOL OF NURSING

health
Department of Health
FREE STATE PROVINCE

INTERNAL MEMO

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT FSSON NORTHERN CAMPUS			
DATE:	23/08/2010	FILE NO:	
TO:	Mr WM Fikizolo Executive Manager	FROM:	Mr M G JAFTA

1 **PURPOSE**,
To obtain approval from the Executive Manager to conduct reseach study at EFSSON Northern campus making use of tutors and student nurses at the college.
1.1Background
Nursing forms the backbone of every health care system and for the country to have competent and committed nurses nursing education should be up to standard. Research need to be conducted to investigate factors that lead to poor academic performance at our institutions.

2. **MOTIVATION**
Over the past year first year students academic performance at EFSSON Northern cumpas seemed to be poor. An analysis of the tsets and examination results of the students revealed 101/213 (49%) failed their tests and 121/204 (59) failed their examinations. Academic performance is defined as the number of students completing versus the total nunber of students enrolled. Considering the above definition it becomes clear that something need to be done to remedy this situation. The FSSON Northen campus, participants, the student nurses and the tutors at the college will benefit greatly from this study. If recommendations are implemented this could lead in the improvement of the academic performance of the students. Though the study is qualitative in nature and the findings cannot be generalised, other nursing colleges in other parts of the province and the country may implement the same recommendations if confronted with poor academic performance

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**
The will be no financial implication on the part of the department as I, reseacher will be responsible for all payments required for my studies.

4 **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

No personnel or students will be disadvantaged by this as examinations, tests and markings will be completed at this stage.Participants will be notified on time so that they will make the necessary arrangements not to temper with their duties

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS
None

5 **COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS**
The Rector as well as the campus Dean at which the study will be conducted has been consulted

6. **AUTHORITY OF APPROVAL**
Authority to approve is vested in the Executive Manager.

7. **RECOMMENDATION**

Submitted by: **Mr M G Jafta** **Lecturer** **Date: 10/06/2011**	**Supported / Not Supported** **Me NP Msayi** **Dean: FSSON: North** **Date: ----------**
Recommended / Not Recommended **Mr MB Mochwaro** **Senior Manager: FSSON** **Date : ----------**	**Recommended / Not Recommended** **Ms M Mabitle** **General Manager: HR** **Date: ----------**
Approved / Not Approved **Mr MW Fikizolo** **Executive Manager: RMSS** **Date: ----------**	

ANNEXURE C

ETHICS NUMBER: ECUFS 71/2011

UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA

Direkteur: Fakulteitsadministrasie / Director: Faculty Administration
Fakulteit Gesondheidswetenskappe / Faculty of Health Sciences

Research Division
Internal Post Box G40
☎(051) 4052812
Fax (051) 4444359

E-mail address: StraussHS@ufs.ac.za

Ms H Strauss

2011-07-27

REC Reference nr 230408-011
IRB nr 00006352

MR MG JAFTA
P O BOX 1136
WELKOM
9460

Dear Mr Jafta

ECUFS NR 71/2011
PROJECT TITLE: TUTORS AND STUDENT NURSES PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT A NURSING COLLEGE.

- You are hereby kindly informed that the Ethics Committee approved the above study at the meeting held on 26 July 2011 after the following was received:
  - ***Permission letter obtained from the Department of Health Free State.***
- Committee guidance documents: Declaration of Helsinki, ICH, GCP and MRC Guidelines on Bio Medical Research. Clinical Trial Guidelines 2000 Department of Health RSA; Ethics in Health Research: Principles Structure and Processes Department of Health RSA 2004; Guidelines for Good Practice in the Conduct of Clinical Trials with Human Participants in South Africa, Second Edition (2006); the Constitution of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Guidelines of the SA Medicines Control Council as well as Laws and Regulations with regard to the Control of Medicines.

  Any amendment, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.
- The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.
- A progress report should be submitted within one year of approval of long term studies and a final report at completion of both short term and long term studies.
- Kindly refer to the ECUFS reference number in correspondence to the Ethics Committee secretariat.

Yours faithfully

.....
CHAIR: ETHICS COMMITTEE

Cc Prof A Joubert

ANNEXURE D

LETTER OF CONSENT: PARTICIPANTS

Dear Participant

Re: PERMISSION TO INCLUDE TUTORS AND STUDENT NURSES ON FIRST YEAR LEVEL FOR THE DIPLOMA IN NURSING SCIENCE (GENERAL, PSYCHIATRY AND COMMUNITY NURSING) AND MIDWIFERY IN A RESEARCH PROJECT REGARDING TUTORS AND STUDENT NURSES PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT A NURSING COLLEGE

Hereby, I George Jafta requests your permission to include you in a research project regarding tutors and student nurses perceptions of factors that influence academic performance at a nursing college at Free State School of Nursing Northern Campus. A qualitative study using focus group interview will be conducted. The information obtained during the investigation will be used to formulate strategies to improve academic performance of students at the college. The college as well as the students stands to benefit greatly from the study.

Please note that your participation is voluntary. And if you agree to participate, you will still have the right to withdraw from the study immediately with no negative consequences for yourself. Personal information will be kept confidential. Focus group interview will be conducted for two hours and two questions will be asked. One hour will be spent on each question to ensure that enough data is collected.

The following information is important:

- Results will be published
- There will be no costs payable by the participant
- Participants will not be remunerated.

The research will be done as soon as permission is obtained from the Faculty of Health Science's Ethics committee. Permission will also be obtained from the Dean: Free State School of Nursing Northern Campus.

Your participation will be appreciated. If you have any inquiries you can contact the researcher at 057 3966241 or 0794989374

Yours truly,

_____

GEORGE JAFTA
Researcher

FREE STATE SCHOOL OF NURSING NORTHERN CAMPUS

TUTORS AND STUDENT NURSES PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT A NURSING COLLEGE

I, Valentine Majoli Pelesa Moraule hereby agree to participate in a research study on the FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE at the Free State School of Nursing Northern Campus. I understand that my participation is voluntary, that my personal information will be kept confidential and that I can withdraw whenever I want to without negative consequences.

MORAULE V.M.P
PARTICIPANT
SURNAME AND INITIALS

SIGNATURE

10/08/11
DATE

.....
GEORGE JAFTA
RESEARCHER

.....
DATE

DATES:

ANNEXURE E

EXAMPLE OF FOCUS GROUP 1: TUTORS

Facilitator started by greeting and welcoming every participant and asked them whether they understand the purpose of the gathering, reminded them that their participation is voluntary and that any of them may withdraw without any fear.

Facilitator

What are the factors that influence academic performance of students at the nursing college? Anyone who would like to answer first? Or maybe give you some time to think on this

Are we ready to go-Ok

Facilitator

Yes fine

Participant

NB Starts here

Facilitator

Participant 7 NB FGI STARTS HERE

I think, especially the young ones, they most of the times they are are not focussed they are always in a hurry, and they are bored with the olden ways of teaching or lecturing.

Facilitator

When you talk about young ones, do you specifically talk about the young in years or first years or so?

Participant 7

First years and they are young in years

Facilitator

Yes and you said they are bored by the old ways of ofof teaching, Ok

Participant 5

(Cough) I also think, Uhhmm the their personal problems are times, many a times one is absent from class because she is the mother, she is the father, she is everything in the home and social problems do occur and you knows he is the wife and they affect her negatively, They must go to court, there is a divorce and there is this, there is that.

Facilitator

Oohh so personal problems ahhm , Ok mmm ahh make sure that I may get all of you Aamm Ok MR Nala

Participant 3

I think also AAHH what makes them not to perform very well is the lack of commitment with their work and also prioritize their work because as you are here you have to do one thing at a time you can't make a baby or anything else out because this is your co-business there is lack of commitment with their work because they are not committed to perform well

Participant 10

I think the problem is with our present students if they are not having the money they have to come to school with empty stomachs so that influence how they learn, you cannot learn if you are hungry so it goes with aahh family background if there is no one at home who is supporting them then it becomes difficult if they have to come to school and learn

Facilitator

So are you saying that there are some students who don’t have the bursary?

Participant 10

They do have bursary but they are, they don't know how to use it they misuse it

Facilitator

Ok aahh so, aahh so, I just want to clarify here do you think they don't budget well mghhhmghh (coughing) or do they have to give the money to the family or not.

Participant 10

It's both, most of them they don't know how to budget well, when the money comes they spent it recklessly, and then others, at home they are depended on their bursary moneys so it dry out quickly

Participant 5

To add on the point, sometimes, administratively, there is a problem, that they don't get the bursary on time, and they are three four months without anything (pause) obviously starving

Facilitator

Ja

Participant 4

Still on the issue of bursary I think to according to my observation, most of the students that we get nowadays, are just here for the bursary. They do not have the dedication to work hard, or to achieve education at the end of the day. Because you find that others are already registered with other campuses doing other courses whereas here in they just come to get the money and pay their fees somewhere else, so in that order they are not going to perform well this side because they don't have something they want to achieve this side.

Participant 4

Adding on that the other thing they are here thinking that nursing is just a light course, they don't realise it is a true course, four year programme, they think it is a first aid like thing

Participant 11

Another thing is that they compartmentalise the subjects, they are unable to understand that each subject built on another so if they are doing BNS for instance they just think its done then they pass and then when they come to the other level they have to use the previous information, but they cannot.

Facilitator

Yes

Participant 2

The other reason is that I think the rate of failure, I think even the subject choice because our criteria on how to select the students it is just 24 points that you take irrespective of the subject, it just mentioned that biology and physical science its a recommendation but when the student apply they apply with accounting and other subjects you find that those students don't have the background of eh biology and whatever most of them struggled especially with the bionatural nursing sciences they struggle and makes a high failure rate especially in the first year and second year because that's the basic where it is being taught.

Participant 11

Ya to add on the, on the subjects the other thing is, lack of interest in another subject and even the very thing they say we want these subjects, but when they come in the other subjects that they should do for instance midwifery so you find that they really lack interest and therefore they can't manage, they don't pass

Facilitator

AahmIs there anything else?

Participant 8

Others I think due to illness can't perform well

Participant 3

Also the, the type of student that we get also Aahh, for example some of them maybe they have dropped out from the university and they think nursing is one which they just get in because they are going to get a bursary the material we get is not van die best

which means that we still have to look into the selection criteria otherwise it will be a little bit difficult to get a quality because you can have those flying colours with matric but one may never know whether you have spotted or not because the certificate must match with your output but sometime what we find is it is upside down is not a reality so the quality of the student also I think it influence it.

Facilitator

This lady

Participant 1

I was going to talk about the about the issue of ahh the, the selection criteria, the type of the student that we get, aahh, I think we are having a problem by looking at the, the M score only not looking at does the person does to do nursing, does the person has the passion in the, in the course, that's where the problem lie because just for an example you find the third year when you ask the, the, the learners where do you want to see yourself in the next three years you would be expecting the person to say I want to see myself as a qualified professional nurse you know, in charge of a unit but you will see that the student say I want to see myself as a Hip hop producer at a third year level ? So it means that you are, you you are mentoring, you are supporting a person who is going to be a Hip hop producer or somebody who is going to be a farmer at third year level. So we we don't have, We don't get people who are really want to do the profession.

Participant 12

Just to add on what Judy said concerning ill health, during the selection ahh process we there's the task that we overlook, for example when they come for interview, they go to a panel, and then they aa but they are, we don't consider their health ah ah of the interviewee now you find that some student they come being pregnant, she is the first thing she comes highly pregnant she was accepted then according to me this is what is

going to affect that like we talk about the age thing to me I think that is what is going to impede the progress because now it is the first time she is pregnant like we talk about the age, the first time being pregnant, the first time being exposed to a- -a tertiary a- -a education- - - -and others when look them in class because we have that skills you will find that a student has a condition that is obvious and then find that sometimes sometimes he don't even come to tell you until you call student and then the progress in their study another thing that is going to connect a- -a a to the condition that they are suffering from

ANNEXURE F

EXAMPLE OF FOCUS GROUP 1: STUDENTS

Facilitator

What do you think are the factors that influence the academic performance of the nursing students?

Participant 6

Uhm miss the thethe first thing ne, on arrival ne, kehoreits about anxiety ne, akere (isn't) when you arrive ne, you don't know people you don't know students akere(isn't) and then I mean the way we are given ntho (this thing) then ee the rooms and welcomed, we are ntho, and the way we are ntho, you are ntho, panicking ne, endane ne, the second years nthontho students or those who have been here akere they told us that kehore, about the situation that you must not ee fail those, ntho, tests but and then, they threatened us that if you have failed your test and you wanted to to know your script or you wanted to make any query for example if I am not satisfied maybe, I when (cough) evaluate my ntho, my script after being given my script ne. Maybe I went to Mrjafta ne, they told us that ahm, they took us management hore they will, they will hate us, hore they will gossip us, amongst them, this is student he is so an so kehore she is political kehorewa bona o full of eeee complains endane ne akere they will after that treat you bad for the rest for the until until they will mark you see and then kore we were abating to terms endan it psychological it has affected us because when we returning to the ntho for an example the like the tests the most thing that has contributed for us to having e ntho a blackout its like even the hand was panicking when you writing that ahm the test, we were even afraid of that the particular person of that subject at the same time we afraid and panicking hore if and one I'm afraid of you physically and afraid at I fail this subject wa e bona nthoeo(do you see that) that they, it was all about that and one again maybe what has happened hore the particular tutor didn't think, realise or learn kehore not the kehore, maybe hore we ahm, many of us have understood him, how many of us who didn't understood because the students were being filled with information they and one the copied the first ntho test, if the others have copied the first test and have received the results like 80% you won't see those who are the slow learners who have

get ntho the ntho received the thentho bad ntho results cause the others have been provided with information and one they have copied like they were like to questions e.g. like e the e mhmmmkehore, the the penalties from the nursing council-akere they know here it will be weekend and ten, ten ten marks so there was he was a person who have given them the, it was that particular lady went want to to the the tutor's rooms and one he he while they were tutors were setting their exam they copied that

Facilitator

Ok, so ahhmm I understand that you saying ah the first thing you say, is uhmm, the uhmm lack of orientation when you arrive and then there what the senior students tell you that make you scared

Participant 6

Yes ah

Facilitator

Ok, anyone else, yes

Participant 3

Uhm one of the factors is time management, is when our classes are commencing maybe some other classes will be too early in the morning (noise of page turning) it is cold in winter the morning so some classes commence early in the morning its cold, the environment where I study, were the classes are either very cold at times so we can't just come here.

Facilitator

Ok, so when you talk about time management uhmm, I just want to get this clear in my head, you are clear at what time you got to be were, but the problem is that the the time and the schedule is somewhat a problem its either they are too early and too late. Uhmm and the second thing you mentioned is the that the venue not conducive for studying and, uhh you specifically mentioned it's cold ok.

Participant 1

Uh mm the other thing that I feel contribute negatively towards the results is we uhm in in we we do four subjects and now it's five with nutrition. Out of those four subjects two are majors and in these two subjects we have prescribed books uhm some of the work that, that, that, uhm our tests and exams are based on, are on are on textbooks we do not have, when we get here, we are given forms to fill out and we are told which books to order but not all this books uhm, are ordered for us, so it becomes a problem later on that we have, a test is set on books we do not have, based on information we do not have, so that also contributes and the other thing our work is compressed we too much too much work within little time you get two weeks to study, you get two weeks two subjects to study and at the work of those two weeks you expected to write two tests and its always four or more units, it's always in in four units or three units, too much work too little time.

Facilitator

Uhmm, yes I promise I will give you all a chance

Participant 4

The other thing is at the uhh at the nurses home uh at the nurses quarters, lack of rest others the the third or fourth years when we are writing they are not writing so they will do parties so they will do all things so they will disturb us on radio that is the main problem

Facilitator

Uhm, ok

Participant 10

Ok I was about to talk about what about what you just mentioned now, preparation some way some how its kind a like us the way things are compressed it's kinda like uh we end up cramming everything and then get a mental block and that has an affect on us, cause (cough) another we study two days before the test, we relaxed two days before

Facilitator

Any other?

Participant 9

I think the way that we, the way that we stay, cause when you are first year you got to share a room. So you got to adapt to another person's way of doing things, you put that person into consideration. And now at the same time you have to concentrate on your studies. As we are human beings there are going to be differences and those differences are in environment where we have to study after class. If it's not comfortable or you not comfortable it lead to conflict. You end up not doing what you suppose to do, you end up not studying the way you suppose to. So we actually forced to study abilities, cause you

are able to study in a certain way and the next person studies in a certain way and then there is a conflict with each other.

Facilitator

Uhm yet for clarification may you swap, roommates or not?