



**EXPERIENCES IN A TUTORING PROGRAMME FOR BEd FOUNDATION PHASE
ISIXHOSA FIRST LANGUAGE STUDENTS**

by

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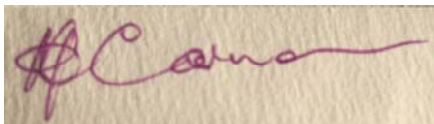
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DECLARATION

I, Anneline Jacqueline Carnow, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.



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ABSTRACT

Students from disadvantaged communities in South Africa enter higher education under extreme pressure due to under-preparedness when transitioning to university. While universities have succeeded in increasing the enrolment of students from the population groups that were excluded during the Apartheid dispensation, they are still struggling with throughput rates after more than two decades into the country's new democratic dispensation. Universities' challenges to meet throughput rates are partly ascribed to the barriers which students from educationally disadvantaged communities experience. Universities with English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) comprise one of the barriers which students, whose home language is not English, must overcome.

A University of Technology in Cape Town in the Western Cape Province of South Africa initiated a tutoring programme in the home language of isiXhosa students who enrolled for a BEd Foundation Phase qualification in its Education Faculty. Support was offered to students who failed one or more subjects in their first year of study, as well as new recruits who anticipated that they might be at risk of failing. Those who failed the subjects in the previous year stated the reasons for failure as not understanding the concepts and terms of the subjects presented to them in English.

This study attempts to investigate the experiences of the tutees and tutors, as well as other role players for the duration of the tutoring programme. The research question was formulated as: *"What are the experiences of role players in a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa home language students?"* Within a qualitative case study, the researcher uses semi-structured interviews and reflective journals to understand how the role players experience the tutoring programme. This study is framed within a Social Constructivist theory; while an interpretative paradigm is employed to analyse the data. The findings suggest that tutoring in their home language grants isiXhosa students access to the curriculum, for which they would otherwise have struggled to have access to. The findings explore the possibility of tutoring in the home language becoming a mandatory practice for students whose home language is not the LOLT of the institution.

Keywords: Tutoring, Tutors, Tutees, higher education, Language of Learning and Teaching, Under-preparedness.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the learners, past and present, who attended Lavender Hill High School during my tenure as an educator at the school. I thank them for contributing to my development by teaching me virtues such as patience, humility, steadfastness and unconditional love. I remain faithful to the cause of education because of my interaction with them.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In South Africa, the majority of students who enter higher education institutions are academically under-prepared due to historical inequalities: socio-economic circumstances and/or under-resourced high schools in disadvantaged communities (Council on Higher Education, 2013:15). Enlightened policy initiatives after 1994 have increased enrolment of students from previously excluded population groups: Black student enrolment increased from 40% in 1993 to 63% in 2007. Under-preparedness of students has been identified as a key issue for universities across the country which are not meeting their throughput rates (Wilson-Strydom, 2011). In 2002 only 30% of the national cohort of first-time students entering students had graduated within five years, while 14% were still registered and 56% had dropped out or were no longer in the system (Wilson-Strydom, 2011).

Research shows that black students, in particular those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, are still mostly affected by poor graduation and throughput rates (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). According to Paideya and Bengesai (2017) students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds form the largest part of high attrition rates as opposed to their counterparts from more advantaged contexts who have a high pass rate. Wilson-Strydom (2011) reports that white students are twice as likely to graduate as black students within a five year period.

The Council on Higher Education (2013) has identified under preparedness; especially of first-year and/or first generation students as a key obstacle in the transitioning to higher education. Under-preparedness manifests itself in many ways which include difficulty to complete the formal curriculum and adjust to independent study, and a university environment which is foreign to them. Under-preparedness, however, does not equate with lack of ability (Council on Higher Education, 2013). The transition to university is a critical time of establishing sound patterns of study and academic engagement which has historically been marked by poor academic support (Pearson & Naug, 2013).

Under-preparedness is a significant contributing factor to student failure, which is, in part, the result of a historically unequal schooling system (Council on Higher Education, 2013). Higher education should not have to compensate for poor schooling; it has to offer well thought through responses to improve completion rates (Council on Higher Education, 2013).

Globally, higher education institutions are increasingly required to focus intentionally and systematically on interventions and programmes which will increase throughput and graduation rates (Arco-Tirado, Fernández-Martin & Fernández-Balboa, 2011). In South Africa, universities have to design intervention strategies to improve the success rates of students against a backdrop of an inadequate school system, and diverse language and life experiences (Strydom & Mentz, 2010).

In a response to the call for increased success and throughput rate, the Education Faculty at the University of Technology in the Western Cape Province, South Africa, initiated a tutoring programme in home language for BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa first-language students who either failed, or were at risk of failing, identified subjects. The expectation was that the support would increase the students' chances of success.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

At the University of Technology in this study there was, and still is, a growing concern around the national shortage of teachers who are able to teach in the Foundation Phase through the medium of the official African languages. In 2012, many of the African language speaking students who were in their first year of study for the BEd Foundation Phase programme failed one or more subjects, and as a result, had to repeat these subjects. Some of the reasons cited for their failure were that they often did not understand instructions, terminology and test questions in English, which is the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) at the institution.

Analysis of first-year 2012 examination results and informal interviews with students conducted by lecturers of the institution identified three subjects as problem areas. These subjects were Language in Education, Mathematics in Education and Computer Literacy. Specific challenges in Computer Literacy included students' lack of exposure to computers, the fast pace of the work and lack of terminology. In both Mathematics in Education and Language in Education, students lacked basic understanding of the terminology required.

In line with the Council of Higher Education mandate to offer support which can improve completion rates, the University of Technology embarked on a tutoring programme for a period of one year. Students, or tutees, were to receive tutoring through the medium of isiXhosa, the mother tongue of the tutees. In addition to the students who failed the subjects the previous year, new recruits who feared failing their subjects signed up for the tutoring programme. IsiXhosa students who were at least one academic year level higher than the tutees in the respective subjects were employed as tutors. The expectation was that, with the

correct support, tutees would have an improved understanding of the course material and improved chances of success.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE

This study investigates the experiences of the tutors, tutees, programme manager, trainer of the tutors and lecturers who were involved in the implementation of the tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa first-language students at the University of Technology. Considerable research has been conducted into tutoring in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) of education institutions, as is reflected in the Literature Review (see Chapter 2) of this study. The focus of this study falls upon tutoring offered in the first language of the students; which is not the LOLT of the University. The aim of the research is to explore the dynamics at play when students are offered tutoring in their first language and when that first language differs from the LOLT used in the lecture rooms of the institution. Examining the experiences of the role players could provide valuable insights into how tutoring in the home language may affect students.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

This study poses the question: "What are the experiences of the role players in a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa first language students?"

1.5 DELINEATION OF THE RESEARCH

The focus of this study is to examine the experiences of the role players in the tutoring programme for B-Ed Foundation Phase isiXhosa first language students. The tutoring happened in the home language of the tutees. While some aspects of the study may point to issues pertaining to language and implementation effectiveness, it must be clarified that the primary objective of the study is not to focus on the linguistics but on pedagogics. A linguistic focus would involve analysis of the viability of teaching a subject such as Mathematics or Science in isiXhosa at tertiary level. This study focuses on the pedagogic advantages of isiXhosa instruction by gauging the experiences of tutors and tutees in an isiXhosa tutoring programme.

1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS STRUCTURE

Chapter 1 introduces the study by setting the context for the basis of the research. It provides a background to the research, states the research problem and research goal, as well as providing a brief overview of the structure of the study as a whole.

Chapter 2 provides details of the literature that was examined around the emerging themes as the study progressed. Several topics which showed relevance to the discussion of the phenomenon under review were examined and the main ideas identified.

Chapter 3 describes the philosophical assumptions and research strategy which the researcher used to guide the study; followed by a discussion of the methods applied for the collection and analysis of the data. A discussion of trustworthiness and ethical issues ends this chapter.

In Chapter 4 the researcher presents and analyses the data that were collected. The chapter includes a discussion of a step-by-step process which was followed to analyse the data and the subsequent themes that emerged from the analysis of data.

Chapter 5 entails a discussion of the researchers' interpretation of the identified themes, as well as a presentation of preliminary findings that were formulated.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the thesis. It provides a summary of the findings and recommendations for future practice and includes ideas on the research in relation to interpretivism and social constructivism as the chosen paradigm framework and research theory deployed in the study. The limitations and researchers' reflective remarks conclude the thesis.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study and background in the context of higher education in South Africa. The research problem, the research objectives and their significance, as well as the research question were presented. In conclusion to the chapter, an overview of the thesis as a whole is provided. In Chapter 2 the literature relevant to tutoring in this specific context is identified, listed and described.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigates a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first language student”. The topics included in this literature review are germane to the issues surrounding the subject of tutoring, and the opinions and experiences of the participants in the tutoring programme. Below is a visual presentation of the research topic and the chosen related topics. The presentation offers the reader an overview of the inter-relatedness of the various topics as they intersect with each other, and the research topic. The presentation shows how, an initial review on the topic of tutoring, evolved into a review of issues surrounding language, challenges, metacognition and support in higher education. The visual presentation is followed by a discussion of the literature topics:

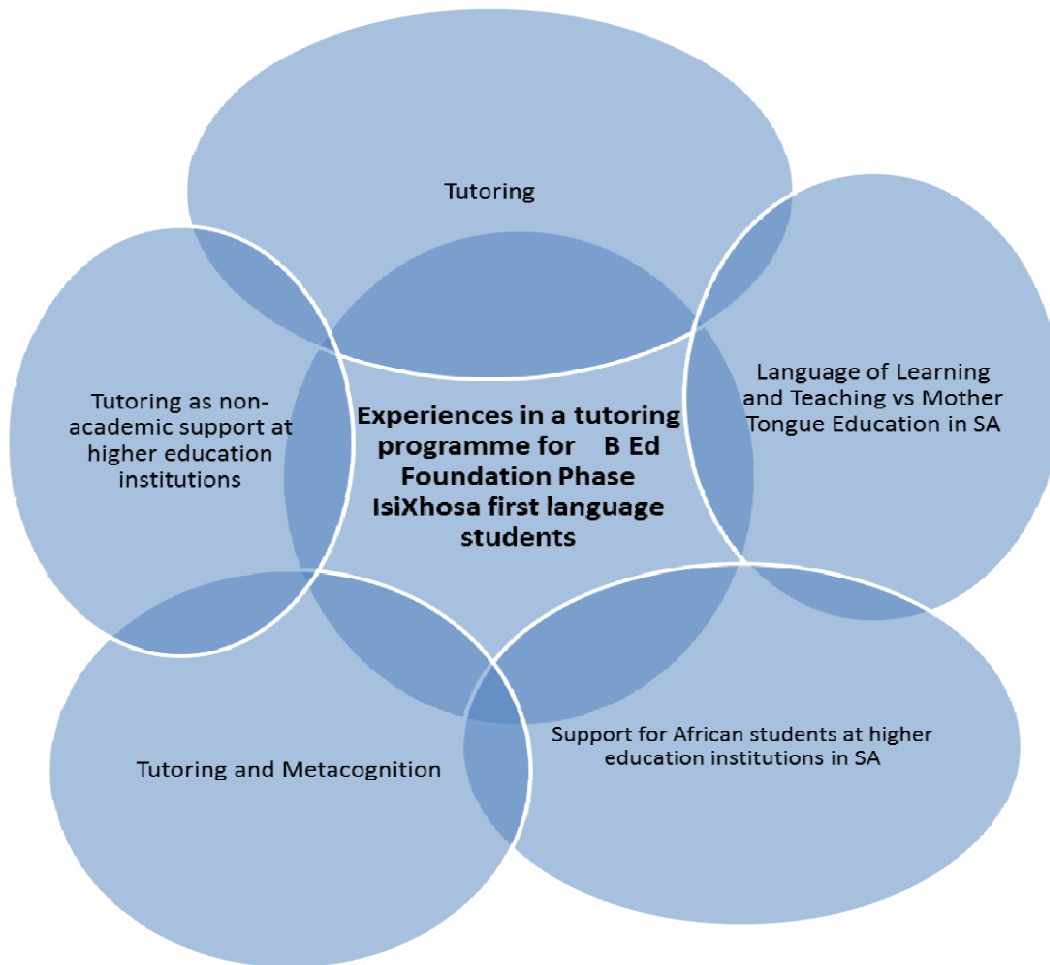


Figure 2.1: Overview of inter-relatedness between research topic and related topics

2.2 TUTORING

The tutoring programme under examination investigates the experiences of BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa first-language students at a University of Technology in Cape Town, South Africa. The role players in the study include the tutees, those students receiving the tutoring to improve their academic performance, the tutors, those students offering the tutoring as support to the tutees, the lecturers of the subject for which the tutees are receiving support, the trainer who trained the tutors and the faculty member assigned to coordinate the tutoring programme itself. In this section various aspects of tutoring are highlighted as an intervention to improve success at academic institutions. The sub-sections of the topic deal with the purpose of tutoring and the benefits it possesses for both tutors and tutees. The challenges that exist for such a programme are noted carefully as well as the elements that must be kept in mind when considering and/or implementing such an intervention.

2.2.1 Definition and purpose of tutoring

Tutoring in general refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills through the active help and support offered to students by experts in a certain field. The system of tutoring has been sustained at Oxford and Cambridge for centuries. Tutoring in the sense of this project, however, does not refer to tuition offered by professors or lecturers to students in small groups or individually. Tutoring as defined and employed in this research project refers to tuition granted to students by fellow students who have excelled in, or completed, their studies to a higher level than that attained by the students they are tutoring. Such tutoring may be described as a form of peer learning among individual learners from similar social groupings who are helping each other to learn and learning themselves by doing so (Topping, 2005). In such a co-operative and small group learning setting, a more able and experienced student transmits knowledge and skills to a student who has yet to acquire the knowledge and skills required for a particular course of study or semester within a programme (Topping, 2005). Mynard and Almarzougi (2006) describe tutoring as a system in which learners assist each other out of class time in content or strategy in order to improve results. In education, tutoring can be regarded as an intervention model that aims to improve the academic performance of individuals. This type of intervention model is best employed as a solution to specific academic problems and in response to certain identifiable academic needs (Furstenburg, 1995:2).

Tutoring is one model of support in an effort to assure greater academic success rates. The main aim of this approach to academic intervention is to enable students who receive the support to participate more actively in their own learning in order to gain the cognitive skills

necessary to succeed (Arcado-Tirado, Fernández-Martín & Fernández-Balboa, 2011). In a small group, students are often more likely to feel secure enough to ask basic questions which would be awkward to pose in a large lecturing hall. Through cooperative learning, students discover gaps in their secondary preparation, and individual shortcomings in a safe environment. Tutees are given the opportunity to correct misunderstandings without fear of ridicule. In the process they become more receptive to the views and ideas of others (Loke & Chow, 2007). Tutoring settings, in contrast to intimidating lecturing settings, provide more frequent opportunities for questions, responses and feedback; making this informal instructional model more successful for those who receive the support (Bowman-Perrot, Davis, Vannest, Williams, Greenwood & Parker, 2013). Krause (2005) provides another perspective and a possible definition of tutoring when describing such student engagement as activities which are designed to enhance students' learning at university. The example of student engagement as the time students spent on out-of-class learning experiences that connect students to their peers in educationally purposeful and meaningful ways, brings the concept of student engagement very close to a definition of tutoring as it is employed for this study. The above definitions offered by various researchers provide a broad definition of the term and the particular meaning of the word as it is applied in this project.

2.2.2 Benefits of tutoring for tutors and tutees

While the general aim of tutoring in academic institutions is to improve learning and to assist tutees to develop a deeper understanding of a particular subject or subjects, both tutees and tutors gain various valuable skills during the process: as the discussion below will show. Among the benefits discussed below, peer tutoring instils social and affective skills in both tutors and tutees. According to Mynard and Almarzougi (2006) some of the benefits include enhancement of team-working skills and leadership skills, development of networking opportunities and building of confidence and self-esteem. In the following section of this literature review the benefits for tutors and tutees are set out. The benefits discussed are not designed to be exhaustive, but to describe the value of tutoring for both tutor and tutee.

2.2.2.1 Benefits of tutoring for tutors

Any situation or context where individuals have the opportunity to communicate with each other, presents an opportunity to learn from or through the other (Rae & Baillie, 2005). Besides the extrinsic accomplishment of being able to help and inspire others, there exists the intrinsic accomplishment of developing interpersonal skills and a greater sense of responsibility, as well as the ability to convey knowledge to others. Studies show that tutors experience an increase in their confidence levels and generally feel affirmed about helping

others (Carmody & Wood, 2009). The nurturing nature of peer tutoring instils a sense of pride and responsibility in tutors (Topping & Ehly, 1998:4).

Tutors are expected to simplify, clarify and exemplify the study material for tutees (Topping, 1996). In preparation for the tutoring process, tutors have to engage with the tutoring material and apply metacognitive skills such as: planning, monitoring and evaluating. Preparation involves cognitive processes such as: perceiving, differentiating, selecting, storing, inferring, applying, combining, justifying and responding (Topping, 1996). Tutors benefit greatly just by preparing for the act of tutoring. Arcado-Tirado *et al.* (2011) suggest there is a substantial difference between meta-cognitive abilities such as study-planning and the effective use of study material of students who have the opportunity to tutor, and those who do not. Arcado-Tirado *et al.* suggest that, because of the enhancement of these abilities, tutoring contributes to the academic success of tutors themselves, and as such the quality of higher education. The metacognitive benefits of tutoring are discussed in more detail in the section on tutoring and metacognition (section 5) of this literature review.

Tutoring appears to be a good training ground for the workplace; especially for students who have to convey knowledge or even present information to managers (Carmody & Wood, 2009). While tutoring, tutors learn to be sensitive to the needs of the students they work with as far as pace of presentation and use of language are concerned. When tutoring, tutors draw from their own experiences and allow diverse perspectives; making it possible for them to draw even the quiet students into the discussions. Tutors are reported to be learning from teaching while tutoring and in the process they develop a greater awareness of the learning process (Mynard & Almarzougi, 2006). These skills are particularly useful for students preparing for a career in teaching (Arcado-Tirado *et al.*, 2011). Being involved in tutoring may even spark in participants an interest in teaching as a profession (Carmody & Wood, 2009). An enhanced ability in leading small groups, being able to apply various questioning techniques, an increase in subject knowledge as well as a better understanding of the need for preparation for teaching, were some of the added benefits mentioned by tutors who were studying to become educators themselves (Johnston, 1995:50).

2.2.2.2 Benefits of tutoring for tutees

Tutees have the benefit of being actively involved in their learning, being free to question and explain when needed. The opportunity of participatory learning allows for immediate clarification and feedback in an unthreatening learning environment. Students have a better understanding, feel motivated and have lower anxiety levels. Higher motivation can encourage higher commitment, self-esteem and self-confidence (Topping, 1996).

The opportunities for effective engagement with one another are much higher in tutoring, because of the low level of “pupil/teacher” ratio; especially when compared to the normal lecture setting in higher education (Topping, 1996). According to Johnston (1995:43) tutees find the small group context a less threatening environment in which they feel free to talk about their difficulties and concerns, and discuss their problems with their peers in a language that all can understand. The tutees experience the proctor (another term used for tutor) as potentially more approachable than the lecturer. Tutees involved in the study of Johnson (1995:43) felt that their understanding of the subject improved dramatically during the programme. Findings from this study confirmed that the collaborative and interactive environment in which the learning took place established learning patterns which contributed to a change in the culture of the students. In addition to the benefit of increased levels of engagement, tutees feel that tutors are more interested in them as individuals and are less authoritarian than teachers/lecturers, which in turn leads to a reduction in feelings of isolation among students (Topping, 1996). In an individualistic world where individuals easily feel socially isolated, interaction and contact with peers in an academic setting can create feelings of belonging (Topping & Ehly, 1998:4).

Effective students show capabilities in the areas of note-taking, the use of libraries and a range of other basic academic skills. These skills are generally not explicitly taught or demonstrated to newly registered students. It is too often assumed that such exposure to learning habits has been formed at secondary level. But in South Africa the historical challenges of legislated racism have precluded countless learners from gaining these basic learning habits which are taken for granted for learners at well-funded quintile 5 schools. Tutoring as a teaching method has the potential to establish these skills and make up for the lackings in secondary training. Literature shows that students who receive support in a tutoring program gain more in terms of academic knowledge and skills than those who do not receive such support (Bowman-Perrot *et al.*, 2013). Peer tutoring contributes to the academic success of students by enhancing the learning culture of the institution (Arcado-Tirado *et al.*, 2011). The small group setting of a tutoring programme is less formal than a lecturing setting: providing opportunity to discuss concepts and topics in an interactive and face-to-face manner. This form of informal small group communication improves the learning and teaching experience: all of which could potentially work to the benefit of the tutees (Carter & Yam, 2013).

2.2.3 Implementation of a tutoring programme

Studies by Morrison and English (2012) and Durlak and DuPre (2008) have established that the level of implementation affects to a great extent the outcomes of intervention and

prevention initiatives such as a tutoring programme: where the objective is to assist students with academic success and/or prevent possible future failure. The writers claim that the potential value of such an intervention can be tested only when one carefully attends to the process of its implementation. According to Morrison and English (2012), an evaluation of the process of implementation can ascertain the internal and external validity of the tutoring programme: as well as identifying targets for program improvement. In addition to establishing validity, the value of early monitoring of implementation lies in identifying and correcting at an early stage problems that might arise in the program application (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).

During the implementation process, data need to be collected which must be used to evaluate and assess the quality of the implementation process (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Such data can include information on the quality of the tutor training, the technical and human resource assistance available to the programme manager, as well as the extent to which the role players in the programme share decision-making and ownership of the programme. Morrison and English (2012) emphasise the crucial role of gathering and analysing data about the implementation process, and measuring information against the goals and objectives which have been established in the planning phases of the programme. The monitoring of implementation by means of regular meetings for debriefing and feedback is supported by Dufrene, Noell, Gilbertson and Duhon (2005), who amplify the risks of non-implementation or poor implementation: especially in circumstances where role players wrongly assume that training of tutors and provision of support material alone will guarantee efficient and consistent implementation.

Clarence (2016) emphasises the role of lecturers, programme co-ordinators and tutors in successful implementation. Clarence (2016) recommends a partnership in which lecturers and programme co-ordinators provide guidance and ongoing support and contact with tutors assisting tutors to learn effectively within the specific disciplinary context. Considering the invaluable role that tutors play in facilitating student learning, Clarence (2016) suggests a support and development programme that will build tutors' knowledge and skills base because it relates to the work they do with students. Successful implementation requires accountability from lecturers as far as tutor development is concerned. The generic training, even the discipline-specific training which tutors undergo may not be adequate to successfully implement (Underhill, Clarence-Fincham & Petersen, 2014).

This section of the literature review dealt with the topic of tutoring. It outlined the definition and purpose of a tutoring programme and the advantages it holds for both tutors and tutees. In this section the importance of monitoring the implementation of a tutoring intervention is set out: with specific emphasis on the role of lecturers, programme manager and tutors.

Analysis of the data indicates whether the aspects discussed in this section were evident in the study under review and/or whether different or additional aspects came to the fore. Comments on evidence of these observations appear in the chapters on analysis of the data and interpretation of the data. In the next section the topic of Language of Learning and Teaching versus Mother Tongue education in South Africa is discussed.

2.3 LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING vs MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

This study examines the experiences of, amongst other, BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa first-language students in a tutoring programme at a higher education institution in South Africa. The tutoring for the students was initiated after it became apparent that students were struggling to be successful in their studies: caused by, according to the student, a limited understanding of the academic concepts in certain subjects. The Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) at the institution where the students receive their training in Foundation Phase teaching is English; whereas the first language, referred to as the home language or mother tongue of the students is isiXhosa. The support offered to the students in the form of tutoring happened mainly through the medium of their mother tongue. There is an expectation that the explanations of the concepts in their mother tongue promote better understanding and ultimately greater success in the various subjects. Conclusions concerning this expectation are discussed in the final section of the study.

This section of the literature review takes a closer look at the issue of language in public schools and universities in South Africa and how it affects the transference and acquisition of knowledge: in instances where English is not the first language of the learner or student. It is expected that an analysis of the data reveals whether the issues discussed in this section bear any relevance to the experience of the participants in this study as far as Language of Learning and Teaching is concerned. The paragraphs below include a historical perspective of language used in education in South Africa, as well as the challenges posed by English as a language of instruction in situations where English is in fact the additional language of the student or learner.

2.3.1 Policies on Language in Education in South Africa – a historical perspective of language use in education

With the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the country acknowledged and adopted parity of nine indigenous African languages: of which isiXhosa is one. These African languages, which form the greater part of a total of eleven national languages in the country, were previously excluded and neglected. The aims and underlying principles of policies guiding the use of languages in the public school system in South Africa are primarily to (i) redress the neglect of the African languages under the Apartheid Governance system; (ii) to promote the development of all the official languages; and (iii) to promote multilingualism. It is envisaged that realising these aims and principles of the policies potentially enable all South Africans to access and participate meaningfully in societal and economic activities (SA Schools Act, 1996). The policies address the notion that previous policies have either negatively affected the access of learners to, or have hampered their success within, the education system.

As in the case of the school system, similar policies exist for the use of language in tuition on tertiary level: outlining the aims and principles of promoting and developing equitable use of and respect for all the official languages of the country. Reports of studies conducted on this ideal of promoting the use of all the official languages, however, show that English and Afrikaans are still the dominant languages of tuition at most of the country's tertiary institutions. A growing number of African Language students, whose mother tongue is neither English nor Afrikaans, are enrolling at these institutions (Council on Higher Education, 2001).

Despite the intention of the policies and proposals on language in education to promote and advance African languages in the South African education system, English is still regarded by many as the language of power and the language which grants access to opportunities and advancement in socio-economic spheres of life. Learners at schools and students at universities prefer to be taught in English and even parents have a preference for English as the Language of Learning and Teaching for their children (Barkhuizen, 2002). Barkhuizen (2002) claims that, although many students regard their home language (such as isiXhosa) as the language of their people, and though they see it as a strong cultural link between themselves and other isiXhosa speakers, they prefer English as their Language of Learning and Teaching in a range of subjects at school. IsiXhosa students state the reasons for their preference for English: they find little, if any, functional value in their mother tongue after school, be that for the purpose of using the language in the workplace or for further study (Barkhuizen, 2002). In addition to these opinions, students often view English as the language which holds more use and opportunity after school. Some learners regard mother tongue instruction as poor because they associate it with the inferior education propagated

under the Apartheid system (Setati, 2002). Learners at high schools then progress to tertiary institutions with the same prejudices. With these preferences in mind, it is then not a coincidence, neither strange, that English remains the language of instruction at most higher education institutions in South Africa, with Afrikaans as the language of instruction at only a few institutions (Council on Higher Education, 2001).

English remains the predominant language of instruction at most higher education institutions, and learners often prefer to be taught in English at South African schools. Research shows, however, that English as a Language of Learning and Teaching poses serious challenges for students who have an African language as their mother tongue. The next section highlights how English as an Additional Language has the potential to become a barrier instead of a means of transferring knowledge and skills effectively.

2.3.2 Challenges of English Additional Language as an instructional language

Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2004) emphasise the power of the spoken word in the form of language when mediation of knowledge and skills takes place. Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2004) caution that, if a situation occurs where teachers and students are not properly conversant with the language of instruction used in the classroom, limited learning, if any, takes place. They conclude from their reviewed studies that a general, mistaken belief exists that effective teaching and learning through English is taking place in township and rural schools in South Africa; in particular where learners come from African Language speaking communities. The Council of Higher Education (2001), by implication, supports the previously mentioned conclusion when it argues that effective learning and teaching at universities cannot happen where students are unable to understand the language of tuition. The Council of Higher Education (2001) states that learning in universities takes place best through the mother tongue and that a sound command of the mother tongue supports the learner.

English Additional Language as the Language of Learning and Teaching in classrooms has become more of a barrier because learners find it difficult to express themselves in the additional language (Paxton, 2009). Paxton (2009) ascribes learners' limited exposure to English as one of the main contributing factors to the school environment becoming an English foreign language environment at previously disadvantaged schools in South Africa. Part of this English foreign language environment exists as a result of the home language becoming a substitute for the majority of teachers whose first language is an African Language. Embedded in this culture of using the home language for explanations is often the African Language teachers' difficulty in expressing themselves in English; and the subsequent poor or incorrect use of English which they transfer to their learners. Under these challenging circumstances, the home language becomes a tool to help learners to

understand better; improving their chances for success in the subjects they offer (Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir, 2004).

Most textbook materials at schools and universities are in English or Afrikaans; only with little academic textbooks available in the African Languages (Paxton, 2009). Limited exposure to English referred to in the previous paragraph, as well as the absence of suitable academic material, result in most learners not understanding English when they reach tertiary institutions for further study. Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2004) assert that lack of understanding of the English language is one of the main reasons why students at university find it difficult to express themselves adequately in English. Interviews conducted with tutees in this study show that most of them attended schools where the use of English was limited and where explanations were often in isiXhosa. Learners were faced with the dilemma of having to write tests and examinations in English. This practice seemed to have affected the tutees negatively when they became university students; as the data in this study later reveal.

Paxton (2009) refers to multiple studies which point out how the English used by learners for whom English is a second or even a third language, results in a basic level of understanding and subsequent lack of cognitive development in the use of the language. By the time these learners reach university with its cognitively demanding challenges and difficulties of adjusting socially, they struggle to understand the higher level English and the academic terms and concepts that are used in the different courses. In contrast to this, students who had the benefit of developing a high level of competence in English before they reached university at quintile 5 urban schools, have an advantage above the students who did not have exposure to a higher level in the use of English (Paxton, 2009). The struggles faced by both learners at schools and students at universities compromise mathematical concepts and terms, and meaning making and problem solving in mathematics where the subject is offered in English as the Language of Learning and Teaching, and where English is not the main language of the individuals concerned (Setati, 2002). The struggles of English Additional Language students to grasp mathematical concepts and terms bears a resemblance to the challenges voiced and experienced by both tutees and tutors involved in this study; as confirmed by the Mathematics in Education lecturer interviewed.

Limited exposure to the English language, incorrect use of English by teachers, explanations in the home language at school level and the cognitively demanding use of English, cause African Language learners at schools and students at universities to be labelled at risk (Nel & Muller, 2010) or characterised as stupid (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004). This unfair labelling is compounded by the reality of having to write examination question papers that are set in English, a language which most of them do not understand in the first instance (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004). This situation emphasises how most African language

children and adults are subjected to a medium of instruction which is foreign to them and how it then becomes difficult for them to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that are supposed to help them advance in life.

Findings from Paxton's (2009) study revealed how the completion of university programmes are negatively affected by the use of English as an instructional language; where the mother tongue is not English. The focus for Paxton's (2009) study was on statistics from Mathematics and Science in schools in South Africa, but it referred to similar negative results in several programmes at universities in the country. Students shared their difficulties in learning through the medium of a second language and how the curricula of study programmes become inaccessible to English Additional Language speakers when you do not understand the concepts. The writing of examinations in the second language becomes a daunting exercise because of the mind having to switch constantly between thinking in English and the home language (Paxton, 2009). The negative effect on the completion rate of English Additional Language students, who have English as an instructional language, is echoed by authorities advocating mother tongue instruction at tertiary level (Council on Higher Education, 2001). The views and sentiments expressed by researchers as summarised in this section were the opinions of the tutees in this study when asked about the reasons for failure in the subjects they were tutored in. All of them had fears of failing again, unless help was available to support them in understanding the curricular content of the particular subjects they were struggling with. The data collected for this study show whether the curriculum has indeed become more accessible to them and whether it has been translated into success in the study programme.

2.3.3 Mother tongue support in schools and universities

Amidst the ongoing debate around multilingualism, English Additional Language as Language of Learning and Teaching in South African educational institutions and its adverse effects on African Language speakers, exists the danger of African Languages not being developed soon enough if ever, as Language of Instruction (LoI) at schools beyond Grade 3 and at tertiary level (Council of Higher Education, 2001). Judging from the downward spiral in the completion rate of black students enrolled in university programmes, as well as the unpreparedness of African Language learners when transitioning to tertiary level (Paxton, 2009), the need for instruction in the home language of the learners and students or at least support in the home language, cannot be ignored. Learning and teaching happens best when it takes place in the language in which the individual student is most proficient. Students at university are quoted as saying that "It is easy to learn when you are using your home language, but with English you need to start learning language before you get to the concept"

(Paxton, 2009). It has become common practice for teachers to switch to the language they themselves and the learners are more conversant in when explaining concepts; commonly known as code-switching, or when teachers notice that their learners have difficulty in understanding the subject matter the teachers are trying to bring across to them (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004).

Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2004) make the point that learners and students can benefit and be empowered only if the knowledge and skills intended through education make sense to them. For that to happen, tuition must be meaningful and take place through a medium that they understand. They encourage the practice of code-switching in classrooms and cite cases in South African schools where isiXhosa is generally used in most of the talking time though English is the LOLT of the school and English textbooks are used. Their observations show how learners started paying attention when the teacher started translating the subject matter into their home language,

The practice of code-switching is supported by Paxton (2009) who regards it as a useful way to clarify concepts and add meaning to what is being said. When students were allowed to use English and their home language in a situation where there was inadequate understanding, it helped the students to explore ideas and concepts in a language environment that was partly familiar to them. Students who participated in Paxton's (2009) study, attested to how they understood the concepts better after the tutor explained them in isiXhosa and how it became easier to translate the concepts in English when they knew them in isiXhosa. The findings of Paxton's (2009) study are a basis for serious consideration of providing tutor support in the home language of learners and students; especially in the education environment of South Africa with its many African Languages.

This section of the literature review highlighted the noble intentions of policies in language in education in South Africa, as well as the preference that African language students at schools and universities have for English as a language of instruction. Alongside the intentions of policies and the preference for English, this section highlights the challenges of these intentions and preferences: it points out how the limited exposure to, and sometimes incorrect use of, the English language in schools results in limited understanding of subject matter and how these inhibiting factors ultimately negatively affect success. There exists a tension between preference for instruction in English and the need for better understanding by means of mother-tongue explanation. It becomes clear that support is needed in order to make learning meaningful for African Language learners and students for whom English is an Additional Language; enabling them to become skilled and empowered individuals who can make meaningful contributions to society.

2.4 SUPPORT FOR AFRICAN LANGUAGE STUDENTS AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

“Why did the students in this tutoring programme need the support in the first place and why is there a focus on supporting isiXhosa first-language students and not another language group in the education training programme at the university”? An exploration of the reasons for support held relevance to my research topic. Exploring the reasons for support provided insight into the social context of African students at tertiary institutions in South Africa. This insight into their social context could in turn be useful when analysing the viewpoints and perspectives of the students in this study. The results of researchers who studied the process of transformation in higher education in South Africa are of particular interest; especially the way in which these results highlight the challenges and struggles of African students in their quest to succeed in higher education. An appropriate place to start this discussion would be the history of education in South Africa since the dawn of democracy.

2.4.1 The historical legacy of Apartheid in education

The political change ushered in by the first democratic elections in 1994 meant the advancement of redress in social inequalities of those who suffered injustices under the pre-democratic apartheid regime. The education reforms of the new democracy envisaged a restructuring and transformation of the higher education landscape which were to provide and ensure representation and equal access to optimal learning opportunities for all (Seabi, Seedat, Khoza-Shangasa & Sullivan, 2012). These higher education reformations brought with them greater access to higher education for students from previously disadvantaged areas, with the accompanying pressure of an expected increase in throughput of African language students at an undergraduate and postgraduate level (Seabi *et al.*, 2012). The higher education institutions, most of which were exclusively reserved for whites at the time, deliberately started enrolling African language students; with some of the institutions offering black students bursaries or other financial means in a bid to recruit them (Boughey, 2012). Soon after the increase in the enrolment of African students, institutions were faced with the realities of teaching students from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, which in turn required a radical adjustment of attitude and teaching strategies (Furstenburg, 1995:78).

Changes in policy and increase in enrolment, however, proved not to result automatically in the envisioned transformative outcomes of equal access to learning and throughput increase (Seabi *et al.*, 2012). The equity gains made in enrolment of black students were often negated by disappointing pass rates, as fewer black than white students at higher education

institutions completed and still are completing their education programmes (Boughey, 2012). Furstenburg (1995:78) ascribes the large failure rate of black students at the now open universities to the fact that the students from previously disadvantaged schools were poorly equipped to cope with the demands of higher education. Taylor (2004) contends that the issue of access to learning, and more black than white students struggling to cope with the completion of academic programmes will persist because of the depth of the historic inequalities. According to Taylor (2004) transformation in the education system of South Africa, years after the country became a democracy and access to higher education became a reality for African students, will be a long process.

2.4.2 Higher education challenges

Taylor's (2004) study reveals that the slow pace of transformation in higher education institutions in South Africa is a contributing factor to the struggles that African students are still experiencing; long after the doors of universities were opened for them. Participants in Taylor's (2004) study were quoted as saying "... *blacks and whites were not at the same level, because they had been exposed to different types of education and yet they were expected to produce the same quality of work ...*" Another student stated that "*.....liberals, referring to white lecturers and university managers, have difficulty dealing with students who are not academic*". These statements are an indication of how students themselves are aware of the challenges they are faced with; due to the inequalities that existed and still exist in higher education; as a result of the political history of South Africa. Several years into the new democratic dispensation in South Africa, poor quality of education in previously disadvantaged black schools still leads to poorly equipped students who have to cope with academic expectations at higher education institutions.

The students in the current study are African language students; mostly from previously disadvantaged areas in the Western Cape of South Africa. Logic dictates that they are not exempt from the effects of the slow pace of transformation in higher education and the struggles of black students. The challenges of the tutees and tutors in this study may include a struggle with the English medium of instruction as discussed in Section 3.3 of this literature review. These challenges, mainly identified as the slow pace of transformation in education and the medium of instruction, together with other struggles, have an indelible effect on their levels of success; making the need for support more of an institutional and structured requirement instead of an occasional intervention. Analysis of the data shows whether the success of the students in the tutoring programme is affected by such challenges, and if so, to which extent.

Earlier in this section, I made reference to how poorly equipped, previously disadvantaged schools impacted negatively on the preparation of students entering higher education. Ongoing reports of schools with shortages of teachers, poor buildings and poor management minimises the chances of a child to acquire the values and principles that are a requirement for success in higher education (Boughey, 2012). In addition to the legacy of an uneven schooling system characterised by poorly equipped schools, the negative effects of apartheid live on in the homes where there is little evidence of practices such as the presence of books and the culture of reading which prepare students for formal schooling and subsequent higher education studies (Jama, Mapasela & Bylefeld, 2008). Mokoena and Materechera (2012) suggest that many African language students, who received their schooling in previously disadvantaged areas of South Africa, enter the higher education environment with a deficit and are underprepared for what lies ahead of them at university. Large efforts have been made to address the issues of access and equity in higher education since the advent of democracy in South Africa, but higher education institutions are challenged by having to cater for a student population with diverse needs. Special efforts have to be made to support these underprepared students as they enter institutions of higher education (Jama, *et al.* 2008).

Ill-preparedness causes a vast majority of students from previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa to struggle to fit into the university culture. Many students are first-generation students from households where there is a lack of support and understanding of what is required to succeed in tertiary studies (Seabi *et al.*, 2012). Transition challenges such as new methods of teaching, new rules and regulations and new assessment methods may be overwhelming for first-year students (Jama *et al.*, 2008). Other transition challenges such as switching from lessons to lectures, the volume and level of course material and difficulty in understanding lecturers contribute to failure and the dropout rates of higher education institutions. The transition challenges experienced by first-year students from previously disadvantaged areas in South Africa make it difficult for them to integrate into the academic environment. Academic unpreparedness deficit in study and communication skills, however, remains their greatest challenges (Pocock, 2012). Tutees in this study were likely to be faced with the challenges discussed in this section, making them a part of the student population that are under-prepared for the demands of higher education. Failure in some of their first-year subjects is evidence of their vulnerability to the demands of higher education, which makes the need for support to overcome the challenges a reality for them. To prevent first-year at-risk students from failing or dropping out, higher education institutions should apply their best learning resources and educational interventions to enhance social integration and improve students' chances of academic success (Pather, 2013).

Adding to the above challenges and struggles of African language students, is the lack of “elevated” abilities in languages, communication and critical reading associated with learning, which, according to Boughey (2012), is supposed to pave the way for success in higher education. Boughey (2012) argues that these “elevated” abilities stem from values and principles of formal schooling which parents embrace and then transfer to their children, but only to the extent that they themselves have been exposed to those values and principles. The history of South Africa, however, teaches that generations of black learners in the country were denied the opportunity of being inducted into the values and principles of formal schooling described by Boughey (2012), and that the impact of the denial still manifests itself in the lives of current generations of black students.

2.4.3 The need for support

The challenges which African language students experience may support the view of Jama *et al.* (2008), which states that the tendency to say that “students do not study”, might not be the only and correct answer to the question of why students do not perform well academically and are at risk of failure or even dropping out. Jama *et al.* (2008) hold the view that a better understanding and consideration of the interrelated challenges that disadvantaged students face may bring different insights and answers as to why students do not perform academically well. Such understanding and new insights may emerge when institutions understand what the academic and social constraints are that students face (Jama *et al.*, 2008). The need for support for African language students represented by the tutees in this study is emphasized in the call for provision for compensatory education and/or a different support approach from universities in order to close the gap that exists in success between black and white students (Taylor, 2004).

Pocock (2012) as well as Maher and Macallister (2013) suggest academic support programmes such as peer instruction, assistance with the acquisition of study skills, improvements in teaching methods and tailoring of the curricula are options to be considered as a means to support students. Other suggestions for support to students to reduce the risk of withdrawal from studies could include intentional co-curricular methods such as peer mentoring and additional access to teaching staff. Important aspects to consider for intervention in the form of academic support are that it should rather emphasize and build on the existing strengths of the student. This approach focusses on motivation which is important for improving academic performance instead of pointing out students’ weaknesses (Mokoena & Materechera, 2012). As opposed to a “one size fits all” approach when offering support, institutions should use a needs analysis and try to determine the exact support needs of students. Specific skills of the individual can then be developed to counter the deficit faced when entering the institution (Mokoena & Materechera, 2012).

Boughey (2012) argues that academic support for students in higher education can be more successfully addressed by considering learning as a socially embedded phenomenon; individuals are shaped by the social contexts into which they are born. The historical and social contexts of black South Africans allow for an understanding other than the inherent deficiencies in individuals; lack of talent, aptitude, motivation and study, reading and writing skills are among the reasons why black students fare so badly in South African higher education (Boughey, 2012). Instead of addressing the deficiencies, contextual reasons for failure should be taken into consideration when planning intervention and support strategies for black students. Boughey (2012) calls for support which is aimed at accelerated transformation and equity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds; she claims that little has been done to allow black students access to learning. This contextual approach of greater chances of epistemological access for African language students should include proper social, financial and linguistic support such as mentorship programs and increased representation of academic staff who speak indigenous languages, an approach supported by Seabi *et al.* (2012).

The tutoring programme examined and tested in this study is a support strategy for African language students from previously disadvantaged schools in South Africa. This sub-section of the literature review highlights how apartheid, long after its official demise, continues to impact on the chances of individuals' success in higher education, and how the tutees involved in this study are affected. The discussion argues for an interrogation of the theory that informs the intervention and support strategies for students from previously disadvantaged schools. This study suggests that academic support should not be informed by the perceived inadequacies in the individual, but by the social context into which the students have been born and raised. Analysis of the data of this study indicates whether the experiences of the tutors and tutees involved in the tutoring programme bear any relevance to the discussion outlined in this section. In the next section of this literature review, the discussion turns to tutoring as an instructional tool to harness metacognitive skills for the purpose of academic success.

2.5 TUTORING AND METACOGNITION

Tutoring as an academic support strategy, although largely meant for the benefit of the individual receiving the support (the tutee), has proven to be much to the advantage of the individual giving the support (the tutor) as well. Section 2.2 of the literature review of this study briefly mentions how tutors benefit on a metacognitive level when they plan for tutoring sessions. Through the act of tutoring, the higher order skills such as planning, monitoring and

evaluating are developed. The same section mentions how these benefits are felt by the tutors, but that the skills can be enhanced in the tutees.

Section 2.3 of the literature review of this study makes multiple references to the struggles that students at higher education institutions in South Africa encounter when their home language differs from the language of instruction (LOI) of the institution. Section 2.4 of the literature review provides an account of the inequalities that still exist in schools in post-apartheid South Africa, and how, students from these schools struggle to adapt and succeed in their studies when entering higher education institutions. While much of the challenges which are mentioned in Sections 2.3 and 2.4 of this chapter can be ascribed to language and social barriers, some of it has to do with gaps that exist in the way students have been prepared for higher education. Section 2.4 on the challenges of higher education institutions refers to ill-preparedness and a lack of essential higher level skills such as critical thinking which forms part of the metacognitive orientation of a student. Metacognition supports success at tertiary level, and the arguments proffered in Section 2.4 suggest a reconsideration of the support approaches that are followed for African language students in English-instruction institutions. The following sections explain how tutoring as an example of collaborative learning can become instrumental in the enhancement of metacognitive skills for both tutors and tutees.

2.5.1 The meaning and value of metacognition in education

Metacognition can be described as an individual's awareness of thinking processes, coupled with the ability to monitor and regulate cognitive efforts in solving a problem or executing a task (Suwono, Susanti & Lestari, 2016; Mahdavi, 2014). Metacognition is defined as a person's knowledge about learning and learning behaviours; in order to determine the extent to which progress is made as well as the strategies that are needed to accomplish a particular learning objective. Metacognition can be described as a higher order thinking process which involves thinking critically and reflectively about thinking (Suwono *et al.*, 2016). The more metacognitive an individual is, the more strategic and successful the learning is (Mahdavi, 2014).

Mahdavi (2014) argues that metacognition has the potential to provide students with the knowledge and confidence to manage their own learning, but that they ultimately find their learning more meaningful. A further advantage of metacognition for students is that it fosters independent thinking and lifelong learning, and that it enables students to use their learning in different contexts and situations. Suwono *et al.* (2016) regard the metacognitive skills of independent thinking and application of learning in different situations as some of the necessary life and career skills that support post-secondary education and the workplace.

The 21st century student is challenged with a shift from knowledge transmission to knowledge construction which is aimed at self-regulated and lifelong learning; making the need for metacognitive awareness and knowledge so much more an essential skill since it corresponds with meaningful, deep-level learning and often leads to higher achievement (De Backer, Van Keer & Valcke (2012).

According to De Backer *et al.* (2012) only a minority of higher education students have sufficient metacognitive skills and knowledge to self-regulate their learning spontaneously, a fact that poses a concern, particularly if one considers that self-regulation of learning is regarded as crucial for academic success, especially in higher education. De Backer *et al.* (2012) hold that the majority of higher education students do not possess the knowledge about how people process information, nor do they have the essential skills of planning, monitoring and evaluating their thinking processes before, during and on completion of an academic task. Metacognitive knowledge and skills are teachable and learnable, but necessitate specific instruction methods of basic skills and strategies (Mahdavi, 2014).

2.5.2 Tutoring as a learning strategy to enhance metacognition

If it is assumed that one of the objectives of education should be to help learners to take charge of their own learning, then they have to be skilful in planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning processes. An awareness of these skills, however, precedes the skills themselves. Metacognitive awareness and skills are a necessity for the completion of many academic tasks. Education should ask how metacognition can be fostered (Madhavi, 2014). Fostering of metacognition in education holds advantages for students, because it teaches students skills that support their ability to retain information, apply information to new situations and solve problems in a skilful and creative way (Cook, Kennedy & McGuire, 2013). The ultimate advantage for students, who find themselves part of an education environment where metacognitive awareness and knowledge are taught, is that it enhances their academic achievement.

De Backer *et al.* (2012) claim that a few higher education programmes succeed in effectively preparing students for metacognitive self-regulation, and conclude that metacognition is a social activity which can be developed through interaction with teachers and/or other students. Cook *et al.* (2013) suggest various teaching strategies that directly use metacognition skills; but for the purpose of this study the strategy of group study, as it correlates in many respects to the strategy of tutoring, is of significance and is the strategy suggested by De Backer *et al.* (2012). When students work in groups, they hear how differently others think about a topic which informs and increases their own understanding. Students are more likely to evaluate each other's thinking and correct any misconceptions

that might be expressed by others. These acts of listening to, and evaluating others' thinking, create an awareness of their own thinking as well. When working in groups, students are likely to be metacognitive about their own approach to information (Cook *et al.*, 2013).

De Backer *et al.* (2012) emphasise the social dimension of metacognition and contend that it is best promoted through social interactions in which metacognitive insights and strategies are modelled and consequently internalised. Supportive social settings allow students to ask questions freely, provide explanations and discuss different viewpoints; they compare their thinking with the thinking of their peers and start to monitor and control how their peers are working. During collaborative learning and its accompanying social interactions, metacognitive activity is mediated among students.

Tutoring is considered a form of collaborative learning which holds major advantages as an instructional approach that promotes metacognitive regulation in higher education (De Backer *et al.*, 2012). The section on tutoring in this literature review (section 2.1) refers to the metacognitive benefits of tutoring for the tutor in particular. When engaged in preparation for tutoring sessions, tutors automatically develop metacognitive skills such as planning, monitoring and evaluating. Tutees are afforded the opportunity to discuss problems they experience in their studies and become active participants in their own learning by effectively engaging with one another. The metacognitive benefits of tutoring increases substantially in a peer-tutoring instructional approach; where peers can function as metacognitive role models when tutoring and being tutored (De Backer *et al.*, 2012).

Section 2.5 of the literature review of this study describes how tutoring, although used as a support mechanism for the tutees involved in the tutoring programme, can be instrumental in developing metacognition among higher education students. The section points out how both tutors and tutees can gain metacognitive awareness and skills which are essential for success in higher education. Social interactions which occur during tutoring offer opportunities for tutors and tutees to compare their own thinking with the thinking of their peers; making them aware of their own thinking. Tutoring can be a support structure to develop academic abilities and serve as an instructional approach to enhance metacognition in students.

2.6 TUTORING AS NON-ACADEMIC SUPPORT AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

This section of the literature review investigates the academic and non-academic nature of a peer-assisted learning support programme such as tutoring that is offered by various higher education institutions in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. This section highlights the

value of non-academic support and amplifies the extent to which it supports underprepared and students perceived to be at risk when they transition into higher education. The transitioning challenges students face when entering higher education, as well as the non-academic needs of these underprepared students, are highlighted. This section includes a discussion on the role which non-academic factors play to support at-risk students as they transition into higher education institutions. Special reference is made to the supporting role of Peer Assisted Learning and Tutoring as interventions, and the value these learning strategies add as non-academic factors in strengthening students' abilities.

2.6.1 Under-preparedness of first year students in higher education institutions revisited

Section 2.4 of this chapter emphasises concerns in the research domain around the struggles of South African students from previously disadvantaged communities in their pursuit of academic success. Section 2.4 gives an account of how, throughout higher education institutions in South Africa, student progress is still impeded; leaving these particular students unable to complete their study programmes. Some of the main reasons for incomplete study programmes and low throughput rates can be ascribed to the academic under-preparedness of first-year students when entering the higher education institutions. This under-preparedness is a result of poorly resourced schools in previously disadvantaged communities; where most of these students come from. Most students from previously disadvantaged communities struggle with transitioning from school level to university level, where they often experience difficulty integrating academically and socially into the higher education culture. Often the shift from remote rural area to urban environment is overwhelming. Section 2.4 includes a call for higher education institutions to understand the reasons for the academic and social constraints of students; instead of supplying a "one size fits all" support programme. A supportive approach which is based on a needs-analysis of the students involved should be taken. In order to accelerate access to learning and facilitate greater success among students from previously disadvantaged areas, such a support approach could include social, financial and linguistic support as a means to address the historical inequalities of the education system in South Africa. Students entering university from previously disadvantaged communities stand a better chance of succeeding when receiving both academic and non-academic support. Students receiving support in the form of tutoring as designated in this projected come from disadvantaged communities and have expressed a fear of failing because they do not understand the concepts related to their study programmes. They generally are drawn from poorly resourced high schools which make it likely that they may experience transitioning challenges into higher education.

Analysis of the data shows whether the tutoring they receive can support them on an academic as well as a non-academic level.

Karp (2011) contends that modern day postsecondary education presents a space which all students must learn to navigate as they meet new expectations and engage in new types of interpersonal relations. An inability to find their way successfully renders them unlikely to fit into the new learning environment (Spark, De Klerk, Maleswena and Jones', 2017). Spark *et al.* (2017) define student success as a university student's ability to cope on the following levels: transitioning from high school to university, progressing through the first year of study, graduating in their degree of choice within five years of first registration, managing the psychosocial, socio-economic, cultural and academic demands encountered during the university studies and accessing the relevant academic and non-academic support structures on university campuses. Where students experience a lack of social support and integration into the university culture, lack of time-management, inadequate study or exam-writing skills, have none or unrealistic goals, have family/financial/workload pressures and even fear of failure, they are more likely to fail or even drop out (De Klerk, Spark, Jones & Maleswena, 2017). Wilmer (2008) defines underprepared students as those who are unsure of themselves, often need financial assistance, have a need to feel comfortable within the learning environment and have a need for tutoring and basic skills development. Underprepared students are likely to meet the criteria of an unsuccessful student. The tutees in the current study have already failed some of the subjects in their first year and were identified as in need of tutoring. It is possible that they may fit into the category of underprepared students and might end up being unsuccessful. The data show whether the tutoring offers the holistic support they need to improve their chances at success.

Under-preparedness, difficulty in transitioning and integrating into higher education, are not limited to previously disadvantaged students in South Africa or Africa. Research shows that the threat to first-year success has become a worldwide phenomenon among first-year students mostly from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Ginty & Harding, 2014; Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004; Karp, 2011). Under-preparedness and the diverse needs of students in terms of ethno-cultural, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds are adding to the complexities which higher education worldwide has to deal with (Qureshi & Stormyhr, 2012). Apart from the unnerving, isolating and intimidating experience which the act of separating themselves from their past school associations and families can bring to first-year students (Ginty & Harding, 2014), the largest threat is the low socio-economic conditions which has not equipped these first-year students with the required social and academic skills to cope with higher education (Maitland & Lemmer, 2011). First-year students from low socio-economic backgrounds such as the tutees in this study, risk failure mainly because of their lack of preparation for, and their lack of understanding of, the type of learning that is

required at higher education level when they transition to university (Ginty & Harding, 2014). All of these challenges leave them vulnerable to failure and in need of support to transition and integrate more smoothly into higher education.

Keeping in mind the under-preparedness and transition challenges of first-year students into higher education, and the support that is needed to navigate successfully through the first year and beyond, various researchers (Pearson & Naug, 2013; Ginty & Harding, 2014; Lotkowski *et al.*, 2004; Karp, 2011) propose a support approach that focusses on academic and non-academic aspects of the student's university experience. Many universities render different forms of academic support but more is required in the area of non-academic support. Below is a more detailed discussion of an integrated academic and non-academic support approach.

2.6.2 An integrated academic and non-academic support approach for underprepared first-year students

Pearson and Naug (2013) hold that the transition process for students to university have historically been a poorly supported and difficult process. The absence of support is cause for concern, given the fact that it is during the students' first year experience at university where sound patterns for study habits are established. The Department of Higher Education and Training (2013) in South Africa echoes this view when stating that effective support for first-year students is not available everywhere, and where it is available, it is often not prioritized and sufficiently resourced. Both Pearson and Naug (2013) as well as the Department of Higher Education and Training (2013) argue for higher education to take responsibility for the provision of a learning environment which promotes the transitional needs of all commencing students; but especially those who have been disadvantaged educationally, socially and financially, and at risk of failure and/or withdrawal. In order to accelerate access to education and to ensure equity of learning opportunities in a South African context, Maitland and Lemmer (2011) propose that universities offer students supportive environments where students and academics have access to strategies and techniques which will holistically support learning and teaching.

Makala (2017) describes at-risk first-year students as those who feel insecure for one or more of several reasons such as financial stress, social adjustment and academic challenges. At-risk students have a greater need for personal attention, assistance and guidance than other students. Some of the factors which strengthen these feelings of insecurity are a lack of social support and integration, lack of time management, inadequate study or examination-writing skills, no or unrealistic goals, family/financial/workload pressures and even the fear of failure (Spark *et al.*, 2017). Success in higher education

requires students to do more than master the academic course content (Karp, 2011). Students are required to learn to think independently and question established truths. Such skills may be deduced from course material and lectures but require the individual student to synthesize a personal mode of autonomy and maturity. Many students who cannot at once grasp the skills of critical literacy, have been at secondary schools which exposed them to little more than rote learning. To raise the thinking skills of such students, support programmes are required. But such programmes often focus on helping students to master course content only without assisting students to make up for long-term deficiencies (Lotkowski *et al.*, 2004). Institutions cannot and should not ignore the principal contribution that academic support factors make toward the improvement of at-risk students' abilities. Tertiary educational bodies may find that non-academic support factors can add to students' success. Lotkowski *et al.* (2004) contend that students who master course content but fail to develop enough self-confidence and commitment to their academic goals, may be at risk of failure.

On the other side of the spectrum from bewildered rural students from poor communities, are the privileged few whose parents were at university and taught them what to expect. Such students often feel far more connected to the university environment and his/her peers, the faculty and other campus activities. For such students who have been carefully groomed for university life and ways of thinking critically, such an environment of support and connectedness raises levels of self-confidence and self-esteem (Lotkowski *et al.* 2004). The ideal support programs for at-risk students are designed to nurture and supplement the necessary academic and life skills that will enable such disadvantaged and confused students to integrate more quickly, be successful and persevere beyond their first year (Ginty & Harding, 2014). An integrated support approach would be a fair compensation for students who had been denied a sound preparation for university: such an approach would include both academic and non-academic factors to form a socially inclusive environment that addresses the social, emotional and academic needs of students (Lotkowski *et al.* 2004).

At-risk students enter higher education with needs which are currently not adequately addressed. Being a university student requires more than the ability to master higher education level academic skills (Karp, 2011). Non-academic aspects reflected in support programmes such as Peer Assisted Learning (Makala, 2017) and Tutoring (Faroa, 2017), are widely promoted as mechanisms to support academically vulnerable students. Karp (2011) emphasises how the act of engagement between students, even though at times not part of a formal academic intervention, can address different skills and knowledge gaps and help students to negotiate the academic world of higher education. Support programmes such as Peer Assisted Learning and Tutoring encourages and facilitates an environment where students can engage with their peers. Such support mechanisms are likely to raise the ability

of such uncertain students and increase their early success (Pearson & Naug, 2013). The following section sets out in more detail the non-academic support offered by Peer Assisted Learning and Tutoring.

2.6.3 Non-academic support offered by Peer Assisted Learning and Tutoring

In a Peer Assisted Learning programme students are encouraged to support each other in a safe, friendly space under the guidance of trained senior undergraduate students. Students acquire knowledge and skills through the active support of other students who are their equals in status, and who, in the process, help them in adjusting to university life faster (Makala, 2017). Through informal, yet much focussed group discussions, students are afforded the opportunity to improve their study habits, develop a clear view of their study and career goals and enhance their understanding of the subject matter of their course programmes (Makala, 2017). The cooperative nature of Peer Assisted Learning enables students to exchange learning habits and strategies, while developing skills such as facilitation techniques, information processing, critical thinking and reflection (Ginty & Harding, 2014).

In addition to the detailed discussion of tutoring as an academic support strategy for learners as set out in Section 1 of this literature review, tutoring has been viewed as a historical model for facilitating student engagement: forming an important part of the university teaching-learning process (Faroo, 2017). As a response to the challenges of student success in South Africa, tutoring is a basic strategy for improving students' academic success and professional goals. Faroo (2017) places much value on the multi-faceted and diverse roles of tutoring in the integration of previously excluded groups and redress of inequalities. The value of tutoring for students who are at risk is proven over decades, especially for those from disadvantaged communities. Tutoring, when maintained at a high quality, has the ability to enhance success and to facilitate the advancement of higher education students (Faroo, 2017).

Both Peer Assisted Learning and Tutoring offers at-risk students meaningful engagement opportunities for skill practice, social interaction and improvement of confidence; and the one can even be viewed as a form of the other (Ginty & Harding, 2014). Spark *et al.* (2017) contend that where students are brought together for the purpose of mentoring and support, engagement, motivation and self-confidence will automatically increase. Peer Assisted Learning and Tutoring are learning and teaching techniques which make it possible to involve students actively in the learning process. Faroo (2017) describes student engagement as a key strategy which can successfully be used to address the challenges which higher education in South Africa faces.

The non-academic value of support programmes such as Peer Assisted Learning and Tutoring lies in the social integration which occurs during student engagement. Spark *et al.* (2017) regard the interpersonal support which happens when students integrate socially, as the most important type of assistance for university students. These researchers emphasise the social nature of learning and claim that many students persevere in their studies because of successful social integration at their tertiary institution: even in the face of poor academic performance. The dynamics of social interaction evident in collaborative small-group settings such as Peer Assisted Learning and Tutoring develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and develop crucial competencies such as critical thinking, communication skills, interpersonal relations and self-assessment which students need for success (Qureshi & Stormyhr, 2012).

Based on their personal experiences, tutors and mentors can offer solutions to the challenges students face, and in the process address academic and non-academic concerns of students (Spark *et al.* 2017). Tutors and mentors are often the preferred persons who students speak to freely and candidly about their academic and personal challenges. Such students who have received an incomplete secondary training, fear exposure of the gaps in their education and the ridicule of large groups which include students far more thoroughly prepared. Such at-risk students find tutors more approachable, friendlier and more available than lecturers. Although tutors and mentors in Peer Assisted Learning and Tutoring programmes give academic guidance, they often have the contextual insight, understanding and awareness of what it means to be in a student's shoes. They are able to enact Vygotsky's mediation: knowing in detail about the taxing conditions and predicaments of students whose parents can barely afford to send their children to university. Consequently, students gravitate to tutors and mentors, who then become the providers of holistic support which assist students in transitioning into higher education and subsequent academic success (Spark *et al.*, 2017).

Karp (2011) claims that non-academic factors that come into play during informal social interactions between students, tutors and lecturers encourage student success via processes that are different to formal academic interventions, yet address the social, cultural and implicit demands of higher education. Such low-key social interactions help many students to navigate the academic world of higher education: in that informal discussions can provide them with access to information and resources necessary to be successful, and in the process allow them to integrate into higher education. The tutees in this study are considered to be in the same category as those regarded as underprepared for, and as those experiencing transitioning challenges into higher education. It is expected that the non-academic support which tutoring and peer assisted learning offers should be to their

advantage. A discussion of the data in Chapter 5 reveals whether this is the case or not or in what degrees both elements manifest in students.

This section of the literature review revisited the under-preparedness of first-year students in higher education who come from disadvantaged communities. Additional views are shared on how transitioning challenges exacerbate the first-year experience of these students. This section highlights how their poor socio-economic conditions and the poorly-resourced schools they come from make it difficult for students to adapt to the demands of higher education. Emphasis is placed on the need for a holistic support programme, which preferably should be characterised by an integrated academic and non-academic approach. Such an approach has the advantage of offering students who are underprepared and challenged with transitioning into university culture, the support they need to progress through the first year and to complete their study programme successfully. The literature suggests that learning strategies such as Peer Assisted Learning and Tutoring should be in place to enhance the engagement and social interaction processes which increase students' confidence and skills to help them negotiate the higher education landscape, and ultimately achieve success. This section concludes the literature review chapter of the study and is followed by a summary of the whole chapter.

2.7 CONCLUSION

In the literature review of this study, a background to tutoring is adumbrated and a specific kind of integrated tutoring programme is mooted as a possible solution and way forward for at-risk students who have been denied appropriate preparation at secondary level. The aim of such an integrated support programme of tutoring is to enable students to make up for gaps in their schooling and adjust to university life. This literature review describes topics and shows the inter-relatedness between them. The focus of the study is to gain perspective of the experiences of the role players in the tutoring programme. It became evident from the literature that a review on the topic of tutoring alone would paint an incomplete picture of the ideals of the practice of tutoring; especially in a post-apartheid South African context. Research on the various topics reviewed shows a more complete picture of the factors to consider when studying the experiences of African language students in a support programme such as tutoring. An integrated tutoring scheme can be moulded to the peculiar challenges and predicaments of at-risk students.

This chapter highlighted literature on tutoring as an intervention for academic improvement, and emphasised the benefits that tutoring holds for both tutor and tutee. But historical models of tutoring such as Oxbridge need to be adapted to benefit students who face a particular set of difficulties: socio-economic, political and linguistic. Tutoring contributes to the academic

success of tutees and provides them the opportunity to become active participants in their own learning. Tutoring adds value to the professionalism of tutors by increasing, among other abilities, their confidence levels. Of significance is the potential that tutoring has to nurture the metacognitive abilities of planning, monitoring and evaluation of academic tasks for both tutees and tutors. These metacognitive skills are considered to be of importance for success; especially in higher education. From the literature, it appears that tutoring could successfully be used as an instructional method to foster and enhance metacognition in students, enhancing their chances of successfully passing and graduating.

The review of relevant literature shows that, in the absence of proper structures and support systems, a tutoring programme can become a futile exercise. Lack of resources and accountability are the sort of obstacles that can hinder the objectives of such an intervention. It is evident from the literature that non-implementation remains the greatest obstacle: as does ineffective tutor training which could result in bad tutoring techniques. The literature suggests that, in order to enhance accountability and effective implementation, a programme co-ordinator be appointed and that extra care be paid to monitoring, ongoing support and evaluation, during and at the end of the programme.

Literature reviewed in this chapter shows that support for African language students is a non-negotiable issue in higher education in South Africa. The literature explored various aspects which point to inadequacies in the use of English and how such shortcomings lead to ineffective learning and teaching at township and rural schools in South Africa; especially in the schools where learners come from African language speaking communities. The notion of ineffective learning and teaching stems mainly from learners' limited exposure to the English language at township and rural schools, which in turn, could be a result of teachers' own difficulty with expressing themselves properly in English. Learners then transition to higher education institutions with an inadequate mastery of English and subsequently struggle with the higher level demands of the English language at universities. Section 2.3 shows that, despite the noble intentions of language policies in education, seeking for redress and more respect in the use of the eleven official languages in South Africa, English remains the predominant language of instruction at universities and the preferred language at schools. Section 2.3 of the literature review argues for the need for support in instruction in the home language, or at least a form of support in the home language if education is to make sense and be meaningful for English Additional Language learners at schools and students at universities.

The argument for support for higher education students gains further traction in findings that students enter higher education with an under-preparedness which has its roots in the historical inequalities and injustices which prevailed in the pre-democratic Apartheid society, and remains visible in current generations of the non-white population. Students from

previously disadvantaged schools are still struggling to cope, despite the education reforms which promote equal access to learning opportunities. According to the reviewed literature, these struggles and challenges persist as a result of generations of blacks being denied formal schooling, with the accompanying values and principles needed for success in higher education. The most appropriate support, therefore, is the kind where learning is looked at as a socially embedded phenomenon, viewed from its historical context.

The literature reveals how underprepared students from disadvantaged communities experience transitioning challenges as they enter universities and how a peer-assisted learning strategy such as tutoring can offer the support they need to navigate the higher education landscape. Sufficient evidence exists to suggest that tutoring is a suitable intervention strategy through which first-year students can adopt the academic as well as the non-academic competencies and life skills needed to support and promote their success. First-year students from disadvantaged communities benefit greatly from the multi-faceted and diverse elements of mentoring and tutoring as they socially engage with peers in the safe and friendly environment which peer-assisted learning programmes provide. The reviewed literature shows how crucial competencies are fortified during social interactions between tutors and tutees when tutors share with tutees from their own experiences, and in the process transfer communication skills, critical thinking skills and interpersonal skills; all of which support a sense of belonging, perseverance and success in the long run.

This literature review is used as a benchmark to compare the results of this study and to map interrelations between the topics and the research question. In the next chapter I discuss the methodology adopted and adapted for this study in detail.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter (i) the purpose and objectives of the study (section 3.2), are set out, (ii) the philosophical assumptions and theory within which I frame my study (section 3.3) are defined and (iii) my choice of a qualitative strategy (section 3.4) is justified. The chosen design type and the sample that was selected for the inquiry (section 3.5) are explained, followed by the methods for gathering data and a description of each method (section 3.6), as well as preliminary thoughts on how the information gathered is organised and managed (section 3.7). The chapter contains an outline of how trustworthiness was built into the study (section 3.8) and the ethical considerations of the study as a whole (section 3.9). The chapter ends with a summary of the discussions (section 3.10).

3.2 PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the experiences of the participants involved in a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first-language students at a University of Technology in the Western Cape, South Africa. The participants are (i) tutors who are experienced students providing support through the medium of mainly isiXhosa), (ii) the tutees, who are receiving the support, (iii) the lecturers of the three identified subjects for tutoring, (iv) the programme co-ordinator who manages the implementation of the programme, and v) the trainer who trained the tutors.

The conclusions and findings of this study enable the institution and interested audiences to gain insight into, and develop, an understanding around the experiences of the participants from their point of view. The findings provide an understanding of the benefit of the programme for the tutees, and the usefulness and quality of processes and procedures during its implementation. These insights and understandings inform decisions around similar future programmes.

The research question thus is: "What are the experiences of the role players in a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first-language students?"

3.3 PARADIGM FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Researchers have to make decisions on the broad plans and specific procedures they follow and which allow them to address the issue of the inquiry they are embarking on. These plans and procedures, referred to as the research approach, outline the overall design of the study and include the researcher's decisions from a broad philosophical perspective, to the detailed methods of collecting, analysing and interpreting the data (Creswell, 2014:31). Marshall and Rossman (2006:52) refer to these procedures to be followed for the inquiry, often referred to as the research methodology section of the study, as the place where the researcher presents to the reader a plan that is logical, concise, thorough and sound. The researcher demonstrates competency to undertake the study and take it to its successful completion. In the design, the researcher steps into the role of "manager of the inquiry" (Henning *et al*, 2004:142), ensuring that the process is planned and executed effectively and efficiently and that work of a good quality is maintained. Creswell (2014:51) holds that the approach a researcher decides to take in a study, will to a large extent be influenced by his/her own training, experience and worldview or philosophical assumptions about truth and reality.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that researchers engage in three interrelated activities when conducting research. The first is to articulate his or her view or basic beliefs about reality and truth in relation to the research domain. The second is to make decisions about the theoretical perspective and strategy of enquiry, and the third is to decide on methods of data collection and analysis of the data. The three activities are connected by what is called the research design. The researcher cannot be divorced from the process: the researcher's gender, class, culture, philosophy, expectations and political perspective form an integral part of each of the three activities mentioned.

In the next section, the chosen paradigm framework is discussed as it reflects the researcher's views on reality and truth within the domain of this study. Second, the theoretical framework for this study is discussed.

3.3.1 Interpretivism as a paradigm framework

Maxwell (2013:39) holds the view that researchers have their own ideas, beliefs, assumptions, expectations and theories which support and inform their research and that the researchers then develop a tentative theory or conception about what they think concerns the phenomena in the study and why. These fundamental beliefs and assumptions can alternatively be termed paradigms: a term which refers to philosophical questions about reality, truth, objectivity and method in research. The researcher's chosen paradigm will then cause him or her to approach their inquiries in a unique way. The choice of paradigm refines

the goals, develops appropriate and relevant questions, and helps to select methods and identify possible threats to the validity of study.

An interpretive position was chosen as a paradigm framework because its philosophy states that research is influenced and shaped by the worldview of the researcher and the group or the person being studied (Willis, 2007:96). Willis (2007:96) proposes that, in social science such as education, each individual participating in the research, whether the researcher or the person/group being studied, possesses a peculiar understanding of the world, which was gradually built up through experiences. As individuals in a sample group share their own understanding with each other, meaning is constructed and a new or different reality about the topic being studied is created as these individuals interact with each other socially.

Researchers who approach their studies from an interpretive paradigm search for understanding of context. The purpose of such studies is primarily to understand the particular context or situation of the person/group that live the experience. Interpretive researchers may call into question a general conclusion of a similar study conducted in a different context (Willis, 2007:99). The knowledge or reality constructed through the lived experience of the person/group is often referred to as contextual knowledge or local knowledge (Willis, 2007:99). The home language of the student and tutor participants in this study is IsiXhosa: while the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of the institution is English. In contrast to other tutoring programmes where the language used is the LOLT of the institution, this tutoring programme offered support in the home language of the students, IsiXhosa. The difference in language could be perceived as a different context to other tutoring programmes, and could suggest a different experience to the participants; resulting in the findings of this study being significantly different to tutoring programmes in another context.

Willis (2007:100–107) introduces three other movements in support of understanding as the purpose of conducting research. Willis argues for the philosophies of (i) understanding (the German “*verstehen*”), (ii) hermeneutics and (iii) phenomenology as a basis for the core principle of context when conducting research. First, understanding, he proposes, can best be derived from the point of view of those who live the experience. Second, Willis proposes that hermeneutics be used as support for the purpose of research because it emphasises the importance of the use of language in understanding and the importance of context, particularly historical context, in understanding human behaviour and ideas. Third, Willis argues for phenomenology which is the study of people’s perceptions of the world: with a strong focus on the person or persons being studied. These three philosophies strengthen the ideals and importance of understanding as the goal for research within an interpretive paradigm.

Interpretivists reject the notion of a particular “right” or “correct” method as a path to knowledge or intellectual progress. Instead, they accept that any method can guide research as a path to the truth. They believe that, although any method, even a scientific method, is acceptable to use; any chosen method is subjective and potentially fallible. For interpretivists, however, the difference in the use of methods lies in how the results of the research are interpreted, because each researcher can offer his/her best argument or interpretation of the topic under discussion (Willis, 2007:109–112).

The purpose of research within an interpretivist paradigm is to identify, comprehend and contextualize a phenomenon in a particular context: and not a search for valid, generalizable truth (Willis, 2007:188). The search, however, is against the backdrop of past experiences, knowledge and historical backgrounds of both the researcher and the person/group involved in the study. The researcher may, at times, use generalizations or propose hypotheses and theories, but the purpose remains to set a particular scene that helps the reader understand the phenomenon under scrutiny (Willis, 2007:190). In a different context, such generalizations, hypotheses and theories may not be applicable.

Klein and Myers (1999) hold the view that the search for a better understanding requires the researcher to examine multiple perspectives, interpretations and viewpoints, as different people and different groups have their own perceptions of the world and assign unique meanings to particular phenomena. The interpretivist researcher should search the reasons for, and examine the influences the social context has on these interpretations and perspectives. It may well be that an examination of these influences brings to the surface contradictions and conflicts related to power, economics or values among the participants in the study and/or the understanding of the researcher. The students, tutors, lecturers and programme manager involved in the tutoring programme represent the diverse cultures of South Africa. When analysing and interpreting accounts of the participants’ experiences, the researcher has to keep in mind these cultural differences and the historical inequalities which characterise, and are still evident, in South Africa.

Willis (2007:194) supports the view of Klein and Myers (1999) by stating that “acknowledgement of multiple perspectives recognizes that basic condition of human existence and often helps to elucidate why different individuals and groups behave the way they do”... [and] ... “perceive the world the way they do”. The purpose of seeking multiple perspectives on the topic or situation under discussion in this study is not to find a single supposedly ‘right’ view, but to allow for diverse viewpoints to manifest themselves when analysing the study (Willis (2007:194). Adding to the views of Willis (2007:194) and Klein and Myers (1999) is the idea of McQueen (2002) that the main goal of interpretivist research is not to prescribe a solution to a problem, but to describe a phenomenon through the eyes of the individuals participating in the study. For the interpretivist researcher, the unique account

or perspective of each person represents a “unique truth” which is equally valuable for a rich description of the phenomenon under scrutiny.

Users of an interpretive paradigm in research choose methods that enable them to reflect upon the individual experiences of those in the study, because they believe that every person has his or her own sense or interpretation of reality (McQueen, 2002). Since context is of utmost importance, interpretivist researchers prefer data sources that are closest to the person or group being studied: for example participant observation and unstructured interviews. Both of these methods provide information that allows for a deeper understanding of a person or group of people and embraces ethnographic aspects of the individual's reality (McQueen, 2002). Additional methods may include autobiographical narratives of individuals with relevant experiences of the topic discussed in the study: as well as reflective discussions of professional practice. A detailed description of data sources can be found in the section on “Data Collection Methods” later in this chapter.

Interpretivists do not separate themselves from the research process. They are fully integrated into the research setting by reflecting on, analysing and evaluating the impact of the different steps in their own thinking and actions, and coming to some conclusions of what to do next (Willis, 2007:4). Walsham (2006) distinguishes, however, between an outside researcher and an involved researcher. The former is the researcher of this study whose involvement with the participants occurs mainly through formal interviews. Involvement of the latter is as a participant researcher or action researcher, tutors and tutees.

3.3.2 Social Constructivism as a theoretical framework

This research project depends upon constructivism as a learning theory. Constructivism stems from its proponents' shift from looking at how knowledge as an acquired entity, to looking at how knowledge is constructed (Schunk, 2012:229). Proponents of constructivism contend that individuals have particular experiences in the situations they find themselves in and, that thinking takes place in these situations and that their cognitions, referred to as learning or cognitive development, are to a large degree constructed in these particular situations. Constructivists believe that knowledge is not imposed from outside a person, but is rather formed inside them, based on their experiences in the particular situations in which they find themselves in (Schunk, 2012:230–231). Phillips (1995) emphasises the constructivist nature of human knowledge and agrees that no knowledge is “handed down from somewhere on high”, but that even existing or collective knowledge of subject domains that are available to learners, were the constructs of earlier scholars.

In contrast to learning theories which place the emphasis of learning upon the learners' information processing abilities, constructivism places the emphasis on the active

participation of the learner in the learning process and couples this emphasis with the importance of social interaction for knowledge construction (Phillips, 1995). The only aspect which constructivists differ on is the emphasis they place on the factors that affect learning and learners' cognitive processes (Schunk, 2012:229). These factors that constructivist differ on manifest largely in the variants of constructivism (Liu & Matthews, 2005). From the many varieties of constructivism, Liu and Matthews (2005) distinguish between cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Cognitive constructivism finds its roots mainly in the intrapersonal nature of Piaget's work and focusses on the role of individual knowledge construction and discovery in cognitive development. Social constructivism highlights the role of the social environment and the social factors that influence learning. This social constructivist tradition is often said to be derived from the work of Vygotsky (Liu & Matthews, 2005), and it is this tradition that will be the focus of this study.

Bruning, Schraw, Norby and Ronning (2004:193-194) contend that the Vygotskian social constructivist view of teaching and learning highlights social activities: an individual's learning takes place through interaction with adults or peers who have greater knowledge. These researchers support the importance of social interaction as a foundation for cognitive development and subscribe to the role, guidance and support of more experienced partners as facilitators in building students' knowledge. This view of learning as a profoundly social activity during interaction with others is supported by Vygotsky's description of learning as a socially mediated process during which individuals, in their social interaction with others, acquire knowledge of many concepts (Schunk, 2012:274). Bruning *et al.* (2004:195) claim that a constructivist approach manifests itself in many ways: some of which are the use of cooperative learning and guided discussions in tutoring classes.

The Vygotskian concept of dialectical constructivism, within the social constructivism variant, is of particular interest to this study. Dialectical constructivism is the perspective which highlights the notion that knowledge construction takes place from both the workings of the individual's mind, referred to as an internal factor, as well as external influences such as presented information in the form of teaching and exposure to models, referred to as an external factor or the environment in which the individual finds himself/herself (Bruning *et al.* 2004:196; Schunk, 2012:232). This contribution of Vygotsky to constructivism emphasises the value of personal interactions during collaborative situations such as tutoring, and highlights the stimulation these personal interactions provide during developmental processes and the fostering of cognitive growth (Schunk, 2012:242). The theory brings to the fore the idea that knowledge is co-constructed between two or more people: with language as the most important tool in the construction of knowledge during such interactions. The dialectical constructivist view is a relevant and useful perspective to consider in studies which explore the effectiveness of social interactions in a peer-assisted instructional approach such

as tutoring – in which both student, called tutee, and tutor are active agents in the learning process (Schunk, 2012:270).

In addition to the relevance of Vygotsky's dialectical constructivism perspective to this study, is his concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky described the ZPD as the difference between what a person can manage to do independently and what that same person can potentially accomplish with the support of others (Bruning *et al.* 2004:197). In the zone, called a space or process, of proximal development a person interacting with an adult or a more capable peer can attempt tasks which would have been beyond their abilities independently. During this process of mediation, the adult, or more capable peer, shares his/her knowledge or skill and makes the task easier for the person attempting a new task (Schunk, 2012:242).

The students in this study averred that failure in the subjects they received tutoring in was due to a lack of understanding in the Additional Language-taught concepts and terminology of the subjects: adding to their inability to make sense of the subject matter. The tutoring offered to them in this study was provided in their home language: potentially increasing their chances of better understanding and sense-making of the subject matter. Tutoring, as described in the review of the literature of this study, is a mediation process during which a more capable person, called a tutor, uses his/her own experiences and knowledge to support a less capable person, called a tutee, to develop a better understanding in order to, in this instance, master the subject matter. It is my opinion that the two concepts within the social constructivist perspective, dialectical constructivism and zone of proximal development, are useful concepts to use as a framework in analysing the data derived from the experiences of the participants, especially the tutors and tutees in the tutoring programme.

In the following sections an inquiry strategy and the research design are applied: which includes, amongst other things, a description of the data collection methods and preliminary thoughts on how the data collected will be analysed in an attempt to answer the research question.

3.4 QUALITATIVE METHOD AS A STRATEGY OF INQUIRY

According to Creswell (2014:31), the researcher's decision about a strategy to study a particular issue or topic is informed by the philosophical assumptions the researcher brings to the study. In the section on the paradigm framework of this study, reasons were given for and discussed in the philosophical view of truth, reality and knowledge for this inquiry. The essence of the chosen interpretive paradigm embraces the view that both researcher and the person or group being studied bring their own understanding, which in turn is influenced by their own experiences, to the research. Interpretive researchers do not seek a particular right

or wrong method of conducting research, but rather endeavour to search for understanding a phenomenon in a particular context: having a deep concern for the view of the individual (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:17).

Notwithstanding the view of Willis (2007:109–112) that interpretive researchers can use any method as a guide in search of truth, several writers (Creswell, 2014:32; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:219-220; Patton, 2015:22; Mouton & Marais, 1996:169) suggest that qualitative methods of inquiry should be the choice where understanding of individuals' perspectives on a particular phenomenon is the aim of the inquiry and where humans are the research instrument, such as in education research. Where the goal of the study is to hear and make meaning or interpret the views of the participants, a qualitative approach is a suitable choice that will support that goal (Creswell, 2014:37). Meaning making and depth in interpretation of views is acquired where a researcher is interested in finding out what happens, why it happens and how it happens the way it does (Henning *et al.*, 2004:3). The use of qualitative methods in research gives voice to participants and provides the researcher an opportunity to probe in-depth and detailed understanding of meanings, attitudes and intentions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:219; Patton, 2015:22).

Maxwell (2013:30) supports a qualitative approach to research where participants' perspectives add meaning and understanding to the goals of the study. The writer takes a similar stance where the unique context and circumstances in which the experiences of a small number of individuals takes place, can be understood, as is the case in this study. Qualitative research lends itself to an understanding of the process in which the events and the actions take place: while the outcomes at the end of the process are similarly important.

A qualitative approach to an inquiry can be distinguished from a quantitative or mixed-methods approach by means of several characteristics. The next section is a short summary of how evidence of the characteristics of a qualitative strategy were gathered for this study (Creswell, 2014:234–235):

- (i) Data for the study were collected by holding face-to-face interactions with participants.
- (ii) I collected data personally and used an interview protocol which I developed myself, remaining the key instrument.
- (ii) Data were collected from transcripts of recorded interviews and reflective journals to acquire the perceptions of participants. The information from these multiple sources was reviewed and analysed to search for categories and themes that cut across the sources.
- (iv) The use of inductive and deductive processes in the analyses of the data facilitated a build-up of patterns, categories and themes in the data organising stage, while simultaneously looking back at the data to determine whether more information was needed.

This iterative backwards and forwards movement was not restricted to the data analyses section, but was applied between the several stages of planning and conducting the research, as well as working between the data sources (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:223). This was evident as I continuously found myself having to go back to previous sections either to review or amend particular thoughts and ensure that it aligns with later sections.

(v) Throughout the process I made all efforts to keep the focus on the meaning the participants assigned to the issue in question, and not my own meaning or that of the writers as they expressed it in the literature. In this regard I relied heavily on the original utterances of participants to maintain the authenticity of their meanings. Examples of these utterances can be found in Chapter 4.

(vi) As the researcher, I had to be mindful of the fact that the research process of qualitative methods is emergent and that some or all of the phases of the process may shift or change. These shifts could manifest in a need to modify the participants or sites from where the data are collected: a change in the questions or even the forms on which the data were collected. The important aspect I had to keep in mind here was to keep the participants as the key source of information and to learn about the issue from the participants.

(vii) For this study I developed a conceptual theory from analyses of previous research, and used it as a reference to address the social and historical contexts of the students and tutors as participants.

(viii) Throughout the study I constantly reflected upon what I heard, saw and understood from participants and how it potentially linked to my own prior understandings, background, history and context as a student, and currently as an educator in a previously disadvantaged school. I made reflective notes about my own experiences, thoughts and feelings on a continuous basis and kept it safe for future use.

(ix) By giving consideration to the multiple perspectives of participants and by identifying a variety of factors that are involved in the study, I endeavoured to develop a complex picture of the issue under scrutiny, while at the same time giving a holistic account or big picture.

This section of Chapter 3 spelt out my choice of a research approach, the qualitative approach, and the reasons for the choice. Included in this section is a statement of its general intent with a qualitative approach and characteristics or qualities that must be evident in an enquiry where a qualitative approach is used. I will now expand my research methodology by making explicit the research design I have chosen and adopted for the purpose of this study.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study focusses on the experiences of participants in a tutoring programme which ran for one academic year. The primary focus of data collection was the views and perceptions of the individuals involved in the tutoring programme: specifically how they were affected by the dynamics of the programme.

When embarking on a study, the chosen research design, together with the researcher's choice of a research approach and the research methods, are the key terms that represent a researcher's perspective on research. The information presented in these three terms spells out the researcher's perspective on research and ranges from broad philosophical assumptions to the narrow procedures followed for collecting, analysing and interpreting data (Creswell, 2014:31). In the previous sections of this chapter, I shared my perspective on the paradigm, theoretical perspective and research approach I have chosen for this study. The following section contains information on the research design for the study. It explains my reasons for choosing the specific design and how it will shape the aspects of sampling, data collection and analyses, as well as ethical issues which need to be considered for the study.

Patton (2015:255) suggests that, when faced with a decision about a research design, it is essential to consider and define who and what are studied or even who or what are not studied. In addition to this consideration, Patton (2015:255) proposes that the researcher decides on the depth of the inquiry; given the resources and time at the researcher's disposal. The choice for a research design is dependent on the context, purpose and nature of the research (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005:201). When considering the aspect of research design, researchers must bear in mind that the choice specifies the unit or units of analysis to be studied (Patton, 2015:260).

The epistemology of the already established qualitative approach of this study provides the framework for how research is conducted and as such, prescribes that the researcher should at all times give preference to the perceptions of the person, or group of people, that is being studied (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005:201–202). Qualitative methods of inquiry typically collect data from in-depth interviews, selected focus groups, analysis of documents and open-ended questions on surveys amongst other elements to produce detailed information about a small number of people and cases (Patton, 2015:255–257).

3.5.1 Case Study as a research design

I have decided on a case study research design because it gives an opportunity for an in-depth exploration of views and experiences of the participant, the bounded unit while they are part of the program, the bounded time (Patton, 2015:259). From an interpretive perspective, as mentioned in the paradigm framework in qualitative research, case studies provide an opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of how participants make meaning of a certain phenomenon under scrutiny, and give the researcher a deeper understanding of the dynamics of a particular situation (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:75).

The emphasis of the case study is on what specifically can be learned about the single case (Stake, 2005:443). A researcher's decision on case study as a design and by implication the appropriate unit of analysis goes hand-in-hand with what the researcher wishes to express about the phenomenon in question at the end of the study (Patton, 2015:263). The observation of Wiersma and Jurs (2005:202) that the findings of a case study represent a detailed examination of a specific event or program, of which a tutoring programme is an example, gives credence to Patton's (2015:262) conclusion that the individuals, and the event or the program become the case.

In this study I used an *intrinsic* case study, as opposed to an *instrumental* case study and *multiple* case study. It drew on Stake's (2005:445-447) explanation of an *intrinsic* case study as an inquiry whereby the focus is not necessarily on theory building: although theory building is not completely ruled out, but on this specific case with all its particularity and ordinariness. In his discussion on *intrinsic* case study, Stake encourages researchers to seek for commonalities as well as particularities. However, the researcher's end product of the inquiry must show uncommon phenomenon evident from the nature, the historical background and other cases which show similarities with this particular case. In this regard I have endeavoured to make comparisons to show differences and/or similarities in the conclusions and findings between this and other studies on tutoring programmes. These differences and/or similarities are available in the chapter dealing with the findings and conclusions of this study.

In accordance with Stake's (2005:450) view on *intrinsic* casework, this case as identified by the commissioning institution and explained in Chapter 1 of this study then became an opportunity to study the experiences of the participants in this particular tutoring programme. The intrinsic interest of the commissioners of the case and the researcher call for an understanding of the issues, contexts, interpretations and "thick description" peculiar to this case. Researchers who draw on the *intrinsic* case study method cannot avoid generalizations, but do their utmost to describe the case in question in sufficient detail so that readers comprehend the interpretations of the researchers, and draw their own conclusions about the phenomenon.

Case studies, despite their limited generalizability on their own, have the potential to be part of a pool of data which, together with other case studies, can contribute to greater generalizability. In this way, the case study under scrutiny can contribute to the expansion and generalization of theory on experiences in tutoring programmes which can assist researchers to understand other similar cases or situations and/or test the theory in other empirical cases. The generalization then becomes more of an “analytic” rather than a “statistical” generalization (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:294–295). The findings and conclusions of this study have the potential to contribute to existing theory and research findings about academic support in cases with similar features.

Section 3.5.1 of Chapter 3 dealt with the choice of the research design for this study and provides reasons for the choice. Case study research is not necessarily qualitative in its nature and therefore a choice of a particular kind of case study was identified, namely *intrinsic* casework. The focus of the case will not be on representivity, but rather on the case itself. An explanation was given of how the choice of an *intrinsic* case study facilitates an analysis of the entire programme as seen through the eyes of the participants, and shape the researcher’s analysis and interpretation of the data. The next section deals with the details of population and sampling as part of the research design.

3.5.2 Population and Sampling

In addition to the researcher’s decisions about the method and instruments to be used for the study, decisions had to be made about the population that the study focuses on. However, a researcher may experience limitations in terms of expenses, time and accessibility to the whole population and has to focus on obtaining data from a smaller, representative group: termed a sample (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:100). In the population and sampling strategy, the researcher gives a clear description and justification for the choices, and makes explicit the method and procedures he/she will be using to undertake the selection for the sample (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:61). Cohen *et al.* (2007:100) claim that the quality of a study is highly dependent on the suitability of the sampling strategy that the researcher identifies, selects and deploys and that decisions around representativeness, the sample size and access to the sample be made explicit early in the study.

Various researchers (Cohen, *et al.*, 2007:114; Maxwell, 2013:96; Nieuwenhuis, 2010:79) propose purposive sampling for qualitative enquiries: which is the chosen sampling strategy for this study. The name suggests that respondents in this type of sampling strategy are handpicked because they possess the characteristics appropriate for the particular purpose of the study. Purposeful and deliberate selection of participants in this type of sampling lies in their ability to provide information that is pertinent to the question and goals of the inquiry

(Maxwell, 2013:97). Patton (2015:52) endorses qualitative purposeful sampling by stating that it emphasises in-depth understanding and provides information-rich data from which it is possible to learn a great deal about issues at the heart of the phenomenon in question.

The size of the sample used in qualitative studies depends upon what the researcher seeks to know, what will be useful for the purpose of the inquiry and what will have credibility to provide the audience with a “thick enough description” of the topic under review (Patton, 2015:311). Cohen *et al.* (2015:143) suggests that, in instances where the researcher can access the whole population and such population represent only themselves, it might be wiser to refer to them as a group or individuals instead of a “sample”. I have decided to select the whole population in the tutoring programme as the sample for this study: since I was cautioned that access to some of the tutees and tutors might be problematic due to difficulty travelling and other responsibilities after classes. Should this have proved to be the case, the size of the sample to which I had access would have been adequate for data collection and been representative of the total population.

The total population consisted of all the tutees and tutors in the tutoring programme, the lecturers in the three subjects identified as challenging for IsiXhosa First Language students (Mathematics in Education, Language in Education and Computer Literacy), the programme manager and the trainer sourced by the institution for training of tutors. A total of thirty tutees, divided into five groups, five tutors, three lecturers, one programme manager and one trainer participated in the program, accounting for a population of forty. For data collection purposes, the focus shifted to at least ten tutees, two per group, depending on their availability.

Researchers have to make arrangements for access to the participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:109). For this study permission was obtained from the Head of Research in the Education Faculty of the University. One administrative official arranged an introductory session between the researcher and some of the tutees and tutors, during which the purpose of the study was explained and the tutees and tutors were informed that they may be contacted by the researcher for participation.

The table below presents an overview of the population and sample used in the study: together with the data collection methods used. Following the table, is a discussion of the data collection methods.

Table 3.1: Overview of population and sample

No.	Data Collection Method	Sample
1.	Semi-structured interviews	10 Tutees (2 tutees per group) 5 Tutors 3 Lecturers 1 Programme manager 1 Trainer
2.	Reflective journals	30 Tutees 5 Tutors

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The data collection methods are the sources or tools that the researcher uses to gain access to the information which enables him/her to answer the research question. The choice of the methods or sources depends largely on what works most effectively in that particular situation (Maxwell, 2013:100). Henning (2009:6) proposes that the researcher be guided by the purpose of the study when deciding which data sources to use. The purpose of this inquiry was to find out what the experiences of the participants are in the tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first-language students. I had to use methods that would give access to the kind of information (Henning, 2009:6) that would speak of their experiences during the running of the programme.

Creswell (2009:178) suggests four basic types of data collection methods in qualitative studies: observations, interviews, documents and audio-visual materials. Use of multiple sources of data collection serves as data triangulation which aims at corroborating either the same facts or the same phenomenon (Yin, 2009:116). Maxwell (2013:102) supports the use of multiple data collection methods for two reasons: first as a means of checking whether the strengths and limitations of the different methods all point to the same conclusions, and second, to gain access to information which highlights different aspects of the issue under scrutiny.

The tutoring in this particular programme was conducted in the first language of the tutees and tutors, which is IsiXhosa and because of the linguistic interpretation limitations that observations and audio-visual materials posed (Creswell, 2009:179–180) for the researcher in this study, I decided on interviews and documents as data sources, as these could be conducted in English. The choice of interviews as a data collection method for this study afforded participants the opportunity to express their own interpretations of how they viewed the world through their lived experiences (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:349). Reflective journals as an additional data collection method in this case provide the tutees and tutors the opportunity to reflect on, and write about, their experiences at the end of each tutoring session. Below is a more detailed description of each of my data collection methods.

3.6.1 Interviews

In qualitative interviews the enquirer and participants engage in a two-way conversation during which the enquirer asks and the participant answers questions that shed light on the ideas, beliefs, views and opinions of the participant (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:87). Cohen *et al.* (2007:349) emphasize the social role of the research interview in generating knowledge, by referring to the interview as an *inter-view*, or rather a bilateral exchange of views between two individuals in search of knowledge.

To ensure success during the interview, the researcher needs to consider the interview setting: the exchange of views and ideas should ideally take place in a physical and psychologically comfortable, private and quiet space. The physical setting, including the seating arrangements, should be devoid of barriers between the researcher and the participant: while interruptions or other people overhearing the conversations must be ruled out and audibility should be maximised (King & Horrocks, 2010:42–43). Most of the interviews for this study took place in empty lecture rooms and private offices on the campus of the institution: to ensure privacy and comfort. On the occasion where an interview was conducted off campus, I ensured that the location was a quiet, private and comfortable space.

King and Horrocks (2010:48–49) regard the establishment of trust, alternatively known as building rapport, between the researcher and the participant as a key ingredient for a successful interview. The way in which the researcher introduces herself and the project to the participant is a starting point to allow the participant to relax, and for paving the way for the participant to be candid with the researcher. Informing the participant, and ensuring an understanding of what the study is about, together with some consideration for the physical appearance, non-verbal communication and use of vocabulary of the researcher, contribute towards a frank, amenable and trusting atmosphere. The purpose of the study was explained

to participants prior to the data collection process: it was important for the researcher to repeat the explanation because this was necessary to build rapport. I made an effort to use a tone of voice which established a trusting, informal and conducive atmosphere.

Nieuwenhuis (2010:88) suggests three probing strategies for the researcher to ensure that what s/he has heard is in fact what the person meant. First, the detail-oriented probing technique provides answers to the “who”, “where” and “what” of the information needed. Second, in using the elaboration technique, the researcher asks participants for more information about an answer or example that a participant gave: so that the researcher can offer a more comprehensive account. In the third instance, the researcher uses the clarification probing technique to check understanding or accuracy of what has been said. In order to achieve the benefits of these probing techniques mentioned, I opted for a face-to-face, one-on-one, in-person interview. In addition to the opportunity of exercising the three techniques of questioning mentioned in this paragraph, it gave me the opportunity to control the line of questioning (Creswell, 2009:179) and focus on the views and opinions of one interviewee at a time.

Interview questions should not be confused with the research question: the latter being formulated with the aim of understanding the problem of inquiry, while the former are formulated with the aim of understanding the experiences of the participants, in this case the experiences of the participants in the tutoring programme (Maxwell, 2013:101). Maxwell (2013:101) proposes that the researcher take special care in developing good interview questions in a creative and insightful way, the type of questions where there is a direct logical connection between the research question(s) and the interview questions, as well as the type of questions to which the researcher is genuinely interested for the answers. Avoiding questions that illicit a simple “yes” or “no” answer would be a good strategy to follow (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:88).

Nieuwenhuis (2010:87) suggests that the interviewer draw up a semi-structured interview schedule with a few pre-determined questions to assist with a particular line of enquiry, but that room is allowed for probing and clarification of answers. An interview schedule helps to maintain a balance between (i) giving the interviewee some space to expand on his/her own views and ideas, and ask some questions herself; and (ii) the interviewer exercising some authority over the process (Henning *et al.*, 2004:66). The researcher maintains her position as the inquirer and the one responsible for the process, but at the same time gives validation to the respondent as a co-creator of knowledge (Henning *et al.*, 2004:69). Cohen *et al.* (2007:353) point out that the use of an interview guide approach which contains the pre-determined topics and issues to be covered, lends a systematic weight to the conversation, but still allows the interviewer to change the sequence during the course of the interview to

keep the process conversational and situational. An interview guide for this study (marked Annexure B) is included at the end of this document.

Because of the unique nature of the interview conversation, the researcher must give special care to the way in which the questions are formulated and her choice of words, while at the same time putting the participant at ease with her own relaxed and comfortable appearance (King & Horrocks, 2010:49–53). As the one who asks the questions, the interviewer should avoid asking the type of questions where the participant feels compelled to give an answer s/he feels the interviewer expects: these are termed leading questions. Wording of questions should preferably be kept simple and clear, and point to one issue only at a time. Judgemental responses from the side of the interviewer could harm the rapport that was built up, in the same way that poor listening skills can (King & Horrocks, 2010: 49–53).

Successful interviews occur when interviewees are aware of the aim of the interview and the type of information that is needed, where there is a willingness to participate and when the interview is not too long. (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:88). Marshall and Rossman (2006:101) encourage an approach where the interviewer shows appreciation for the participant's views and ideas. The enquirer may want to explore a variety of issues by using a range of questions: e.g. questioning about participants' experience, opinions, feelings, values and knowledge. Good listening skills with a combination of a non-judgemental and non-critical attitudes and maintaining eye contact are all factors which add to success during the interview (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:88). The purpose and value of the participants' contributions to this study were fully explained before and during the interviews. Before starting the interviews, I enquired about their studies and work situations: all in an effort to put them at ease and to build rapport.

Interviews are, however, dependent on personal interaction for their success. Effectiveness may be limited where there is non-cooperation, an unwillingness or discomfort in sharing on the part of the participants. The success of the interview may be compromised if the interviewer lacks the expertise to draw narratives from the participants or lacks the ability to converse in a language that participants are familiar with: in which case she may not fully understand the responses, or certain sections of them, and may fail to gather sufficient data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:102). The home language of the tutees and tutor participants was isiXhosa; they were comfortable in conducting the interviews in English. In this way the researcher ensured that none of the inferences and subtleties of responses was lost in translation.

While recordings of interviews can be useful and may help with the retrieval of information at a later stage, they do not capture the tacit, non-verbal elements of an interview (Walsham, 2006). The absence of these elements can cause loss of some crucial aspects which body language can offer to the interpretation of a person's view. The researcher may want to

supplement interviews with notes on his/her own observations while conducting the interview. All interviews for this study were recorded and for each interview I had a notepad ready to make additional notes on any observations that could be helpful at a later stage. I explained the use of the recorder and the presence of the notebook to the interviewees and requested their permission. This action supported the building of rapport and the establishment of trust.

3.6.2 Reflective journals

In qualitative research, documents are a written data collection technique that helps the researcher to shed light on the phenomenon s/he is investigating (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:82). Reflective journals are one option of data collection, and can serve as a useful representation of participants' thoughts, feelings and views (Creswell, 2009:180). For this study, tutees and tutors were requested to keep a reflective journal in which they recorded their learning, thoughts and feelings immediately at the end of each tutoring session (Creswell, 2009:182), capturing their own perspectives of their experiences during the session.

Boud (2001) describes the act of reflection as a process in which experience can be turned into learning. When writing these reflections in a journal, learning from experience enables the writer to enhance what s/he does and how s/he does it. One purpose of reflective journal writing is to capture an experience or record an event as it happened: a method which can be effective as an alternative method of expression for those not good at expressing themselves verbally. Researchers, however, when using the written recording of the writer, extract the meaning from the written recording and use it as data to shed light on the phenomenon under scrutiny (Boud, 2001).

While reflective journals offer the advantages of giving the researcher access to the language and words of the participants and saving the researcher the time and expense of transcribing the data, they pose a limitation: in that not all people can articulate their perspectives equally well (Creswell, 2014:241–242). While reading the reflective journals of the tutees and tutors, and since English was an Additional Language for them, it was clear that some of them struggled to express their experiences on paper. The reflections of the tutees and tutors were nonetheless clear enough and sufficient to capture their experiences and perspectives. Throughout the process of the study, my own personal thoughts and reflections were captured on what I called reflective notes. Extracts from the reflective journals of some of the participants are available in Annexure C.

Section 3.6 of this chapter contains my choice of data collection methods for this study. I explained in detail the reasons for the choice of interviews and reflective journals and

discussed some pertinent issues to take into consideration when using the selected data collection methods. In section 3.7 I discuss ideas for conducting the data analysis of this study.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis as part of the design of the study reflects the researcher's thoughts and decisions about how s/he will conduct do analysis of the data that were collected (Maxwell, 2013:104). As with the case of decisions on the design of the project, the analysis strategy which the researcher decides on should be appropriate for the data that were collected: ultimately to answer the research question and address any potential validity threats to the conclusions of the study (Maxwell, 2013:104). Doing analysis entails the literal taking apart of words, sentences and paragraphs, while at the same time organising, reducing and describing the data to interpret and/or build a theory around it (Henning *et al.*, 2004:127). The qualitative researcher has the challenge of having to sift through and reducing a massive amount of data into a framework which s/he then communicates to the reader as the findings of the study (Patton, 2002:432).

There is no single clear method for analysis of data: in this instance the researcher was advised to apply proposed guidelines while applying his/her own intellect and analytical thought processes to present the data and communicate what it reveals in a fair manner within the framework of the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002:433). In applying the guidelines, each enquirer used his/her unique skills, insights and capabilities which shape his/her creativity and judgement (Patton, 2002:433). When analysing the data for a qualitative study, the researcher uses quotations and descriptions from the collection methods that were used to provide sufficient detail for a convincing conclusion (Merriam, 2009:166). Henning *et al.* (2004:101) describe the process of analysis of the data as a challenge to the researcher's creative ability to interpret, capture, understand and translate it into writing.

Several writers (Maxwell, 2013:104; Merriam, 2009:169; Henning *et al.*, 2004:127) suggest that researchers in qualitative studies deal with the gathering and analysis of data as a simultaneous process and not as two separate processes. This simultaneous action of collecting and analysing data facilitates the important decision of whether the researcher renders a full description of the setting or generates theory around a certain aspect of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Merriam, 2009:171). Another aspect which qualitative researchers have to consider when analysing the data, is the paradigmatic and theoretical frameworks within which the study is conducted (Patton, 2002:434). All of the aspects mentioned in this and the paragraphs above have to be considered with great care: the final

product of the study is judged on how scrupulously the data are presented, analysed and interpreted, together with the extent to which the researcher makes recommendations about overall effectiveness, continuation, expansion and/or possible replication at similar sites (Patton, 2002:435).

Analysis starts with reading of the data (Maxwell, 2013:105; Henning *et al.*, 2004:127) and the researcher identifying information from the text which seems important or meaningful to him/her or which s/he thinks could lend new insight to the phenomenon in question. During this process of reading, the enquirer makes notes or comments about the data and divides it into smaller units: all the time keeping the purpose of the study and the research question in mind (Merriam, 2009:170). In the same way that listening to recordings of interviews and writing notes on these and other data sources are useful ways which assist the researcher in developing preliminary categories and relations, so is the making of regular memos which capture and facilitate the analytical thinking around the content of the data. The memos are then used as an additional technique to analyse the data (Maxwell, 2013:105). The researcher may have to return for more data collection to fill gaps and ambiguities: to create a thick, rich description by which a qualitative study is characterised. Once the researcher gets to the point where no more data are collected, s/he has to be led in the analysis by the research question/s and the writing up of analytic insights and interpretations which emerge. Gaps and unresolved ambiguities often become part of the final product because of deadlines for dissertations and publication purposes (Patton, 2002:437).

Researchers have to devise a system to organize and manage all the data which have been collected: which should ideally occur in the study (Merriam, 2009:173). The dominant strategy for this organizing and managing in qualitative research is termed coding (Maxwell, 2013:107). Merriam (2009:173) describes this strategy of coding as assigning different aspects of the data to a particular designation which can take the form of letters, words, numbers, phrases, colours or even a combination of some of them: something which facilitates the reliable retrieval of data and faithful writing up of the findings at a later stage.

“Open coding” is the term used to describe the process by which the researcher organizes or rearranges the selected text into themes or categories, examines and makes comparisons both in and between ideas in the themes or categories and develops certain theories around each theme or category. The act of coding becomes a physical separation and sorting of the descriptive data which has reference to a particular topic (Maxwell, 2013:107), aptly referred to as “literally making up the codes as the researcher works through the data (Henning *et al.* 2004:105). The researcher should try to gain a broad impression and overview of the entire text at this stage by reading the transcriptions as closely as possible in an attempt to find meaning, and go back to reading individual transcriptions to find units of meaning in sentences and phrases (Henning *et al.* 2004:104). Related coded data are grouped, a theme

or category is constructed and a name is assigned to it. The theme or category then becomes part of the discussion of the inquiry (Henning, 2004:105).

This section of the research design dealt with ideas and aspects to consider when conducting analysis of a study. In Chapter 4 of this document I elaborate on the analysis of the data for this study. Part of the process in Chapter 4 will be to present the data that were collected and to discuss the process I followed during analysis: as well as the themes and categories that were identified. In the following two sections of this chapter I present my thoughts on how trustworthiness was built into the study as well as discussing how I endeavoured to conduct the study in an ethical manner.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

New knowledge created through research results has to be valid and reliable in order to gain the trust of the people the results are intended for (Merriam, 2009:209). Users of the results of a research study, such as other researchers, practitioners and readers will trust the results of a study when the insights arrived at and the conclusions derived from the data sound convincing and truthful to them, and they have confidence in the manner in which the investigation was conducted (Merriam, 2009:210). Patton (2002:542) claims that the quality of an inquiry, and the credibility of it, is judged against criteria that the intended audience assigns to the notion of trustworthiness of its findings.

I have adopted an interpretivist position as a paradigm framework for this study, where the emphasis of the inquiry is on the interpretation which both participants and researcher assign to the experiences of the participants in the tutoring programme. The intended audience of studies conducted within an interpretivist framework uses findings of the study to gain an appreciation of the perspective of others and the ability of the researcher to reflect on her own perspective as criteria to judge the trustworthiness of the findings (Patton, 2009:546). In seeking to lend credibility to the study and its findings when analysing and reporting on the data, I captured multiple perspectives of the participants and was explicit about my own interpretation of what their perspectives mean (Patton, 2009:546). Proving trustworthiness meant that what I present in the results as reality had to be congruent with my chosen philosophical assumptions and theoretical paradigm: supported by sufficient detail of the experiences of the participants as shared in their own words (Merriam, 2009:211).

According to Patton (2002:552) credibility in findings is obtained when the researcher can provide evidence of the application of rigorous methods for collecting high-quality data through multiple methods and analysing it in a credible manner which speaks of insightfulness and the ability to conceptualise different perspectives. For this study I have engaged in interviews with, and gathered information from, reflective journals from a number

of participants as data collection methods. In analysing the data, I had to be mindful and caution myself against developing and shaping findings based on my own disposition and biases (Patton, 2002:553). If any such disposition and biases came to mind, I had to make it explicit while conducting the analysis.

Both Merriam (2009:216) and Patton (2002:556) suggest triangulation of data collection methods and data sources as a sound strategy to ensure valid and reliable results. By using more than one method of data collection, I could compare what was said in an interview with one participant, with what was written in the reflective journal of that same participant. By using multiple sources of data, I could compare and cross-check individual views and perspectives of participants, with those of others through the interviews and reflective journals.

Qualitative research almost always investigates the constructs of how people experience and understand the world, and the findings of such investigations comprise their interpretation of reality (Merriam, 2009:214). Merriam (2009:214) regards the credibility of any study as the extent of the congruence between what is presented as the findings and what has been presented by participants as their different dimensions and variations of reality. To emphasize the importance of trustworthiness in research, McQueen (2002) cautions that interpretive researchers retain a consistent standard of communicating and understanding of the individual perspectives of the subjects, rather than assume neutrality by focussing on replicability: for this consistency is what grants credibility and importance to the work of an interpretivist researcher. I have, throughout the inquiry, made all efforts to capture, present, interpret and translate the reality of the individual participants. For further enhancement of credibility, I have included extracts from interview transcriptions to authenticate the perceptions and experiences of individual participants. Examples of these extracts from interview transcripts can be found in Annexure D at the end of this document.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the factors mentioned in section 3.8 above, the trustworthiness of an inquiry rests on the extent to which the researcher can demonstrate that the investigation has been conducted in an ethical manner (Merriam, 2009:234). Merriam (2009:235) suggests that researchers have an awareness of ethical issues that may arise during the investigation process and be conscious of his/her own understanding, beliefs and values around these issues. These ethical dilemmas are likely to arise during the collection and analysis of data stages and disseminating of findings (Merriam, 2009:231). Consideration should be paid to participants' right to privacy, the notion of informed consent, the relation between researcher

and participant, as well as the filtering of information collected and reporting on the same (Merriam, 2009:232).

Approval for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee of the university. Since the participants in the study are students and lecturers from the same institution, approval was sought and received from the research department of the Social Science Faculty to access the site and its students and lecturers as participants for the study.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I developed a letter of consent. I presented and explained the contents to the participants before commencing the interviews (Patton (2002:407). I informed participants of the fact that their participation was in all respects voluntary and that they had the right to discontinue their participation at any point before, during or after the interview process. I thanked the interviewees for their willingness to participate in the study and shared with them that the purpose of the study is to capture their experiences during their involvement in the tutoring programme. I explained that their identity would be kept anonymous and that no names would be used when writing up the data and its findings. Participants were requested to sign a consent form as proof that the content of the consent letter was explained to them fully and that they indeed agreed to grant consent. An example of the consent form is attached as Annexure A.

Patton (2002:405) cautions that neither the interviewer nor the interviewee is left unaffected by the reflective processes involved in interviews. It is inevitable that the feelings, thoughts, knowledge and experiences of both parties are affected on some level during their interaction with each other. Although I could not know beforehand what impact the interviewing experience would have on me and the participants, I had to keep in mind that the purpose of the interview was to gather the data, and not to alter or unduly influence the participants' views and/or their circumstances. The purpose was neither to judge the views of the participants nor the processes involved in the administration of the programme: nor to give advice to anybody (Patton, 2002:406). As a precautionary measure I invited the interviewees to contact me if there was anything they found uncomfortable in what was said or done during or after the interview: which they needed to discuss. I gave the assurance that if I could not help any further with an issue they felt uncomfortable with, I would at best refer them to somebody reliable.

Marshall and Rossman (2006:82) hold that, when it comes to ethical conduct in research, the researcher can never anticipate and cover all the areas, but has to show an awareness and appreciation of, and commitment to, the principles which guide ethical conduct. Walsham (2006) mentions, for example, how ethical tensions may arise in situations where anonymity was exercised by the researcher, but some readers still managed to make an informed guess as to whom a particular view was attributed or who is being discussed. Where this is the case, in research conducted in organizations for example, some breach of confidentiality

is potentially possible. To my knowledge I have taken all possible precautions to protect the identity of, and avoid possible harm to, any of the participants.

3.10 CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 described the methodology that was researched, selected and adopted in order to find answers to the research question. The chapter started with revisiting the research question, stating what the intent of the study was and how the findings could potentially be utilised. I explained how locating the study within an interpretive framework provides maximum opportunity to explore the meaning the participants assign to their experiences and the importance of understanding context when interpreting the data. My choice of social constructivism as a theoretical basis for the inquiry, with its emphasis on the value of social interaction on cognitive development, highlights the role of socially mediated support in a setting such as tutoring. Choosing a qualitative approach supports the goal of providing a rich and thick description of the experiences of the participants; as is explained in the characteristics of a qualitative study. I provide an explanation of how I attempted to elicit evidence of these characteristics to this study.

In the research design section I explained how the choice of an *intrinsic* case study design provides an opportunity for examining the issues and context of this particular case, while at the same time setting a scene to compare its findings and conclusions with that of other tutoring programmes. The qualitative nature of the inquiry granted further direction in the choice of population and sampling and the data methods to be used to address the research question. In the data analysis section of this chapter I provided a theoretical base for the management of the data and spelled out how I intended deriving the categories and themes that would lead me to the answers to the research question. In conclusion to this chapter I shared some ideas of how I would ensure that the study provided trustworthiness and credibility to its intended audience, as well as how potential ethical dilemmas were addressed. The next chapter focuses on details of how the data were analysed and interpreted and includes key themes extracted from the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3, the methodology design section of this study, alluded to how analysis of data entails a deconstruction of the words, sentences and paragraphs of participants' utterances and how it is the task of the researcher to organize, reduce and describe the mass of data gathered. Chapter 3 pointed out how the researcher applied analytical thinking when interpreting the data in order to build a theory around it, within the framework and purpose of the study. Henning *et al* (2004:103) term the analysis process the "heartbeat" of the research: referring to how the high level of analytical thinking that goes into the interpretation of the data, forms the centre of the study and its ultimate findings. Marshall and Rossman (2006:154) describe this data analysis process as the act of bringing about order, structure and interpretation to the information gathered from the participants and caution about its messy, ambiguous and time-consuming nature.

As I started to engage with the analysis of the data for the study, I was reminded of three central issues which should guide the process: (i) the research question itself, (ii) the purpose of the study and (iii) the theory which frames the study. Beyond these three central issues, Patton (2002:433 – 434) urges the researcher to stay true to the data and report on what it reveals. I decided to use thorough reading of all the information as a starting point for the analysis of the data, while at the same time, searching for general statements made by the participants that could aid in the process of the analysis.

The research question for this study asks what the experiences of the participants in a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first-language students are. My chosen interpretive theoretical paradigm as described in the conceptual framework of Chapter 3 claims that different viewpoints and multiple perspectives construct knowledge and reality, that one should look beyond the words of the participations and search for meaning in their intentions, values, beliefs and reasoning. As I moved from these premises, I had to search for meaning from all the data gathered because all the information represents the reality of the participants and could potentially shed light on the phenomenon in question.

In the conceptual framework, I referred to the literature claims of how poorly-equipped students from previously disadvantaged communities transition to higher education institutions with a backlog in their development, and how English as a medium of instruction adds to their struggle to cope. In conducting the analysis of the data I had to keep in mind that the tutoring programme as a support mechanism for IsiXhosa first-language students

was offered in their home language and that the findings and conclusions of this study could influence future implementation of similar programmes.

In the following section, I present the data set that was gathered, explain the process I followed to work through the data and finally present the themes and sub-themes that were developed. I conclude with a summary of the whole chapter.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA SET

In this section of the chapter I present (a) an illustration of the data set as collected from the two sources used: reflective journals and interviews, together with a discussion and (b) the process I followed during the analysis of the data, together with a discussion.

4.2.1 Presentation and discussion of the data set:

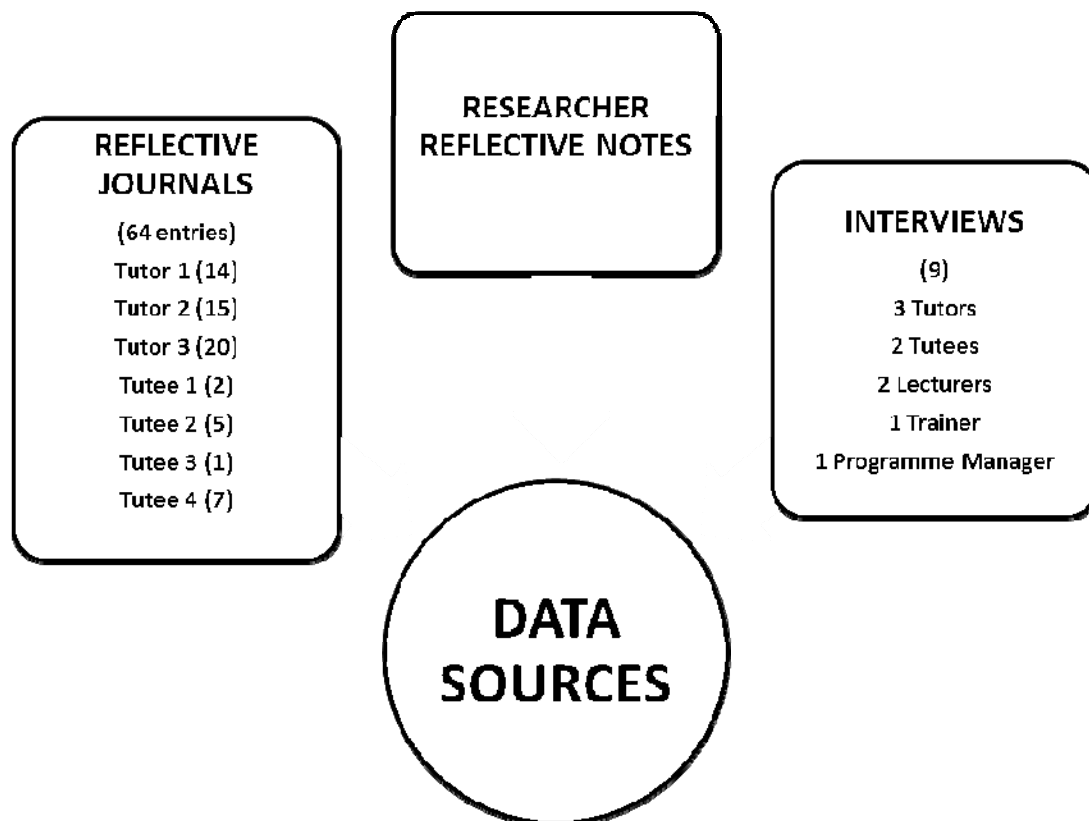


Figure 4.2: The data set

The data set out in the illustration above were obtained from the purposive sample as described in Chapter 3. Three of the five tutors and four of the thirty students submitted reflective journals. The entries into the journals at the end of the tutoring sessions ranged from between 1 entry to 20 entries per person. Interviews were held with three of the five tutors, two of the thirty tutees, two lecturers, one trainer and one programme manager. A total of 64 reflective journal entries were obtained and a total of 9 interviews held.

Of significance in the data set is the relatively limited amount of data obtained from the tutees in the programme. A possible reason for this paucity can be ascribed to the unavailability of the tutees for interviews, due to loaded daily schedules and travelling challenges after lectures. I was aware of how this challenge could negatively impact on the volume of the data to work with and how it could compromise a rich and thick description which characterises a qualitative enquiry, but nevertheless decided to continue with the amount of data available to me.

The presentation indicates the expected link between the information obtained from the different role players as sources, tutors, tutees, lecturers, trainer and programme co-ordinator, and the different methods used to obtain the information. Establishing the link between the sources and the methods placed the researcher on the path to triangulation: corroborating and checking facts which could either point to the same or different aspects of the experiences of the role players. Working back and forth between the sources and methods, helped in the search for categories or themes that cut across the sources and the methods. My own reflections are used in the final chapter.

4.2.2 Presentation and discussion of the process followed during analysis of the data

The process that was followed during analysis of the data was divided into five steps as shown below. Each step represents a new stage in the process and serves as a building block for the next stage.

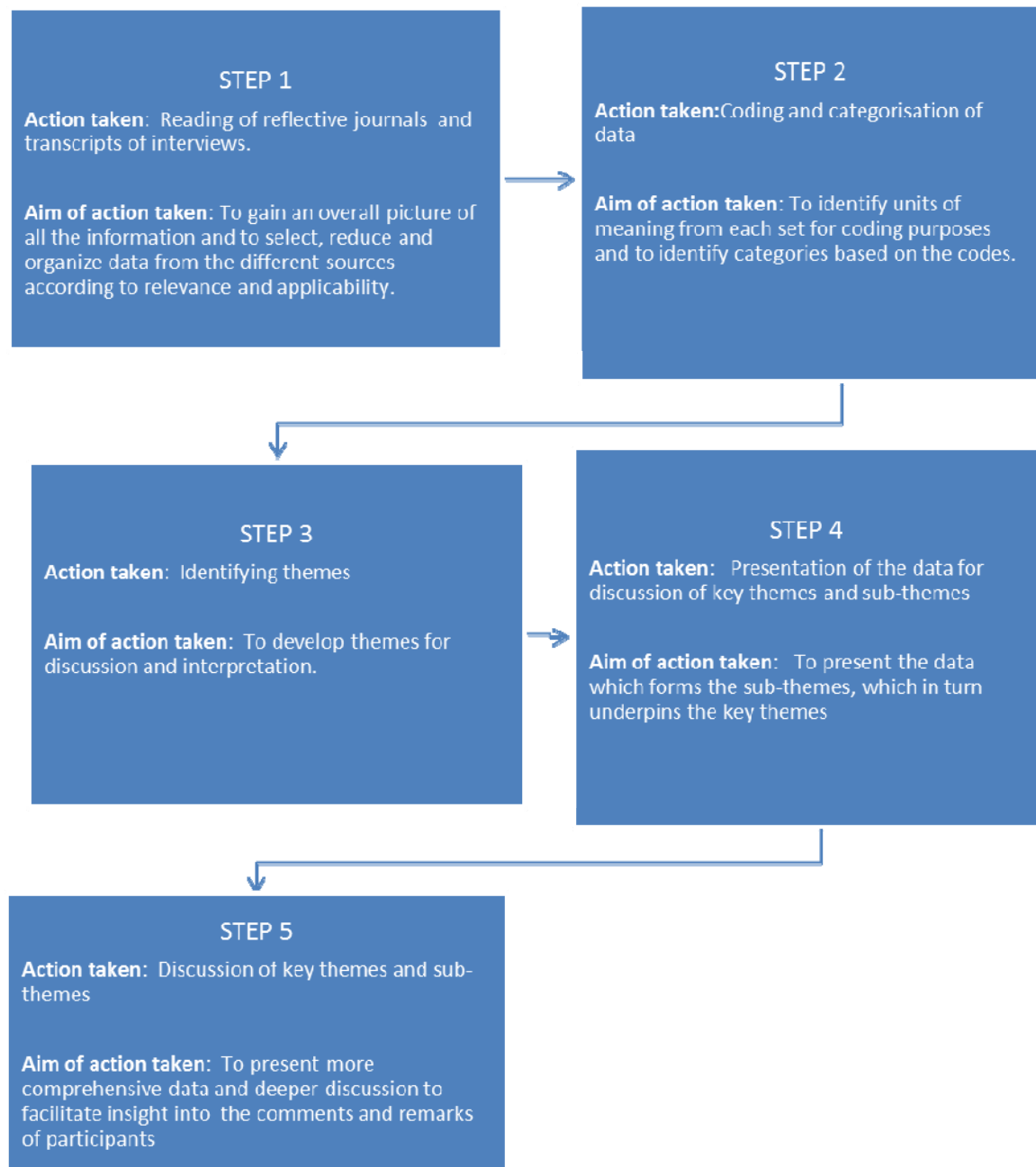


Figure 4.3: The process followed during the analysis of the data

Step 1: Reading of reflective journals and transcripts of interviews

The reflective journals of tutors and tutees, as well as the transcripts of all interviews, were scrutinized to familiarize myself with the content and to gain an overall impression of their experiences during the tutoring sessions. The suggestion of Smith and Osborn (2008:67) to read and re-read transcripts proved helpful in this stage because “each reading had the potential for new insights”. I searched for meaningful phrases and expressions, and selected information that could potentially relate to the literature and the research question and made notes of these issues for further analysis. The search for meaningful data was guided mainly by expressions of the participants as they related to their own personal experiences, as well as their thoughts and insights about the tutoring process and its accompanying issues as they perceived them to be. Words and phrases which described positive and negative feelings and thoughts during and after the tutoring interactions were captured and highlighted. Notes and comments were made on the transcript pages concerning similarities and/or differences in the views of the participants. Throughout the whole process of analysis, my own thoughts, reflections and insights on the process and views expressed were carefully noted and stored with the rest of the data.

Step 2: Coding and categorisation of data

The different stages of reading and re-reading of the journals and transcripts presented me with multiple scenarios. I started making associations and connections with the words, phrases and expressions of the participants, which at times were similar, at other times different, and at times even contradictory in nature. Recurring views on particular concepts in a previous chapter described as open coding were noted. I carefully made comments in the margins of the transcripts and where possible, summarised and paraphrased according to my own interpretations of what was said. Examples of these transcripts with comments are included in the annexures.

As individual views and expressions emerged during the stages and processes of reading, I noted some preliminary ideas for potential categories into which I could organise the information. Some of the information, however, seemed not to be useful, but was at this stage of the analysis carefully stored for possible consideration of inclusion at a later stage. This act of identifying meaningful information assisted considerably with the reduction of information to work with.

Hard copies of the reflective journals and the transcription of interviews which described the experiences of the participants were carefully stored for future retrieval.

Step 3: Identifying themes

Identified categories were listed on paper and categories which showed a connection with each other were clustered. An appropriate name was then assigned to each cluster of categories, forming the themes of the analysis. This process of identifying themes involved a close interaction between me as the reader and the text because I was drawing on my own interpretative skills to assign meaning, yet at the same time staying true to the words of the participants (Smith & Osborn, 2008:72).

Smith and Osborn's (2008:72) suggestion of a directory became a helpful tool at this stage of the analysis: it involves a reference to the participants' actual words and phrases as related to, and supported by, the identified themes. A further aid in this process was the separation of the reflective journals of the tutors from those of the tutees: in the same way that I separated the interview transcripts of the tutors, tutees, lecturers, trainer and programme manager from each other. Each set of data presented more opportunities for clustering of categories. As the clustering developed, so did the themes and sub-themes.

I then assigned a key code to each set of data, to which I added the page numbers of the transcripts for easy retrieval of words and phrases to support the themes in the discussion. For example, the code assigned to information from the tutee journals was SJ which signified student journal: to distinguish it from the tutor journal. The first tutee was SJ1. Names were omitted and numbers assigned to each person for the purpose of anonymity. SJ1: 3, 4, 6 would then be the directory for references to reflective journals of tutee 1 and the words and phrases appearing on pages 3, 4 and 6 pertaining to a particular theme. The same application of key codes applies to interviews. This was a long process which involved several stages of reading and re-reading, but facilitated the sorting of information and later retrieval. A copy of the table reflecting the themes with its directory is included as annexure E.

Step 4: Presentation of data for discussion of key themes and sub-themes

In this step the information as gathered from the data sources was clustered and presented as a basis to describe and discuss the identified key themes and sub-themes. The comments and remarks of the participants were extracted to underpin the key themes and sub-themes.

Step 5: Discussion of key themes and sub-themes.

In this final step of the process of presentation of the data, a deeper discussion of the themes is presented. This step allows for more comprehensive comments and remarks of participants to be included and considered and further facilitates deeper discussion of the key themes and sub-themes.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF KEY THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

The table below represents the key themes and sub-themes as identified from the collected data.

Table 4.2: Key themes and sub-themes

THEME (<i>and sub-theme/s</i>)
1. Commitment and attitude of tutees and tutors <i>1.1 Commitment and attitude of tutees</i> <i>1.2 Commitment and attitude of tutors</i>
2. Study challenges of BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first-language tutees and tutors participating in the tutoring programme <i>2.1 Challenges in Mathematics in Education, Language in Education and Computers in Education</i> <i>2.2 Challenges in Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT)</i> <i>2.3 Challenges in general</i>
3. Benefits of tutoring <i>3.1 Benefits of tutoring for tutors</i> <i>3.2 Benefits of tutoring for tutees</i>
4. Implementation, Management and Monitoring of the Tutoring Programme <i>4.1 Selection of tutors and their ability to implement the programme</i> <i>4.2 Liaison between role-players</i> <i>4.3 Monitoring and evaluation</i>

4.4 DISCUSSION OF THEMES

The focus of this study is to gain insight into the experiences of the role players in a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first-language students. Although my primary interest was focussed upon comments of tutees and tutors, I was equally interested in the responses of all the stakeholders in the tutoring programme. I felt that the unique individual experiences of all the participants offered a more holistic view of the dynamics involved in the process: as well as the ultimate findings of the study. In the following section I present the results of the comments made by all the role players: these comments were analysed and clustered in the chosen themes. The results of the comments are followed by a discussion of the comments.

4.4.1 Commitment and attitude of tutees and tutors

Participants commented on the commitment and attitude of tutees and tutors as they perceived them to be. This section highlights the comments made by all participants and illustrates their perceptions of the commitment and attitude of tutees and tutors during the time-frame of the tutoring programme. The first section points out the commitment and attitudes of the tutees and the second section the commitment and attitude of the tutors.

4.4.1.1 Commitment and attitude of tutees

The tutors and lecturers spoke both positively and negatively about the attitude that the tutees portrayed and the level of commitment they demonstrated towards the opportunity for support that the tutoring programme offered. The comments of tutors and lecturers indicated that tutors and lecturers value commitment and a positive attitude: and that they considered it contributed to success. Conversely, comments on non-commitment and a negative attitude from tutees pointed to a belief by tutors and lecturers that the intended success of the tutoring programme could be defeated. The following utterances were recorded from tutors and lecturers:

"I would prepare stuff for them, but they did not pitch"

"They would come and just play with their phones"

"Students didn't commit 100% to the programme. They come to the sessions only because they have an assignment or the exam is coming up."

"Students don't put in much effort. Some are lazy"

"My literacy group were always asking questions and showed eagerness to learn"

“They were older than me, but gave me the utmost respect”

4.4.1.2 Commitment and attitude of tutors

Tutees generally spoke highly of the diligence and willingness of tutors to help them: while lecturers described the tutors as dedicated and serious about the task at hand. Tutees were appreciative of the positive commitment displayed by most tutors and the positive attitude of the tutors served as an inspiration and motivation for them. All the lecturers were of the opinion that the tutors did their best under the circumstances. One tutee, however, expressed negative feelings about the professionalism of a particular tutor and indicated that a lack of commitment was evident on the side of this tutor. The following comments, however, were made:

“The tutors are very patient and they know what they are doing”

“Tutors were very diligent and they really tried their best”

“Her language she uses – it points to an attitude”

“The tutor is not professional at all”

4.4.2 Study challenges of BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa first-language tutees and tutors in the tutoring programme

The tutees and tutors expressed concern about typical difficulties which they themselves experienced in their first year of study or the challenges which they perceived first-year isiXhosa students to experience in the three subjects for which tutoring was offered in the tutoring programme. Most of the difficulties they referred to were related to (i) the Language of Learning and Teaching at the institution; (ii) being confronted with challenges related to specific subjects, in particular Language in Education; (iii) the attitude with which first-year students approach their studies and; (iv) unpreparedness to deal with the academic demands of higher education. Tutees, tutors and lecturers mentioned how these challenges could have contributed to their failure in the subjects they chose in the tutoring programme. Tutors, tutees and lecturers expressed the following concerns:

“Last year we had three different lecturers for Language in Education”

“..... A disadvantage for us isiXhosa speaking students, especially in the townships, there are no computer classes”

"Some of the subjects you don't understandthe lecturers only speak Englishit becomes too much"

"IsiXhosa students find it difficult to speak and understand academic English"

"I realised that students explain things in isiXhosa but cannot put them in English"

"One of the reasons why the students struggle is because they do not care, they think university is still high school. They think the lecturers will give them everything"

"..... their own mathematics knowledge is not sound poor mathematics content knowledge They are not going to be able to teach it as successfully they have to make more of an effort to teach it successfully"

4.4.3 Benefits of tutoring for tutees and tutors

Both tutees and tutors derived significant benefits from their participation in the tutoring programme. The benefits for tutees were mainly on a cognitive level: while for tutors, advantages were more on a metacognitive and affective level. Below is a summarized breakdown of the benefits for tutees and tutors.

4.4.3.1 Benefits for tutees

Tutees commented on how support in their home language assisted them in understanding the concepts better. They felt more confident when having to work on their own, because they had a better understanding of difficult, particularly abstract concepts. The small group setting of tutoring provided a safe space for them to ask questions and offer opinions freely without fear of ridicule. Tutees referred to the acquisition of skills which they previously lacked. Typical comments included:

"We were all participating and sharing views the more we gained knowledge"

"..... everything was clear the questioning and the answers came out from us"

"I enjoyed being taught by someone who speaks my language"

"What I enjoyed is that we are a small group"

"I was familiarized with how to use the tabs correctly"

"..... Some of the things we learn in class are difficult to understand but with tutors I understand them easier"

“....You get to like question you can be corrected”

One tutee though was of the opinion that she did not benefit as substantially as she expected to. Her view highlighted unprofessional conduct of one particular tutor. She was of the opinion that no value was added to her understanding. This tutee expressed concern that the tutor *“regarded herself as higher than us”* and that *“there was nothing new”*.

4.4.3.2 Benefits for tutors

The tutors in the programme expressed appreciation for the opportunity to help fellow students and felt valued for being selected to tutor. The success the tutees obtained in mastering their challenges boosted the confidence of the tutors. The tutors were able to develop their own skills as mediators of learning. Comments such as the following were recorded:

“I enjoy the positive feeling I get when students have done well in their exams”

“I give myself a pat on the back – knowing that I have been of help and that my efforts were not in vain”

“We’re studying to become teachers a good platform to practice”

“I got excited I was picked from a bigger group”

“I got average marks, but being picked gave me confidence”

“I must identify the challenges of my students”

“While guiding them, I felt I was improving my teaching skills”

4.4.4 Implementation, management and monitoring of the tutoring programme

All the participants in the study commented on one or more aspects of the implementation process, the management and monitoring of the tutoring programme. Comments referred to how the aspects concerned either added value to, or hampered the successful outcome of the tutoring programme. The aspects which the participants referred to are listed below, with accompanying comments which illustrate how, in their opinion, the aspects concerning the implementation process affected the tutoring programme.

4.4.4.1 Selection of tutors and their ability to implement the tutoring programme

Tutors expressed their views on whether it was easy or problematic for them to implement the tutoring programme. Tutors selected from the BEd Foundation Phase study programme found it easy to incorporate the tutoring sessions into their time-tables and study programme. Tutors selected from the BEd FET study programme experienced challenges incorporating the tutoring sessions into their time-tables and study programme. One tutor from the BEd FET study programme could not implement them at all. Tutors raised the following points:

"It was not a problem for me to fit the sessions with the students into my time-table"

"At times I had to re-arrange my own schedule it was not a problem"

"It was difficult to get the student because of my schedule"

"The only time I met with them was when I was introduced to the group"

".....it is really very difficult for an FET student to fit into the tutoring programme for Foundation Phase"

Some tutees questioned selected tutors' abilities to tutor successfully. Concerns were raised around the knowledge-base and professionalism of tutors and whether they were suitable to act as tutors. One of the lecturers was not convinced that all the mathematics tutors had an adequate conceptual understanding of the issues that the tutees were grappling with in Mathematics in Education. The following comments were made:

"The ones that are tutoring us don't have like enough information"

"Sometimes they don't know how to cough out the information"

"When she decides to not come, she does not bother to tell us"

"....I could sense the feeling that I was kinda teaching them as well while we were preparing and I didn't have enough of those sessions intensively"

"They were the strongest in the language, but they weren't the strongest of students"

"She had it incorrect, and she told all the students the incorrect thing"

"Unfortunately I didn't have very strong tutors ... not conceptually as strong as I hoped"

4.4.4.2 Liaison between role players

Many participants expressed concern about the lack of liaison between the different role-players during implementation of the tutoring programme. Support for the tutors in terms of resources, methods to use and encouragement varied between always available, very limited and non-existent. In some cases, tutors felt they were left on their own due to the unavailability of lecturers. After the training, there was no communication between the programme manager and the trainer for possible on-going support. Role players commented in the following ways”:

“Accessibility to labs seem to be a problemthere are classes most of the time”

“I can’t say the interaction was 100%, but we tried to interact”

“We would make appointments, but she would not be available”

“He would constantly ask for updates and enquire about the challenges we had”

“We would askthey would suggest what method to use”

“She gives us questions to ask them”

“When the attendance deteriorated, I called a meetingmotivate students”

“There was no communication with me afterwards about whether the programme was running and how it was going”

4.4.4.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The programme manager found it challenging to monitor implementation of the tutoring programme and determine whether tutors were receiving adequate support. The challenges stemmed mainly from a lack of resources in terms of time and administrative support, as well as the demands of the programme manager’s teaching schedule. The attendance registers and reflective journals that were distributed to tutors and tutees to complete at each session assisted to an extent with the monitoring task. No evidence was found in terms of the evaluation of the tutoring programme as such. The programme manager stated that:

“I needed the tutors and the tutees to know that their attendance was being monitored”

“I often felt frustrated because I did not have enough time to manage this programme..... lecturing load”

“I would have asked for more guidance admin support more regular meetings”

4.5 DISCUSSION OF THEMES

Section 4.4 of this chapter mainly comprises comments made by the role players as they were clustered into the key themes and sub-themes. In the following section a deeper discussion is presented to expand upon and account for, the emergent themes and sub-themes. Discussion is presented in the same order as the presentation of data in the previous section.

4.5.1 Commitment and attitude of tutees and tutors

Various comments made by the role players on the commitment and attitude of students and tutors were presented in section 4.4.1 of this chapter. This discussion first focuses upon the commitment and attitude of tutees, and that of tutors. The reader is reminded that this section includes discussion of comments made by all the role players in the tutoring programme.

4.5.1.1 Commitment and attitude of tutees

The commitment and attitude of the tutees in the tutoring programme were described by the tutors and lecturers as both positive and negative. The tutors had different experiences of different groups. Tutors reported both positively and negatively on the commitment and attitudes of the same groups of tutees. In some cases tutors would report positively on the commitment and attitude of one group of tutees but negatively on the commitment and attitude of another group of tutees. Tutors shared their own positive feelings when positive commitment and attitude were displayed by tutees. Tutors would, however, share and describe their own negative feelings when negative commitment and attitudes were displayed by tutees. These positive and negative attitudes of tutees were mainly portrayed in the attendance of tutoring sessions and the interactions between tutors and tutees

Tutors regarded tutees' complaints about a change in lecturers, tutees' absence from tutoring sessions and tutees' perceived lack of seriousness towards the objectives of the tutoring programme as looking for excuses, careless and lazy. Tutors stated that, in their opinion, tutees had given up on their chances of success before starting and did not expect anything to change for them. The time taken up by the negative comments from tutees became overwhelming for the tutor; causing tutors to feel negatively towards the tutees as well. In contrast to this negative attitude, tutors commented on instances where students displayed a focussed attitude, attended the sessions on a regular basis, asked questions about concepts they were unsure of, and showed serious positive commitment. According to the tutors, the latter group of tutees would take the efforts of the tutor and their own efforts much more seriously and co-operated with tutors much as they would in the presence of the lecturers.

Tutors expressed disappointment and even disgust when tutees absconded without valid reasons from tutoring sessions, but would express appreciation and validation when tutees presented themselves: sometimes even when there were no scheduled sessions but tutees had the need for additional interaction with the tutor.

Tutors felt a sense of respect from tutees, especially when tutees were much older than the tutor, yet portrayed a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the efforts of the tutor. The display of respect made the tutor feel appreciated: resulting in the tutor sacrificing own study and personal time and availing herself for the benefit of the tutees, guiding and supporting the tutees further in preparation for examinations and presentations. Tutees' absence and negative interaction with tutors often left tutors feeling disrespected and unappreciated. Tutors felt angry and taken for granted in the midst of their own workload and in the process developed apathy towards the tutees. A sense of respect and appreciation led tutors to desire a successful outcome for the tutees but a sense of disrespect and non-appreciation led some tutors not to care about the ultimate outcome for tutees.

Tutors were of the opinion that students, especially first-year students, did not care about their own success and progress at university and as such did not show commitment. According to the tutors, this same attitude of non-commitment was carried over into the tutoring programme; with tutees frequently not understanding the seriousness of the objectives of the programme and the commitment it required. Tutors expressed the view that tutees were often spoiled at high school level where teachers did much of the work on their behalf. Tutees expected university lecturers, and tutors in this tutoring programme, to do the same. In the tutors' view, tutees in the tutoring programme who displayed a negative attitude showed a lack of responsibility towards their studies and the opportunity the tutoring programme presented. According to tutors, tutees would attend sessions only when they felt they needed particular information or had to prepare for a test or an assignment and they could obtain the information from the tutors. Tutees expected the tutor to do all the work, and as such, would not apply themselves or come to sessions with specific questions on subject content they had difficulty with. Where tutors prepared notes for tutees at certain occasions, tutees would expect tutors to prepare notes for them at subsequent occasions as well.

The negative experiences of tutors occurred with both the first-year students as well as the students repeating the subjects. Tutors felt that because first-year students were so young, they were not sure yet as to what was expected from them at university level. The tutors' opinion was that some first-year students were not paying attention during the tutoring sessions and would choose to occupy themselves with their cell phones instead of participating in the discussions. Tutors expressed the view that first-year students in the tutoring programme may have thought that the education course was an easy one and that it was not necessary to put much effort into it. The bursaries that students received for their

studies and the advantage it provides for money in the pockets of students, was given as another reason by tutors as to why first-year students were distracted from the real reasons why they were attending university and why they were in the support programme. The distractions and unfocussed attitude of first-year students in the tutoring programme made successful implementation of the programme challenging for tutors and caused tutors to feel demotivated at times.

Tutors regarded some of the tutees who were repeating the subjects offered in the tutoring programme as not having learnt from their past, unsuccessful experiences. According to the tutors, some of these tutees would make the same mistakes as in the past by not finishing assignments in time before due dates: causing them to be under pressure and having to complete the assignments during the time when they were supposed to attend tutoring sessions. When these incidences happened, tutors felt that students were not giving their co-operation and that they were not committed to support being offered to them. When tutors did not receive co-operation and commitment from students, it left them with feelings of irritation and frustration.

In contrast with this, some tutees did show a willingness to co-operate with their tutors, presented themselves on time and displayed commitment to the tutoring process. During such occasions of positivity, implementation became easier and fruitful. A positive attitude and commitment from tutees caused tutors to be willing to put in more effort and tutors would even go beyond what was expected from them.

4.5.1.2 *Commitment and attitude of tutors*

Generally, tutors reflected a strong sense of commitment towards the programme and the students they were supporting. Tutors re-arranged their own class time-tables to accommodate students during the day. Despite the fact that some tutors were unsure of whether they wanted to do the tutoring and felt that it might be difficult to do so, they eventually agreed to it: feeling that somebody needed to help and that they might be able to provide the support needed. Once they began, however, tutors developed a strong sense of responsibility towards their individual students and took a personal interest in the tuition, progress and success of the students.

According to the students, most tutors displayed a positive and caring attitude towards them. Most students expressed appreciation for the patience displayed by the tutors, as well as the effort that tutors put in to preparing worksheets and finding answers to their questions. One tutor referred to using language that described her students as “her children”, which to her was an indication of how important it was to nurture them and help them along. Students attested to the fact that the tutors really went out of their way in supporting them.

Lecturers described tutors as being diligent, doing their best and taking their task of tutoring seriously. Tutors ensured that they were prepared for tutoring sessions and that they had the necessary information and resources when meeting students. They requested meetings with lecturers and the programme manager on a regular basis, seeking information, advice and support to undertake the tutoring. At times, when they were concerned about a lack of commitment from students, tutors would report it and ask the programme manager to intervene.

The response of one student painted the commitment and attitude of one particular tutor as unprofessional. This student felt that the tutor regarded herself as superior to the students and that this attitude was reflected in the way the tutor treated the students. According to this student, the tutor often failed to appear for tutoring sessions without informing the students. Efforts from the students to contact this tutor telephonically resulted in no replies and the tutor did not turn up at all. The student's expectation was that the tutor would inform them well beforehand if she was unable to hold a tutorial. The student was convinced that the superior attitude of the tutor stemmed from the fact that the students were failures from the previous year and that the tutor looked down on them because of their failure. The perceived negative attitude of the tutor caused the student to lose confidence in her own abilities to be successful and lowered her self-esteem.

4.5.2 Study challenges of BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first-language tutees and tutors in the tutoring programme

Students receiving tutoring either failed Mathematics in Education, Language in Education and Computers in Education as a single subject or a combination of the subjects in their first year, or felt that they may be at risk of failing the subjects. In the first year of study the BEd Foundation Phase students deal with mathematics and language with the aim of being capable and efficient in teaching these subjects to Grade R learners. The computer course is aimed at teaching students basic skills in the use of certain computer applications. Various reasons for failure in these subjects were verbalised by students, tutors and lecturers and are discussed below; followed by a discussion on challenges tutors and tutees faced in general.

4.5.2.1 Challenges tutees and tutors experienced in the subjects offered in the tutoring programme

According to one lecturer, Language in Education as a subject in the Foundation Phase is underpinned by certain theoretical propositions geared towards the teaching of language to Grade R learners. These theoretical standpoints are transferred to students in English, the

Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) of the institution. The lecturer felt that students failed to engage with the theory sufficiently, did not read the notes that were given to them and therefore did not understand the theory adequately. Students then had difficulty in adapting or relating the theory being taught in the subject to the subjects that were dealt with in Grade R. The challenge lies in comprehending the theory of Language in Education, although, according to the lecturer, the theory does not cover a wide spectrum.

Students and tutors alike claimed that the constant change in lecturers for Language in Education in the year prior to the commencement of the tutoring programme, may have contributed to the students' failure in the subject. Students found it difficult to adjust to the different teaching and assessment styles of the three lecturers who taught the subject in that particular year. What complicated matters was the dynamic of being taught certain subject matter by one lecturer and being assessed by another lecturer on the same subject matter. Students and tutors felt that each lecturer had his or her own set of expected outcomes and criteria which made it difficult for students and lecturers to form a coherent sense of variables in expectations and criteria.

Another lecturer perceived the challenges in Mathematics in Education to be in the areas of comprehending concepts and the limited ability of students to think at a deeper, critical level. This perceived inability of students may have been caused or exacerbated by the entry requirement of Mathematical Literacy for the study programme: as opposed to the entry requirement of Mathematics in other study programmes and/or institutions. According to the lecturer, the difference between the two subjects lay in the development of a deeper level of critical thinking. The lecturer claimed that many students started the study programme with a limited understanding of mathematics: resulting in higher cognitive demands on them in order to learn to teach the subject.

Limited understanding and critical thinking, as perceived, comprised a further constraint for some students doing Mathematics in Education: especially if they lacked a sound frame of reference: such as being in Grade R themselves or having a good mathematics teacher. Since Mathematics in Education is divided into content and methodology, a good frame of reference supports the thinking of what to teach and how to teach it. Grade R learners learn mathematics mainly through playing, and some students failed to understand that playing is actually a mathematical learning activity. Students in the tutoring programme concurred with the view of the lecturer and tutors that the teaching of Mathematics in Education in English posed a challenge for them because they did not understand many of the terms used in the subject: resulting in them not being able to express themselves adequately in assessments.

Many students claimed that, prior to coming to university their exposure to computers was limited. The schools they attended did not offer training in the use of computers: neither did they have computers at home. The requirement of having to do assignments on the

computer and training in the computer class at university were overwhelming. Students often became confused with the terminology and found it challenging to keep up with the pace at which the training was happening. The use of English in the computer class caused further confusion because they were used to speaking mainly IsiXhosa at home with their peers and even with the teachers at the schools they attended.

The computer laboratories assigned for the use of the tutoring of the subject Computers in Education were unavailable most of the time. Although the computer laboratories were for lecturing purposes and the time-slots for tutoring were scheduled when no lecturing took place in the laboratories, the tutors would still find other students busy in the laboratories. They would then have difficulty in getting them to understand that the laboratories were scheduled for a tutoring session. These students doing assignments and internet research would take up much of the tutoring time before eventually leaving, which caused the tutors to spend more time on the theory of the subject than on supporting with practical computer skills.

The three tutors for the subject of Computers in Education were all selected from the Further Education and Training (FET) study programme: with Computer Applications Technology (CAT) as a specialization subject. Differences in time-tabling and subsequent unavailability of tutors on campus when students were available, posed a major challenge to finding suitable time for tutoring sessions. FET students spent much of their time doing practical teaching, at times that were different to when Foundation Phase students did their practical teaching. This challenge in finding suitable time to meet as a tutoring group with the tutor became an obstacle that prevented successful implementation.

4.5.2.2 Challenges tutees and tutors experienced in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT)

The home language of the students in the tutoring programme was IsiXhosa, whereas the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) of the institution was English. According to the students, they are mostly exposed to their home language while at home and in interaction with their peers. Students who attended high school in townships stated that IsiXhosa was the language mostly spoken throughout their high school years. Most of the students found it challenging to understand the concepts and terminology used in the study programme which is why, according to them, they failed the subjects in which they were receiving support.

4.5.2.3 Challenges tutees and tutors experienced in general

Tutors and students shared views on what they perceived to be the unpreparedness they experienced in their first year of study. In their opinion, it took them long to find their feet and to settle into the diverse university atmosphere and the demands of the study programme. Understanding the concepts and growing used to the LOLT of the institution was overwhelming for most of them. They struggled to understand some of the subjects and had difficulty coping. Tutors in the tutoring programme could identify fully with the students they were tutoring because they experienced most of the same challenges.

Students and tutors often had serious and demanding family responsibilities to attend to at home. Many times these responsibilities distracted them from their studies: especially when they had to spend extra time on campus to do assignments and attend tutoring classes. They depended in most cases upon public transport to get home after classes. Public transport ran according to schedules and students were often torn between catching a train or bus at a certain time or staying on campus. Personal challenges such as own study needs and the needs of the family became a real issue for students to deal with.

Tutors, however, felt that despite the challenges explained in the previous paragraphs, the students they dealt with were not committing fully to the support offered to them in the tutoring programme. According to the tutors, students were making too many excuses, instead of focussing and making use of the resources and support being offered to them. Tutors claimed that students were often idling their time away with trivialities such as social networks on their cell phones rather than paying adequate attention to the long-term benefits of their studies. Some students admitted that they did lose focus in their first year and realised that, after failing, they should pay closer attention to their studies. Part of their duty was to attend tutorials and appreciate the support of the tutors.

4.5.3 Benefits of tutoring

All the participants in the tutoring programme were of the opinion that the process benefited the students as well as the tutors. Most students shared their accounts of how the support, especially the fact that the support took place in their home language, helped them to understand better and increased their confidence in approaching assessments. For the tutors, the benefits resided mainly in a higher level of awareness of their own abilities to help someone else and the personal satisfaction that accompanied the awareness. The tutors commented on the development of, amongst other things, their teaching skills. The benefits of tutoring as explained below shows the differentiation between the two groups: benefits for tutees and benefits for tutors.

4.5.3.1 Benefits for tutees

The tutoring programme under discussion was designed for BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first-language students who failed either Language in Education, Mathematics in Education and Computers in Education as a single subject or a combination of subjects in their first year and had to repeat the subjects, or first-year students who felt at risk of failing the subjects. Some of the student participants in the tutoring programme started their studies within one or two years after they matriculated, while others started for as long as 10 years after they matriculated. All of the students mentioned how they found it taxing to understand LOLT in the lecture room, which was sometimes made more complicated by the academic terms used. The diverse accents of lecturers added to the confusion in understanding. Students were often exposed to their home language while being at school, at home and in conversation with their peers. The English language was a barrier to overcome in order for the students to be successful in their studies; not a bridge to greater learning.

Students in the study were of the opinion that the greatest benefit for them in the tutoring programme was being tutored in their home language. Students were able to understand the concepts and terms as explained by the tutors in IsiXhosa much better than in the English medium lecture room. This improved understanding made them feel more comfortable and confident when dealing with the content of the subjects. The safe space that the small group setting offered, together with the confidence gained from improved understanding, allowed them to participate in discussions more candidly and express their opinions on topics. Misunderstandings about the topics could be cleared up and incorrect answers could be corrected without delay.

Students understood, however, that it was still necessary for them to have a grasp of the English concepts because assessments had to be done in the English LOLT of the institution. Gaining a better understanding in their first language supported them in preparing for assessments. Improvement in understanding was particularly helpful to students when they engaged with the course material on their own at home. Students gained considerable insight into the course content and the application of the knowledge when teaching Grade R learners.

In contrast with the views of fellow students, one student stated that the tutoring programme did not benefit her as much as she expected. Her disappointment stemmed from what she regarded as an unprofessional attitude and limited support on the side of the tutor. The student felt that the tutoring sessions were a repetition of what was done in the lecture room and that no additional value was added to her understanding of the course content. She continued participating in the tutoring programme, however, because she failed the subject

the previous year and did not want to risk being unsuccessful another year. Ironically though, the student cited some thoughts about improved understanding in the subject she received tutoring in.

4.5.3.2 *Benefits for tutors*

Tutors in the tutoring programme each gave an account of how the process of tutoring raised in them a deeper awareness of service to fellow human beings. Not only did they feel affirmed and socially responsible by helping others but the process made them aware of how their own abilities in planning, communicating and mediating knowledge were enhanced. For tutors, a higher sense of self-esteem and self-confidence formed the clearest benefit they gained from the process. The following is a discussion of the benefits as mentioned by the tutors.

Tutors expressed positive feelings about themselves and felt good about being able to help a fellow student do better. Being selected to be a tutor made them feel valued and it was rewarding for them to know that others, especially their lecturers, noticed their potential to be of help to others. The positive feedback received from the students made tutors feel that their efforts paid off and that their input made a difference in the lives of the students they tutored. Tutors felt valued when students expressed appreciation and assigned them the status of a teacher. The successful achievements of students after assignments and exams were rewarding to tutors as well. All of the positive feelings mentioned instilled in the tutors a renewed confidence in their own abilities as students and teachers.

The tutors were generally of the opinion that supporting fellow students in the tutoring programme felt like teaching to them. The tutors understood the caution to guard against acting like lecturers, but it did not detract from their feeling that they were in effect instructing: despite the fact that those they were tutoring were considerably older than the FP learners they really would be teaching in years to come. In much the same way that a teacher in school develops a sense of duty and responsibility for the progress and well-being of learners, so one tutor felt that the students in her tutoring class were “her children”.

Tutors mentioned development of skills which included acting as mediators of learning, especially in the art of identifying the academic needs and challenges of the students and leading them to finding solutions. Tutors mentioned that they developed in the area of skilfully asking questions in a way that invited students to talk about their challenges in the lecture room and the issues with which they were struggling. In preparation for tutoring sessions, tutors noticed how their planning skills were developed and how they became good at preparing notes for themselves and the students. When the tutors’ own strategies of

support were no longer beneficial to the students, the tutors could use the students themselves to help each other.

Of benefit to the tutors was the ability to reflect on their own practices of what worked and what did not work. These reflections allowed them to feed back into the system in the form of recommendations for future implementation of similar tutoring programmes. Tutoring helped tutors to develop their communication skills. They now had to think and reflect upon how they were going to convey a certain concept to students. Tutors stated that although some of the skills had been instilled in them, many had been developed or sharpened during their role as tutors. Social skills, they averred, were developed: because tutors and students could develop and sustain constructive relations even after the tutoring role was fulfilled.

Another area in which tutors developed their skills was in the role of a student. Over and above the skills mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the newly-found confidence boosted tutors to the level where they felt more confident in their own abilities as students. Seeing the tutees in their tutoring class doing better motivated them to improve their own previous average academic performance to above average.

4.5.4 Implementation, management and monitoring of the tutoring programme

4.5.4.1 Selection of tutors and their ability to implement the tutoring programme

Tutors for the tutoring programme were selected by lecturers on the basis of their abilities in the three mentioned subjects. For Language in Education and Mathematics in Education, tutors were selected from the BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa home language group who were at least one year in advance of the tutoring group. The tutors for Computers in Education were selected from the BEd FET (Further Education and Training) IsiXhosa home language group who had Computer Applications Technology (CAT) as a specialization subject.

Tutors from the BEd Foundation Phase group found it easy to accommodate the tutees in their own study programme. With a little juggling, time-tables could be adjusted and tutors could fit the tutees into their schedule: although there was a need for extra sessions outside the normal tutoring sessions. The tutors from the FET group, however, could not manage to implement the tutoring programme adequately. One of the three tutors could meet with his tutee group on one occasion only after the training, while the other two met a few times only with their groups. The different dynamics such as time-tabling and teaching practice schedules were given as some of the reasons why it was challenging for the FET tutors to meet with the tutees.

Some tutees questioned the abilities of the tutors and the selection that was made accordingly. The students felt that some of the tutors were not the best choice in terms of the tutors' knowledge-base in the subjects they tutored. Allegations were made that the tutors were able to progress to the next level of study because of help received from their friends for assignments they had to do in their previous years of study. The students questioned the ability of tutors to act professionally and be genuine in their efforts to support students.

Concern arose around the ability of tutors to transfer and explain to the students the conceptual understanding of the issues they struggled with in Mathematics in Education. According to the lecturer, no agreed-upon mathematics concepts in IsiXhosa existed, which still requires of students to have a level of understanding of the concepts in English. The lecturer mentioned that it was a demanding task to explain mathematical concepts where challenges existed both in understanding the concepts as well as the English language. This objection could be equated to having to explain two different things at two different levels; the words as expressed in a language and the mathematical concepts. The lecturer was of the opinion that such a situation required a tutor who was in command of the second language and adept at breaking down concepts in mathematics. It would have been difficult to ascertain whether the tutors for Mathematics in Education were equipped with all of the skills required to implement the tutoring successfully.

4.5.4.2 Liaison between role players

The success of the tutoring programme depended to a large extent on the interaction and liaison between all the role players. In the planning phase of the project it was determined that there should be continuous consultation on the efficacy of the programme and the support available to tutors. According to an action plan drawn up at the beginning of the project, a lecturer was assigned the duty of liaising and co-ordinating sessions between the tutors and lecturers. No evidence, however, could be found of this arrangement. All the participants were of the opinion that much more liaison, communication and support should be forthcoming on the part of lecturers and the programme manager.

In some cases, tutors received support with regard to resources and methods to use during the tutoring sessions, while in other cases the support was limited and occasionally non-existent. In the instances where tutors were in constant contact with the lecturer in a particular department, they felt empowered and regarded the advice as helpful. Conversations with the lecturer in that department confirmed that tutors regularly sought advice on how to deal with certain subject matter. In other instances there was limited liaison between tutors and the lecturer because of the unavailability of the lecturer. Where this limitation existed, tutors felt that they were left to their own devices: sometimes causing

uncertainty on how to deal with the concerns and questions of the tutees. Tutees felt that progress in terms of discussion and understanding was delayed when tutors were supposed to find out something for them from the lecturer, and tutors returned without the information; due to the unavailability of the lecturer.

The trainer's expectations of further liaison between herself and the managers of the programme in terms of feedback and possible ongoing support to the tutors after the training, were often not met. After the training, the trainer suggested and advised that lecturers meet with the tutors on a regular basis to support them, strengthen their confidence and to fill gaps in knowledge. The trainer felt that ongoing support from the lecturers and liaison between herself and the programme manager would provide an atmosphere for successful implementation of the tutoring programme. Apart from informing one lecturer at the end of the training about the content that was dealt with, no further communication occurred between the trainer and the programme manager.

According to tutors, there was ample liaison between themselves and the programme manager. The programme manager constantly asked for updates and arranged meetings: either from own initiative or whenever the tutors requested such meetings. The mentoring and support in terms of access to resources and advice on dealing with challenges, were welcomed and appreciated by tutors. The programme manager regularly arranged meetings with tutees to discuss with them the challenges cited by tutors. At these meetings, he motivated them to utilize the opportunity granted to them. In the case of the tutors for the Computers in Education, however, there was no communication between the tutors and lecturer and/or the tutors and programme manager. Tutors for Computers in Education were in the FET study programme and, as a result, tutors had no contact with, or opportunity to discuss, with any lecturer or programme manager, the challenges they were experiencing with implementation.

4.5.4.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The programme manager ensured that implementation of the tutoring programme was taking place by means of the completed attendance registers and reflective journals of both tutors and tutees. In this way, the attendance of tutees was monitored and addressed when necessary and needed. When reflecting on its implementation, the programme manager did express a wish for more resources to manage and monitor the successful implementation of the programme. No evaluation of the programme itself took place at the conclusion of the academic year or at any other time.

The limited resources available to the programme manager in terms of time and administrative support when wanting to communicate and liaise with tutors and lecturers

caused frustration in the monitoring and management of the tutoring programme. Managing a tutoring programme was a first for the programme manager and having to make decisions in the face of limited experience and knowledge of how to manage a tutoring programme, some decisions proved not to have been the best decisions. The lecturing load and other duties of the programme manager prevented him from putting in as much time and effort as he would have wanted to.

The programme manager expressed appreciation for the value that the tutoring programme added to the success of the students, but acknowledged that, with more resources, more could have been done about the monitoring of the implementation and the quality of the implementation. His comments included remarks on how monitoring of continuous and improved liaison between the role players, as well as more available time for meetings between himself and tutors and lecturers could have ensured improved and more effective implementation. He expressed regret about the lack of liaison between himself and the trainer and how, with hindsight, regular liaison could have assisted in empowering the tutors.

Section 4.5 of this chapter presented a deeper discussion of the key themes and the underpinning sub-themes: as identified from the data collected. This deeper discussion comprised a more detailed account of the expressions and comments made by the participants during collection of the data, and allowed better insight into their experiences during implementation of the tutoring programme. The following sections sum up the different sub-sections of this chapter and serve as a conclusion to this chapter.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The different sub-sections of this chapter dealt with the processes I followed in the initial stages of the analysis of the data. The chapter was divided into an introduction to the chapter, the presentation and discussion of the data, as well as the presentation and discussion of the key themes and sub-themes as identified by the researcher. The introduction explained the researcher's understanding of data analysis and what informed the researcher's thinking process while undertaking the analysis. In the presentation of the data set, I illustrated what the data set entails and how the data were gathered from the different sources and the sample. This part of the chapter explained the step-by-step processes that led to the identification of the key themes and the sub-themes as identified from the gathered data. The last part of the chapter was divided into two sections: (i) extracts from the actual comments and remarks of the participants which form the basis of the key themes and sub-themes, and (ii) a deeper discussion of the key themes and sub-themes.

A number of themes have been identified after thorough reading and re-reading of the data derived from the data sources. The four key themes identified from the data are (i)

commitment and attitude of students and tutors; (ii) study challenges of BEd Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first-language students and tutors participating in the tutoring programme; (iii) benefits of tutoring; and (iv) management, implementation and monitoring of the tutoring programme. The themes serve as the basis for further interpretation and analysis of the experiences of participants in the tutoring programme in the next chapter. The existing literature on the topic as discussed in Chapter 2, as well as the theoretical paradigm of the study outlined in Chapter 3, grant impetus to the key findings and implications for the study: all of which are included in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 dealt with analysis of the data. I presented a description of what the role players stated about their experiences in the tutoring programme. What follows is referred to as an analytical understanding of the researcher's thoughts on why things are the way they were found (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:111). I now compare and corroborate the data: as summarised in the themes with the literature in Chapter 2, and/or bring my own insights and interpretations to the data. All of these comparisons, corroborations and interpretations are proffered in an effort both to reveal confirmations and contradictions, and to bring new insights to the existing body of knowledge on tutoring and the issues related to tutoring.

In order to understand my interpretation and insights on the themes as they relate to the literature explored in this study, the reader is reminded of the topics which I considered to be of significance as a background to this study. In the literature review, the concept of tutoring as a support programme, its implementation, its cognitive and metacognitive benefits, as well as its value as a non-academic support mechanism was discussed. In addition to the concept of tutoring, the chapter highlighted previous findings on English Additional language as a language of learning and teaching in education institutions in South Africa. The literature review included a section (see Section 2.4) on various challenges faced by higher education students from disadvantaged areas: with accompanying thoughts on support strategies which could be considered in a post-apartheid South African context.

The paragraphs below contain my interpretation of the data as it was summarised in the themes. The four themes identified from the data were:

- (i) Commitment and attitude of tutors and tutees;
- (ii) Study challenges of tutees and tutors;
- (iii) Benefits of tutoring for tutees and tutors; and
- (iv) Implementation, management and monitoring of the tutoring programme.

I present the discussion of the themes in the same order as they were presented in the analysis of the data.

5.2 COMMITMENT AND ATTITUDE OF TUTEES AND TUTORS

The data suggest that tutors were more committed to the process than students appeared to be: they displayed a more positive attitude towards the tutoring programme. This suggestion is rooted in the number of positive comments made by the role players about the commitment and attitude of the tutors: as opposed to the number of negative comments made about the commitment and attitude of the tutees. Both positive and negative views were expressed about the commitment and attitude of tutors and tutees. **The commitment and attitude of the tutors were overwhelmingly viewed as positive by both tutees and lecturers, whereas the comments the tutors and lecturers made about the commitment and attitude of tutees were significantly negative.**

The perceptions of the tutors about the tutees' lack of commitment point to an expectation that tutors had about tutees: and that tutees did not live up to that expectation. From their comments, it becomes clear that tutors expected tutees to be more committed, pay attention and learn from their past mistakes. The perceived lack of commitment and negative attitude of the tutees in general were mainly based on their absence from class and their inattentiveness during the tutoring sessions. Tutors' comments such as: *"One of the reasons they struggle They think university is still high school"* and *"These ones are very young ... they do now know what is their responsibility"* give an indication of the tutors' perception that tutees, especially those in first year were spoiled while at high school with teachers doing too much for them. Such tutees had not been taught to think independently and were unclear about what was expected from them at university level. Tutors felt that tutees were not learning from their mistakes of the past: referring to the failure of first-year subjects and continuing with their bad habits of the past.

The admixture of positive and negative feelings expressed by tutors suggests that tutors were affected by the actions of the tutees. From the data, it was evident that tutors were positively affected when tutees showed a positive attitude and commitment to the support being offered and were negatively affected when the reverse was displayed. The comments of the tutors reveal that, when positively affected, their level of commitment and delivery increased, but when negatively affected, their level of commitment and delivery flagged. When tutors felt respected and appreciated by the positive actions of the tutees, they reacted positively to tutees. Such positive reaction manifested itself when a tutor had a day off but decided to, on request of her group, go to campus and help them with an assignment. Conversely, when tutors felt disrespected and unappreciated by the absence and inattentiveness of the tutees, they would react negatively toward the tutees. One tutor stated: *"I was waiting and no one pitched ... I was so angry and actually wished that they would all fail for not being serious."*

Comments from tutees and lecturers revealed an appreciation for the support and high level of commitment and positive attitudes of the tutors. The data suggested that power dynamics were at play in the process and that these type of issues need to be addressed sooner rather than later. One tutee expressed disappointment at the commitment and attitude of one particular tutor and stated that: *"The tutor is not professional at all ... I do not appreciate it"*. This tutee felt that the tutoring programme offered no significant help to her and stated that *"I didn't get what I expected"*. Deeper into the conversation, however, the tutee commented more positively on the support and hinted that the tutoring was beneficial to her. Given the fact that the tutee and tutor were on the same level of study the previous year but on different levels during the year that the tutoring programme was implemented, the perceived action of the tutor could suggest a display of power dynamics. The overall feedback from tutees, however, shows that, even if power dynamics were at play, it most probably was an exception rather than the rule. The matter nevertheless affected the tutee negatively, which indicates the importance of addressing personal perceptions and issues that arise between tutors and tutees.

The overall impression of the comments made by the role-players on the commitment and attitude of tutors and tutees suggests that a more conducive atmosphere and platform for success can be created when expectations are clarified right from the onset. Students, tutors, lecturers and the programme manager had the opportunity to discuss what they expected from each other, as well as how they thought each one could contribute to reaching the objectives and success of the tutoring programme. Such a process of clarifying expectations and agreeing on how success can be achieved may create a platform for buy-in from all the role-players: in so doing, create an environment in which everyone can be held accountable and benefit from for their own individual actions.

5.3 CHALLENGES OF TUTEES AND TUTORS IN THE TUTORING PROGRAMME

The tutees in the study were receiving support because of their failure in one or more subjects in their first year of study. They ascribed their failure mainly to a limited ability in understanding concepts and terms in English. The data, however, show that tutees had experienced other challenges as well since they started at the university. Data showed that the challenges extended to the tutors as well, and that these challenges indeed covered a spectrum much wider than language limitations only. Many of the challenges described by the tutors and tutees are consistent with the aspects covered in the literature review of this study, and are subsequently discussed.

5.3.1 isiXhosa students and English as the Language of Learning and Teaching

Based on responses from tutors, tutees and lecturers, it became apparent that students struggled with English as the LOLT where their home language was not English, and that the struggle with LOLT caused them to misunderstand or not fully comprehend course material. Both tutors and tutees shared views on how their exposure to English was limited to the academic environment and how this limited exposure resulted in them not understanding the concepts and terminology of the subjects they are faced with in the lecture rooms. Discussions with tutors, tutees and lecturers brought to the surface the difficulties that isiXhosa students experienced in the subjects of Mathematics in Education, Language in Education and Computers in Education. The lecturer in Mathematics in Education commented: *"... for someone who is not first language speaker ... you hear something in a foreign language ... you now have to translate it into your brain ... translate the words and then you have to translate the concepts ... you have to translate it again into mathematics ..."* This comment confirmed that the chief difficulty experienced by students, tutors and tutees in the subject, was related to the challenges they faced with English as LOLT. The lecturer in Language in Education shared this view about the challenges students experienced with English as LOLT when stating that: *"... they don't take the notes and go read to understand ... because they don't read and write in English, it's a big stumbling block for them."* The challenge with English as LOLT of the institution was exacerbated when students were confronted with English terminology when working with computers.

Tutees in this study attested to how tutoring in their home language supported them in gaining a better understanding of the concepts and terms and aided them in mastering the course material. As a direct result of the better understanding, the curriculum became accessible to them and they were able to prepare for, and complete, assessments more confidently. This observation was consistent with what was discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3); where mention was made of how isiXhosa students experienced a lack of higher level English and were denied access to the curriculum and education as such, despite the view that students have of English as the language which grants access to opportunities and advancement in the socio-economic spheres of life. Discussed in Section 2.3 was Paxton's (2009) findings of how English, instead of being a means of transferring knowledge and skills effectively, becomes a barrier for students whose mother tongue is an African language. This denial of access to the curriculum when English becomes a barrier to education is echoed by Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2004) and supported by the Council of Higher Education (2001): both of which stated that effective learning can take place only where students are taught in a language they can fully understand, or at best, receive additional support in when they find themselves in a situation where their mother tongue is not the language of instruction.

Judging from the improved understanding which the tutees gained from the explanations in their home language, it became apparent that tutoring in the home language for isiXhosa-speaking students at the university should be regarded as a requirement instead of an occasional intervention.

In Section 2.4 of Chapter 2 I make mention of how I was led to pose the question of why isiXhosa students in the BEd Foundation Phase study programme needed additional support in the first place. My search for an answer revealed the language barrier of English as LOLT and the challenges that isiXhosa students faced at universities in South Africa. This research brought me to the conclusion that, in order to empower the BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa students and for education to be meaningful for them at all, support in their mother tongue should be viewed as a necessity. The literature provides multiple examples of how students who come from schools in disadvantaged communities in South Africa lack a proper command of academic English, have difficulty expressing themselves in English and are at an unfair disadvantage as a result. From the interviews with tutors and tutees in this study, it was clear that they too struggle with the academic English environment of the university. Consistent with the findings of Paxton (2009), the explanations offered to them in their home language became a tool that allowed them to comprehend content subjects: sometimes for the first time.

5.3.2 IsiXhosa students and under-preparedness when entering university

Apart from the challenges which tutors and tutees shared about struggling to cope with the LOLT of the institution, the data shows evidence of students' struggles in other areas of student life. Many of the utterances pointed in the direction of isiXhosa first-year students being unprepared for the demands of university: which leaves them with gaps as far as the essential skills for higher education are concerned. Below is a more detailed discussion of the gaps which I identified: ranging from deficits in knowledge and skills to struggles with settling into the academic atmosphere and culture of the institution.

IsiXhosa students in the BEd Foundation Phase course at the institution lacked a deeper level of critical thinking skills and the frame of reference that is necessary for success in Mathematics in Education and Language in Education. The lecturer in Language in Education spoke about the inability of the tutees to engage with the theory of the subject, while the lecturer in Mathematics in Education spoke about students' inability to think on a deeper, more critical level. The Mathematics in Education lecturer was of the opinion that the students entered the university with a limited understanding of the basic mathematical concepts which are required at the entry level of the course. According to this lecturer the *"students do not have a good enough frame of reference of their own. So their own maths*

teacher was probably not great, they probably never went to pre-school ... and now they're faced with this thing called mathematics". This statement suggests limited exposure to formal education in Grade R and/or quality Mathematics education, as well as the lack of an adequate frame of reference to help them understand and apply the course material in the Foundation Phase.

Tutees and tutors as African language students in this study were not adequately prepared in high school and were in fact doubly handicapped when it came to Mathematics in Education as a subject. The tutees and tutors shared views on how they struggled to understand the basic mathematical concepts: partly because it they were presented to them in English and partly because the concepts were foreign to them. In Section 2.3 of the literature review, evidence was presented of how the home language often became a suitable substitute for explanations by the majority of teachers whose first language was an African Language, and how the students struggled with mathematical concepts and terminology where the subject was offered in English. Judging from the tutees' and tutors' comments, it became clear that their struggles with mathematics manifest on two levels: (i) on the level of understanding the language in which it is presented, as well as (ii) on the level of meaning-making and problem-solving inherent in the subject.

First-year students from disadvantaged areas often struggle to find their feet at university because they lack the skills and know-how needed to settle into the diverse culture of the university. Examples of such challenges are the lack of exposure to computer skills prior to entering university, the predominant use of the English language and inability to adapt within a reasonable period of time and to advance towards success. Tutors and tutees attested to how *"... a disadvantage for us isiXhosa speaking students, especially in the townships, there are no computer classes ..."* One tutee stated: *"I was so not ready for varsity, I won't lie – I was scared, nervous and yeah, I felt small"*. During the interviews I noted how being confronted with *"lecturers who speak English all the time"* can be overwhelming to a student who, for most part of his/her education up to that point, had been exposed to their mother tongue only.

The data suggest that the tutees in this study may have developed an over-dependence on teachers and lecturers and lacked the skill to work independently. This suggestion of over-dependence manifested in an inability to cope on their own when a management arrangement resulted in change of lecturers in Language in Education. Tutees had difficulty in coping with the difference in approaches of the different lecturers. In addition to the challenges mentioned in the previous paragraph, this seeming inability to cope with sudden or unexpected changes in approach may point to an example of how first-year students lacked the skills to problem-solve when situations arose which they had no control over. According to the tutees, they found it difficult to adjust to the teaching and assessment styles

of the three different lecturers they were exposed to during their first year of study. The fact that the change occurred in the “messenger” and not the content of the course material, suggest that the tutees depended too strongly on the lecturer and were not adequately prepared to engage with learning material on their own. Comments such as: *“You have to make your own notes and it’s you know, for me it was something I’m so not used to... now you have to listen carefully and understand...”* point to an inability and unpreparedness at secondary level to work independently.

The data intimate that tutoring in their home language became an opportunity for tutees to eliminate at least one set of their challenges, when considering all of the challenges mentioned above. The examples of the challenges that tutees and tutors experienced as discussed in the paragraphs above are clear evidence that the tutors and tutees in the tutoring programme were faced with issues which extended over and beyond an inability to understand concepts and terminology in English: Both tutees and tutors mentioned examples of socio-economic pressure, family responsibilities and other personal issues such as transport and conflicting needs of self and family. All of the gaps and challenges which the tutees and tutors in this study experienced with English as LOLT and under-preparedness when entering university are supported by Seabi *et al.* (2012), Pocock (2012) and Mokoena and Materechera (2012) who found that African language students from previously disadvantaged communities were not adequately prepared for the demands of higher education and could easily become distracted from focussing on the academic programme (as discussed in Section 2.4 of Chapter 2).

This study has established that both tutees and tutors struggled with the cognitive demands of the subjects they had to deal with in their first year of study: which consequently caused some of them to fail. This struggle stemmed from their lack of critical thinking skills, inability to engage adequately with the course material and gaps in knowledge as pointed out by themselves and the lecturers. Tutees, tutors and lecturers commented on how tutees and tutors lacked the comprehension and meaning-making skills to decode concepts in Mathematics in Education and the theory in Language in Education. Lecturers attested to how a lack of cognitive skills resulted in much higher demands on the students in their preparation to teach the subjects. The tutees’ struggle with the cognitive demands of higher education and subsequent failure in some of their subjects was consistent with the findings of Seabi *et al.* (2012, Jama *et al.* (2008) and echoed by Pocock (2012) who highlights the plight of students from disadvantaged communities where schools are poorly equipped and first-generation students lack the support of what is required to be successful.

Several issues of a non-academic nature cause tutors and tutees difficulty in navigating their study journey and put them at risk of success. To ensure success, students’ non-academic needs such as learning how to focus, how to manage time and how to study effectively

should be attended to. Comments from both tutees and tutors revealed that they experienced difficulty with issues such as time-management, attentiveness and focussing, study skills and managing family responsibilities and pressures. In Section 4.5.1.1 (Chapter 4) I discussed how tutors spoke about tutees being inattentive during sessions and how they wasted time on their cell phones instead of concentrating on what was happening in the session. In the same section I mentioned how tutors commented on the negative attitude and low level of commitment demonstrated by tutees when they missed tutorials without valid reasons, arrived late and was easily distracted.

Tutors mentioned how personal struggles such as transport issues, family pressures and financial constraints caused them difficulty in meeting the expectations of higher education and made them want to give up. The correlation between the literature and the data, as well as between the academic and non-academic challenges of the tutees and tutors, is evidence that the challenges of the students in this study are inter-related and cannot be dealt with in isolation. Findings of De Klerk *et al.* (2017) amplify how students are at risk of failing when their non-academic needs are not met. Lotkowski *et al.* (2004) explain how non-academic factors such as lack of confidence and lack of commitment add to students' risk of failure (see Section 2.6.2 of Chapter 2), while Pather (2013) states how first-year students who feel they cannot adjust to the new academic and social environment are often at risk of feeling alienated and may even drop out. The cooperative nature of tutoring and its value in facilitating an environment where students can engage with peers and exchange learning habits and success strategies, are supported by Pearson and Naug (2013), Ginty and Harding (2014) and Farao (2017) as discussed in Section 2.6.3 of Chapter 2.

In concluding this discussion on what the data revealed about the challenges of students in the study, I need to mention that, while the initiative of providing tutoring in the home language of the isiXhosa students in this study was a step in the right direction, its once-off nature was not. Considering the challenges that African language students experience with English as their language of instruction and how it prevents them from gaining equal access as opposed to their counterparts who are more conversant in English, **it is evident that support in their home language must be a strong consideration in order for them to be successful.** For the impact to be sustainably beneficial for isiXhosa students at the institution and other African language students elsewhere for whom English is an additional language, the support needs to be intentional, sustained and more of an institutionally-structured requirement: instead of an occasional, once-off intervention. The idea of an institutionally-structured programme is echoed by the words of one tutor who stated that: *"Tutoring programme is a good thing and should probably be fitted formally into a student's time table"*.

5.4 BENEFITS OF TUTORING

The aim of the tutoring programme in the current study was to improve the academic performance of the tutees. The data, however, showed evidence that the programme provided manifold benefits for both tutors and tutees, and on more than an academic level. The benefits for the tutees were mostly on a cognitive level and for tutors on a metacognitive as well as on an affective level. In the section below I focus on the benefits for tutees and tutors: as derived from the data. I point out how the data showed strong resemblances to parts of the literature in chapter 2.

5.4.1 Benefits for tutees

The most profound benefit for the tutees in the programme was undoubtedly the improvement in understanding due to the conversations they were able to conduct in their home language. The interaction between the tutees and tutors took place mainly in isiXhosa; resulting in the tutees following the conversation, understanding better and enabling them to pose questions about issues and concepts that were unclear to them before. For the tutees, this was quite the opposite of the scenario in the lecture room, where much of what was said in English was not clear and where their weak English and imperfect secondary preparation prevented them from asking the sort of basic questions which they desperately needed to ask. In the lecture room, the students had difficulty understanding what was said and they did not feel confident enough to ask questions: they feared ridicule of their poor English and gaps in their academic training. Improved understanding as a result of isiXhosa tuition made them feel more empowered and confident in dealing with the subject matter when they were on their own. In the safe space of the small setting of a tutorial, they felt more confident to express their opinions, talk about their difficulties and concerns, and in so doing, became active participants in their own learning. They were comfortable to ask questions and clarify misunderstandings. The creation of an enabling environment and this feeling of active participation and better understanding empowered and boosted the self-confidence of the tutees.

In addition to the academic value of improved understanding, the tutoring in their home language facilitated development of solutions for the non-academic needs of the tutees. In Section 5.3 above, I discussed how students may still be at risk of failing when their need for the skills such as self-confidence, commitment to the course programme, effective study methods and management of time amongst other skills, which assist them in navigating the road to success, is not met. Statements from the tutees such as: *“... during lectures you are afraid to like answer ... during tutor classes at least you get to like express yourself more confidently ... nobody will judge you ...”* is a confirmation that interaction with the tutors in

their home language was indeed a more constructive and mutually beneficial cognitive experience which made them receptive to the course material while simultaneously building self-confidence. Non-academic aspects such as sharing of techniques and strategies during engagement with peers, especially academically vulnerable students, and reflected in tutoring, are promoted and supported by Ginty and Harding (2014) and Lotkowski *et al.* (2004), who acknowledge the value of support programmes designed to supplement both the academic and life skills that enable at-risk students to persevere in their studies (see Section 2.6.3 of Chapter 2).

5.4.2 Benefits for tutors

Comments made by tutors show evidence of them benefitting on an affective level. Tutors shared views on how they felt appreciated and valued for the opportunity to help a fellow student. One tutor commented: *"I enjoy the positive feeling I get when students have done well in their exams"*. Supporting another student proved rewarding. The positive feedback that tutors received from assignments and assessments motivated tutors to put in extra effort with their own studies. This action of putting in extra effort, points to an increase in the tutors' sense of responsibility, while being selected as a tutor boosted their self-esteem and self-confidence. Evidence of the increase in self-esteem and confidence clearly emerged in utterances such as: *"I got excited I was picked from a bigger group"* and *"I got average marks, but being picked gave me confidence"*. The increased self-esteem and confidence made them aware of their own abilities as students and their potential as teachers, which in turn created an awareness of their own potential and improved abilities, evident in comments such as: *"While guiding them, I felt I was improving my teaching skills"*.

The data showed that the benefits of the tutoring programme proved to be to the metacognitive advantage of the tutors as well, where metacognition is described as the student's ability to think about learning, to think critically and to reflect on his/her own thinking. The literature on tutoring and metacognition in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.5) of this study provides insight into how the metacognitive skills of tutors are enhanced through the processes of planning, monitoring and evaluation while tutoring. Examples of enhancement of cognitive processes such as reflecting and problem-solving are found in comments such as *"They should consider using students from Foundation Phase to tutor computer literacy because it is really very difficult for an FET student to fit into the tutoring programme for FP"*. Through comments such as: *"It helps me with my communication skills, because I had to know how to bring it across to the students / how to deliver my knowledge to them"*, tutors demonstrated an awareness of metacognitive skills such as improved communication-, organising-, and planning skills. Tutors demonstrated an elevated awareness of the learning

process when commenting *"I must identify the challenges of my students"*. These comments made by tutors strongly support recommendations of Cook *et al.* (2013) and De Backer *et al.* (2012) who state that the social dimension present in study strategies such as tutoring promotes metacognition in students.

5.4.3 Benefits for students from disadvantaged communities

The advantages of improved learning and deeper understanding of a subject, as well as the affective and metacognitive benefits which tutoring holds for tutors and tutees must be highlighted because it has been widely researched and documented by various researchers and thoroughly discussed in chapter 2 of this study. The overwhelming advantage of receiving support in their home language for tutees in the current study was the access it afforded them to the curriculum and the accompanying sense of being actively involved in and in charge of their studies. Considering the challenges of African language students from disadvantaged communities and how the English language of instruction is a debilitating factor for them in the lecture room, then comments such as: *"..... everything was clear the questioning and the answers came out from us ..."* demonstrate renewed confidence and a sense of taking control of their studies and by extension their future. For the tutors, the act of tutoring afforded them the advantage of gaining higher self-esteem, more confidence in their own abilities as students and future teachers: together with a greater sense of responsibility.

Tutoring is a useful tool in the enhancement of the metacognitive orientation of students: providing them with an essential awareness, knowledge and skills such as problem-solving, reflecting and monitoring their own learning, and the strategies they need to become successful. The comments made by tutees and tutors in this study provided evidence of how tutoring contributed to their academic success: whether in the form of providing or receiving tutoring. Their academic success contributed to the ultimate increase in the success rate of students in higher education. The tutors in the tutoring programme came from the same disadvantaged backgrounds as the tutees and attested to the fact that they were struggling with the same challenges as described by the tutees and discussed in Section 5.3 of this chapter. Lecturers in Mathematics in Education and Language in Education commented on the lack of higher level language use and lack of critical thinking abilities on the part of the tutees and tutors. Boughey's (2012) allusion to the "lack of elevated abilities in languages, communication and critical reading associated with learning" in Section 2.4.3 of Chapter 2 provides evidence of how higher education students from disadvantaged communities lack the metacognitive orientation that is necessary for success. This lack of metacognitive orientation is often the result of a linguistic inability and lack of higher level critical thinking skills: coupled with the under-preparedness and difficult transitioning to higher education of

first-year students from disadvantaged communities. An improvement in metacognition adds to the success of higher education students: as stated by De Backer *et al.* (2012) in Section 2.5.3 of Chapter 2, and supported by Mahdavi (2014) as well as Cook *et al.* (2013).

Madhavi's (2014) claim in Section 2.5 of Chapter 2 that metacognition is teachable and learnable, suggests that the benefits of tutoring as an instructional approach should be explored and taken advantage of. The data contain sufficient evidence of the metacognitive benefits and inherent advantages associated with tutoring and how, especially the tutors in this study, gained from it. In light of the transitioning and academic challenges which students from disadvantaged communities are faced with when they enter university, they need metacognitive awareness which corresponds with meaningful, deep-level thinking for higher achievement. This need for metacognitive awareness is amplified by De Backer *et al.* (2012) who state (see Section 2.5 of Chapter 2) that the majority of higher education students from disadvantaged communities lack the skill and ability to self-regulate their learning: a skill which is crucial for success at tertiary level.

In the following section I discuss the significance of the data in relation to the theme on implementation, management and monitoring of the tutoring programme.

5.5 IMPLEMENTATION, MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING OF THE TUTORING PROGRAMME

Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.4) contains ideas on the importance of effective implementation of a tutoring programme in order to fulfil its desired outcomes. The section explains how monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process can assist with establishing validity as well as provide opportunities for identifying and correcting problems in the early stages of the programme. In that section I suggested how information on the quality of the tutor training, the availability of technical and administrative assistance and an evaluation of the involvement of all the role players could be used to measure the implementation against the projected outcomes. Section 2.2.4 of Chapter 2 cautioned against an erroneous assumption that the training of tutors and the availability of tutoring material alone guarantees successful implementation.

In Chapter 4 (Section 4.5.4) the theme of the implementation, management and monitoring of the tutoring programme highlighted the issues related to: (i) selection of the tutors and their ability to implement the tutoring; (ii) liaison between role players; and (iii) monitoring and evaluation. All three of these issues are connected to the implementation and are thus crucial to the success of the programme. It is not the goal of this study to report primarily on the level of success of the tutoring programme, but rather to report on the experiences of the

role players. However, since this section deals with data which have a bearing on the implementation and management of the programme, the discussion inevitably points to the level of successful implementation and thus the degree of success of the programme. I provide a brief summary of each aspect of the theme of implementation, management and monitoring of the tutoring programme: as discussed in the analysis of the data, and my thoughts on the issues.

Tutors were selected from the BEd Foundation Phase study programme for tutoring in Language in Education and Mathematics in Education and from the BEd FET study programme for tutoring in Computers in Education. All of the tutors had a good command of isiXhosa and English: considering that the tutoring had to take place in isiXhosa. The tutors from the BEd Foundation Phase programme could implement the tutoring according to the schedule, while the tutors from the BEd FET programme found it difficult to implement. One tutor from the BEd FET programme ascribed his difficulty of implementation to his schedule and confirmed that *"I couldn't meet them ... the only time I was with them was when I was introduced to the group. I went to practice teaching and there just wasn't time."* Tutees questioned the ability and suitability of the tutors as it related to their knowledge and professionalism. One lecturer expressed concern about the tutors' ability to understand the struggles of tutees with Mathematics and tutors' knowledge gaps in the subject.

Comments about liaison between role players varied from good, to average, to non-existent between the tutors and the lecturers: whereas the programme manager maintained a good connection between tutors and tutees. After training of the tutors, the trainer suggested constant and regular liaison between tutors and lecturers for support, strengthening of confidence and to fill gaps in knowledge. From comments such as: *"The lecturer was always available. She would give us input, suggestions on worksheets and stuff ... we could use it in the sessions"* and *"I have trouble with the lecturer ... whenever I was here, she was not here ... we made an appointment but then she would have something else to do ... it was a nightmare"* I deduced that in cases of successful liaison between themselves and lecturers, tutors felt empowered and confident to deal with the questions posed by tutees. Opposite feelings of disempowerment and uncertainty were present in cases of limited or no liaison between tutors and lecturers. Liaison between tutors and lecturers was not monitored adequately: although a proposed action plan for this purpose was developed in the planning stages. The trainer suggested ongoing liaison between herself and the programme manager as a means for feedback, to monitor effective implementation and to provide ongoing support to the tutors if there was a need. No evidence, however, could be found that this actually occurred.

The programme manager maintained good relations between tutors and tutees for purposes of mentoring, monitoring and access to resources. When tutors reported a reduction in

attendance, the programme manager arranged a meeting with tutees to convey his concerns, listen to their issues and to motivate them to attend. The programme manager tried his utmost to stay in touch with lecturers on an informal basis. There was, however, a complete breakdown in communication between the programme manager and the tutors and lecturers from the BEd FET programme.

The programme manager expressed frustration at the inability to monitor the implementation of the tutoring programme adequately and the support he felt was needed for the tutors. This failure was rooted in a lack of resources, time and administration support, as well as the demands of his own teaching schedule. In his own words *"I often felt frustrated because I did not have enough time to manage this programme lecturing load"* and *"I would have asked for more guidance admin support more regular meetings"* the programme manager suggested that, in hindsight, some of the decisions at the time proved not to have been the best decisions, and that more could have been done if resources were available. The programme manager confirmed that no evaluation of the tutoring programme was done.

The summary on the theme of implementation, management and monitoring of the tutoring programme indicates both positive and negative aspects. Some of the positive aspects include appointment of a programme manager who was responsible for the implementation of the programme, the training of tutors and the strong liaison between some of the role players. On the negative side, there was a lack of resources, gaps in the planning and monitoring phases and a total lack of evidence with regard to evaluation. The literature on the implementation of an intervention alludes to the risk of poor programme outcomes where gaps exist in its implementation (see Section 2.2.4 of Chapter 2). Programme outcomes are equally in jeopardy in the absence of a strong organisational structure and where inadequate resources are evident.

The following section presents ideas on how the data suggested positives and negatives with regard to the implementation and management of the programme. Ideas on how to strengthen the successful implementation and management of a tutoring programme are outlined in the section on findings and recommendations.

Planning as a point of departure in the management process is crucial to determine the objectives or goals of the plan or programme. Planning enables the implementers to assess whether the objectives have been achieved. A needs assessment as part of the planning phase can assist with determining the cause/s of the problems or the specific needs of the individual tutees. Planning offers an opportunity to develop a road map which implementers can use to determine time-frames for achievement of mid-term and end goals and even periodic evaluation of programme goals.

While the inherent aim of enhancing the academic abilities of the tutees was stated, no mention was made about the specific programme objectives. Lack of evaluation at the end of the programme suggests either an absence of specific programme objectives or an absence of focus on determining whether the objectives were realized. Programme objectives which are clearly stated and pursued could serve as a motivation for formative evaluation midway through the implementation as well as summative evaluation at the end of implementation.

Morrison and English (2012) as well as Durlack and DuPre (2008) state the importance of monitoring implementation and how the level of implementation determines the outcomes of a programme (see Section 2.2.4 of Chapter 2). The same section in Chapter 2 refers to how monitoring of implementation can assist in identifying aspects of the programme which need to be improved. Formative evaluation of the implementation process may have offered the benefit of alerting the programme manager to the gaps that existed in the liaison between tutors and lecturers, the possible power issues that may have existed between tutees and tutors, the tutee who felt that the tutoring programme did not address her needs, as well as the poor/non-implementation of Computers in Education tutoring. Poor and/or non-implementation put the external and internal validity of the tutoring programme at risk, which in turn could jeopardize the implementation and/or funding of future similar interventions.

I consider the training of tutors to be crucial part of the planning phase of a tutoring programme. This part of the planning was done well in advance. The tutors receiving training in various skills needed to enable them to successfully support the tutees. The training of the tutors from the BEd FET group was not adequately utilised since they were not able to implement the programme successfully. The trainer suggested follow-up training in tutoring skills, further liaison between the programme manager and herself for feedback and support, as well as regular structured support from lecturers in subject matter. No evidence could be found of following through on these suggestions from the trainer, which suggests loss of resources and loss of opportunities for ongoing training of tutors.

Absence of discipline-specific training, as well as lack of liaison between tutors and some of the lecturers, suggest that tutors may have been in a better position to support tutees with course knowledge had these processes been in place. Hassan's (2013) study co-incidentally about tutor training at the same institution involved in the current study, found that the generic training that tutors received was inadequate and therefore suggests that tutors undergo discipline-specific training to help them enhance their own and the tutees' discipline knowledge. Underhill *et al.* (2014) extend the value and importance of generic and discipline-specific training further, by proposing that lecturers share in the responsibility of tutor development and that they be held accountable for such.

Although the data provide no evidence of formal evaluation at any point during the course of the programme, the comments of the tutees indicate that the aim of providing them a better

understanding of the subjects by means of tutoring in their mother tongue was achieved. This improved understanding was evident in comments such as “... *but the tutoring classes somehow do help, because that’s where we get to discuss these things and in our language ...*” Formal evaluation during, and at the end of the programme though, still remains necessary as it provides opportunities to monitor implementation, make adjustments and/or changes where necessary and measure the attainment of programme objectives. The gaps in implementation pointed out above point to opportunities for (i) liaison between the role players, (ii) strengthening of the tutors’ knowledge and skills, as well as (iii) improved management of resources.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 describes my interpretation of the themes identified in the analysis of the data in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I reminded the reader about the topics discussed in the literature review of Chapter 2, and how my interpretation of the identified themes reveals confirmation/contradictions to the literature.

Judging from the comments made by tutees and lecturers, it appears that tutors in this programme were more committed to the process than the tutees. The data revealed that the expectations of tutors and tutees in this study differed and that some form of conflict and even power issues arose. My suggestion is that where these issues arise, they be identified and attended to at an early stage. Neglecting conflict tarnishes working relations and frustrates programme outcomes.

Consistent with previous research, the data in this study confirmed how students from disadvantaged communities experienced challenges when they transitioned to university and how their socio-economic conditions caused them to be under-prepared for the academic and non-academic expectations and challenges they faced in higher education. These challenges included a lack of deeper level critical thinking skills, skills necessary to navigate their academic journey and, most importantly in the case of the tutors and tutees in this study, the ability to understand English as LOLT in the lecture rooms. The tutoring programme, however, offered both tutors and tutees opportunities for development of an academic and non-academic nature.

The appointment of a programme director, the timeous training of tutors, and a strong liaison between the tutors, the programme director and some of the lecturers, points to positive aspects of implementation. The absence of evidence of programme specific objectives, the absence of process and summative evaluations, as well as the lack of discipline-specific training and liaison between the tutors and some lecturers, compromised the integrity and validity of the tutoring programme.

In Chapter 6 below I conclude the study with my findings and recommendations for possible future implementation. I discuss the limitations of this project, make concluding remarks and offer some personal reflections gleaned while conducting the study.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of the role players in a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa first-language students at a University of Technology in the Western Cape Province in South Africa. Some of the tutees in the programme were second-year education students who failed one or more subjects in their first year of study and had to repeat those subjects. Other tutees were first-year education students who, by their own admission, felt they might have been at risk of failing the subjects and signed up for tutoring as a precaution. Mathematics in Education, Language in Education and Computers in Education were identified as the subjects which the students were most at risk: based on the failure statistics of the previous year. The tutors in the programme were students who had progressed at least one level up in the course material of the three subjects. Other role players in the programme were the programme manager, lecturers in the subjects mentioned and the trainer of the tutors.

Traditionally, tutoring for students is presented in English as the LOLT of the institution. Tutoring in the current study, however, was presented in isiXhosa, which was the home language of both tutees and tutors. The decision to tutor in home language stemmed from the difficulty that tutees experienced in understanding English as LOLT in the lecture room. Tutees ascribed their failure in the subjects mentioned above to their inability to understand the concepts and terms of the subjects: making course material inaccessible to them. The rationale was that explanations of the concepts and terms in isiXhosa make the course material easier to understand and render the curriculum and education more accessible to them.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 served as an introduction to the study and provided the motivation for a tutoring programme in isiXhosa by the institution. In the chapter I explained my own position as an educator at a school in a disadvantaged community with isiXhosa learners attending. I was approached by the institution to conduct a study on the tutoring programme towards an MEd qualification. I undertook initial reading on tutoring and gained an understanding of tutoring as a teaching and learning strategy for learners/students struggling academically.

In Chapter 2 I discussed the topic of tutoring in general: as well as tutoring in relation to aspects pertaining to students who attended schools in disadvantaged communities and whose home language was not the LOLT of the institution. Chapter two contained literature on the challenges that African language students experienced at higher education institutions in South Africa and the measure of support that was initiated since the dawn of democracy. In the chapter I provided some insights into earlier research about the non-academic struggles of first-year students from disadvantaged communities and discussed the potential value of tutoring in supporting them as they transitioned into university with both its academic and non-academic demands.

Chapter 3 explained how my choice of a case study located in a qualitative inquiry enabled me to give a voice to the perspectives of the participants through the use of interviews and reflective journals as data collection methods. My choice of an interpretive philosophical framework was discussed in detail: together with my explanation of how the social nature of tutoring, in which a more capable and knowledgeable peer or adult as facilitators in building knowledge, justified the choice of Social Constructivism as a framework for the study.

Chapter 4 described the process I followed to sort and analyse the data. The process was divided into five different stages: with each stage serving as a building block for the next stage. Four themes were identified: each with its own sub-themes. *Verbatim* comments of participants lent credence to their views and interpretations of their experiences.

In Chapter 5 I added my own perspective and insight to the themes and formulated some preliminary findings, based on my interpretation of what was stated by the participants. References were made to the literature in Chapter two and some anomalies were highlighted.

Chapter 6 concludes the study with a summary of the findings and simultaneously points out the relevance of the findings in relation to the existing body of knowledge on the topic of tutoring. I offer some recommendations for future implementation, as well as ideas on linkages between the research, and the paradigm and theoretical frameworks. This chapter states the limitations, shortcomings and gaps of the study and makes some recommendations for future research. I conclude the study with final comments and personal reflections of my experiences while conducting the study.

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to find answers to the central research question: “What are the experiences of the role players in a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa First-Language. Below is a summary of the main findings of the role players’ experiences, as derived from the themes that were developed after analysis of the data.

6.3.1 Tutors generally displayed a more positive attitude and were more committed to the tutoring programme than tutees

The scale on which the amount of positive comments about attitude and commitment were made by tutees and lecturers favoured tutors more than tutees. The positive attitude and commitment of tutors were displayed through their disciplined attendance at tutoring sessions, consistent liaison with, and eagerness to gain support from lecturers, as well as their affective attitude towards tutees. Tutors regularly attended tutoring sessions, met lecturers frequently and developed a caring attitude towards the tutees. Many of the tutees missed tutoring sessions and relied heavily on tutors to prompt them towards discussions on the course material they had difficulty with: instead of posing questions at the sessions.

Tutors ascribed the frequently indifferent attitude and careless behaviour of many of the tutees to the fact that tutees were not serious enough about their studies and that tutees did not understand the gravity of what was expected from them at higher education level. The negative attitude and lack of commitment of some tutees at times affected the tutors at a level where they felt disappointed. Yet, despite the occasional disappointment, tutors pressed on and delivered a high level of commitment.

In one instance, a tutee felt that the tutor did not display a positive attitude and that the tutor was not committed enough. This instance could be assigned to a case of misplaced perception on the side of the tutee, or a result of personality clashes and power issues. Such negative issues which arise between tutors and tutees must be addressed: tutors and tutees were affected by one another’s actions. Henderson, Fadali and Johnson (2002) report on the possibility of such instances arising in a tutoring programme and suggest that room be made for the development of positive relations of mutual respect and trust between tutees and tutors. A process of monitoring, evaluation and debriefing during implementation could detect such issues in time; at which point it could be addressed to clear the way for accountability, better relations and a smoother path towards positive outcomes of the tutoring programme. Henderson *et al.* (2002) propose that tutor training include a module on methods of how tutors can motivate tutees to participate. Such a module can provide tutors with skills and

knowledge of how to encourage participation among tutees and motivate them to better engage and become involved in their own learning.

6.3.2 Tutoring in their home language served as an aid for students whose first language was not the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) of the institution.

With the support of the tutors and the concepts and terms explained to them in their home language, tutees found the course material more understandable. The tutees gained a much better understanding; the curriculum became more accessible for them and in the process their chances of success in their studies increased. Tutoring in their home language helped tutees to counter the negative effect which a lack of higher level academic English had on students from disadvantaged communities and whose home language was not English. The support in a language which they understood became for the tutees a tool which they relied on in order to find the meaning which was crucial for their success in higher education studies. Before the tutoring began, tutees struggled with English as the LOLT of the institution, found it challenging to understand the concepts and terms of the subjects as it was used in the lecture room; all of which made the curriculum inaccessible to them and the course material and education meaningless.

6.3.3 Tutoring in their home language serves as a tool to overcome the academic and non-academic challenges of first-year students from disadvantaged communities

The process of interaction with fellow students on the course material in a language that both tutor and tutee understood as their mother tongue created an atmosphere which was conducive to developing confidence and boosting of self-esteem. Increased confidence and self-esteem were evident in the comments that tutees made about their freedom to ask questions and engage on fundamental issues in the course material when conversing in their home language. From the data, it was evident that the understanding and academic ability of tutees in the subjects in question were raised. Tutors attested to how the opportunity to tutor made them feel affirmed and socially responsible which motivated them to do better in their own studies. The boost in the confidence and self-esteem of both tutors and tutees enriched the lives of both groups.

Tutoring is a successful tool in the enhancement of metacognition of tutees and especially tutors. Metacognition is described in Section 2.5.6 of Chapter 2 as an individual's ability to think about his/her own learning and learning behaviours: as well as a higher order thinking process which involves thinking critically and reflectively about one's own thinking. In Sections 5.3 and 5.4 of Chapter 5 I discuss and provide evidence from the data of how tutors became aware of, and attested to, improvement in their communication-, organising- and planning skills when they had to think about how they were going to deal with the content and convey it to tutees. In sections 5.3.4 of Chapter 5 I provide evidence from the data which describes the tutees' improved abilities in problem-solving, reflective skills and monitoring of their own learning: when they commented on how they could learn from each other during interaction with their peers. De Backer *et al.* (2012), Mahdavi (2014) and Cook *et al.* (2013) consider all the skills mentioned in this paragraph as part of an individual's metacognitive abilities and claim that, through tutoring, an improvement in these skills can add to the success of higher education students. Through the enhancement of metacognition tutoring directly and indirectly addressed the academic and non-academic needs of the tutors and tutees in the tutoring programme.

The cooperative and collaborative nature of tutoring facilitates an environment where tutees' and tutors' non-academic needs can be addressed. The tutors and tutees spoke about how they struggled with transport and family issues which influenced their studies negatively, how they struggled to find their feet and lacked the skills such as use of computers and how to settle into the higher education culture. They spoke of how, when sharing feedback after assignments and assessments, they all felt positive and motivated. From the statements made by tutors and tutees of how they struggled to balance personal lives and studies, it was evident that their academic and non-academic challenges could not be separated. The comments and feedback from tutees and tutors and the role that tutoring played in addressing their academic and non-academic needs, corroborated earlier findings made by Farao (2017) who endorses the multi-faceted and diverse roles of tutoring as a learning and teaching/support approach, and its potential in facilitating an enabling environment for students' transition into higher education and their further success (see Section 2.6.4 of Chapter 2). This need for academic and non-academic support for vulnerable students at risk of failure is supported by Karp (2011) and discussed in Section 2.6.3 of Chapter 2, who proposes a support approach that focusses on the academic and non-academic aspects of vulnerable students' university experience.

The collaborative and intellectually stimulating learning environment of tutoring, and the accompanying opportunity for social connections, supported students such as tutees and tutors in this study and built on their positive engagement experiences (Krause, 2005.)

Krause (2005) states that students from disadvantaged backgrounds often experience university culture as a “battleground” because they lack the social and cultural skills that are necessary to navigate their way through the university terrain. Some of the aspects that contributed to the battle of students such as the tutees and tutors in this study who came from disadvantaged backgrounds, were the linguistic barriers and new/foreign approaches to learning which often left them feeling isolated and overwhelmed. For students who found themselves in these conflicting situations, tutoring in their home language became an engagement opportunity to debate, discuss and explore and in the process provided them with the “armour” to “win the battle” (Krause, 2005).

6.3.4 Resources spent on the tutoring programme were not optimally utilised due to gaps in the selection, training and mentoring of tutors

Tutors were not fully available and equipped in terms of opportunity and even skills and knowledge. Most of the tutors in the tutoring programme under scrutiny were selected from the BEd Foundation Phase (FP) course, while some were selected from the BEd Further Education and Training (FET) course in the Education Faculty of the university. After their initial training, almost all of the tutors from the FP were available for tutoring sessions: while tutors from the FET course were available in a limited way only or not at all. Some of the tutees and one lecturer questioned the knowledge-base of the tutors who felt frustrated, disempowered, uncertain and at a loss due to lecturers' unavailability for liaison and support. The generic training of tutors seemed inadequate in that it lacked the course knowledge which discipline-specific training offers.

One of the tutors for the subject of Computers in Education was partially available while the other tutor was not available at all after initial training. Both these tutors were selected from the FET course. The fact that their inputs were minimal or non-existent suggests that the returns on the resources and efforts invested in them were completely lost. The loss on the investment in these two tutors emphasises why the selection of tutors should be carefully considered.

6.3.5 The lack of resources affected the quality of implementation.

The programme manager expressed frustration at the lack of resources and commented on how, in hindsight and if the resources had been available, he would have dealt differently with certain aspects during implementation of the tutoring programme. One of his comments referred in particular to how he was unable to monitor the implementation due to time

constraints. The responsibilities that go with his own teaching schedule prevented him following up on tutors as regularly as he would have liked to, nor did he have the time to monitor lecturers' liaison with the tutors. The programme manager confirmed that, due to lack of administrative support and time constraints, no debriefing or evaluation took place during or at the end of the tutoring programme. Another one of his comments was that, looking back on the process, he realized that had he had the administrative support and/or more time at his disposal, some of the decisions he made would have been different. He could manage, however, to keep in touch with the tutors and tutees to discuss their concerns and to provide support as far as it was possible for him. These sessions, by his own admission, however, were not sufficient.

A lack of resources such as administrative support and sufficient time to monitor the implementation of the tutoring programme resulted in lost opportunities to evaluate the process. A resource such as administrative support could have provided the programme manager opportunities to arrange for regular debriefing and feedback from tutors, tutees and lecturers. Regular feedback and debriefings would have provided information concerning the lack of liaison between tutors and lecturers, the issues that arose between tutors and tutees, as well as the frustration and feelings of disempowerment that the tutors were experiencing when they felt they were not able to respond to the needs of the tutees sufficiently. The programme manager did not have the resources, neither the time to gather the information: resulting in lost opportunities to evaluate and take remedial action during the implementation.

The literature in Section 2.2.4 of Chapter 2 refers to the importance of the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of a tutoring programme. This importance is re-iterated in Section 5.5 of Chapter 5 where I mention how gaps in the implementation have the potential to jeopardize the validity and integrity of the process as well as the ultimate outcomes of the programme. Inadequate administrative support and insufficient time challenged the programme manager: Future implementation of similar programmes is threatened by the failure of small-scale studies such as this one. Availability of administrative support and sufficient time for the programme manager to monitor and evaluate the quality of implementation are crucial to the validity and integrity of the tutoring programme.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE

6.4.1 Expectations and accountability of role players must be discussed and clarified

The expectation of each role player, and the level of accountability that accompanies the role of each person involved in the tutoring programme, must be clarified at the outset. Such clarification of expectations and accountability enable everybody to state any limitations and issues which affect their involvement and relations with each other. Where limitations and issues are known to all, an assessment can be made of the outcomes and contingency plans which can be put in place. If tutees are affected by transport arrangements, adjustments can be effected to the schedule or where lecturers are not available, alternative arrangements can be made. Open communication on all matters affecting all stakeholders is likely to contribute to better working relations, which in turn contributes to better outcomes.

In this study, tutors commented on the non-commitment/low commitment of tutees. A contract can be one way of clarifying expectations and ensuring accountability on the part of the tutees (Colvert & Fry, 2016), to help ensure that they commit to, and use the programme effectively, as well as take ownership of the intended outcomes of the support offered.

6.4.2 Tutoring in the home language of students from disadvantaged communities and whose home language is not English, should be a mandatory requirement in the Education faculty of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Education students from disadvantaged communities in South Africa whose home language is not English, such as the isiXhosa tutees in this study, should receive tutoring in their home language at least in the first year of their studies at tertiary level. Instead of the opportunity for tutoring in their home language being an occasional event for first-year students and those who failed the subjects in their first year as was the case in this particular instance, tutoring in home language should be considered as an institutional support structure available to all students whose home language is not English. The literature discussed in Chapter 2 of this study offers multiple examples of how English as LOLT in education became a barrier instead of a bridge builder in the learning process of a student whose home language was not English. The necessity of such a mandatory arrangement for students from disadvantaged communities whose home language is not English is summed up by the comment of a tutor in Section 5.3.2 of Chapter 5 when stating that tutoring in the home language should be formally fitted into the time table of the students.

Transformation in Education in South Africa is still slow and mother tongue LOLT is unforeseeable in higher education in the near future. Students from disadvantaged communities, whose first language is not English, should receive support in their home language to remove the barriers which English as LOLT poses to them. Colvert and Fry (2016) emphasise this recommendation of tutoring services as a necessary offer to students, especially first-generation students from low socio-economic communities, and implore any higher education institution dedicated to ensuring that their students persist and ultimately graduate, to make such a service part of its academic culture.

6.4.3 The cognitive, metacognitive and non-academic value of tutoring as a teaching and learning/support strategy should be optimized at the university

Tutoring offers invaluable support in the areas of academic and non-academic needs of students in general, but especially so in the case of disadvantaged students who experience challenges when transitioning into the culture of higher education. This support was particularly evident in the lives of first-generation students from low socio-economic backgrounds who experienced difficulties in an uneven support environment of the university in the current study (Norodien-Fataar & Daniels, 2016). This study established that the challenges of the isiXhosa tutees and tutors in the Education Faculty of the university constituted more than academic challenges. One of the key findings in Section 6.3.3 of this chapter draws the attention to the academic and non-academic value which tutoring adds to the success of higher education students from disadvantaged communities. For the Education Faculty of the university to meet its mandate of ensuring access to education for all (Department of Higher Education, 2013), tutoring should be considered a part of its service to first-year students from schools in disadvantaged communities. Norodien-Fataar and Daniels (2016) support this recommendation with a similar appeal when stating that the university in this study “should actively recognize and strengthen its support platforms to help students from disadvantaged communities towards success”. This recommendation finds further support from Pather's (2013) claim that the small class size and individual attention which students are privileged to in tutoring encourage them to persist and not drop out.

6.4.4 The selection of tutors, their training and mentoring must receive high priority

Tutors are at the heart of the tutoring programme, making their selection, training and mentoring the most important priority towards a successful outcome. Tutors for the tutoring programme under scrutiny could be selected only from among students who were isiXhosa-speaking but it must be added that minimum requirements such as availability and

commitment of tutors and lecturers should be discussed during the planning phase. This part of the recommendation on selection of tutors ties in with the recommendation in Section 6.4.1 of this chapter where I suggest that limitations, accountability and expectations be discussed in order to clarify and communicate how it might affect the desired outcomes of the programme. The advantage of such a discussion in the planning stages of the intervention is that it creates an awareness of the commitment required from tutors and lecturers, and affords an opportunity to take a closer look at and adjust schedules, if and where necessary.

Underhill *et al.* (2014) underscores the importance of mentorship and ongoing discipline-specific support that should be forthcoming from lecturers, as they are best placed to understand the disciplinary context of their subjects. These researchers emphasise how expert guidance from lecturers can help towards the holistic development and positive experiences of tutors: as opposed to the risk it carries when experienced academics distance themselves from the task of developing tutors. For tutoring programmes to be successful, intentional ongoing training and ongoing collaboration between academic staff and tutors must be a requirement for students who serve in these positions: as it is expected of them to fulfil their roles effectively (Frade, 2017).

6.4.5 The programme manager responsible for implementing the tutoring programme must have sufficient resources such as time and/or administrative support to monitor implementation

The institution should consider appointing a designated official with sufficient resources and support to enable him/her to oversee, monitor and evaluate the implementation process so that, if necessary, remedial action can be taken to ensure positive outcomes. The individual who is responsible for the oversight and implementation must be given enough time to facilitate interaction and engagement with all the role players: such as lecturers and tutors for debriefing meetings and gathering information to ascertain whether the process is still on track and going in the intended direction. Where more time for the programme manager to attend to the implementation is not possible, the help of an administrative assistant could be an alternative. Consideration should be given to the process of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation, and that this consideration be built into the planning phase of the programme.

Analysis of the data on the management and implementation of the tutoring programme in this study has revealed how certain issues can jeopardise the integrity of the programme: such as (i) resources spent on training of the tutors who later on were not available for

tutoring; (ii) limited liaison between tutors and lecturers, resulting in tutors not feeling adequately prepared to answer the questions of tutees, and (iii) the absence of evaluation of the programme. All of the aspects influencing the integrity of the programme mentioned here stand a better chance when its effects are evaluated, which can be done when the implementation is monitored regularly and efficiently.

6.5 RESEARCH AND INTERPRETIVISM AS A PARADIGM FRAMEWORK

In Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.1) I discussed reasons for my decision to approach the research for this study from an interpretivist stance. I explained that I gravitated towards interpretivism because it offered me the opportunity to explore the experiences of the participants from their own contexts and search for meaning and understanding from their points of view. The tutees and the tutors were the primary participants in this search, because they were the central figures in the tutoring programme. The choice of interpretivism as a paradigm from which to approach the research, allowed me to search for meaning and understanding in their comments against the backdrop of their historical context. Using an interpretivist approach facilitated the process of putting the experiences of the tutees and tutors as African language students in a historically unequal South African education landscape into perspective. Throughout the analysis of the available data, up to formulating the findings and recommendations, I was reminded of the main goal of an interpretivist approach as offering a description of the experiences of the participants: as opposed to searching for and prescribing a solution to the problem. The findings offered in Sections 6.3 of this chapter are my interpretation of how tutees and tutors, and lecturers, programme manager and tutor trainer, experienced the tutoring programme. Recommendations offered in Section 6.4 of this chapter comprise my interpretation of how experiences of participants in future tutoring programmes may be different/improved, based on the experiences of the participants in the tutoring programme under review.

6.6 RESEARCH AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Section 2.1 of Chapter 2 provides an understanding of how the collaborative and social nature of tutoring as a support mechanism can enhance the academic abilities of tutees. In addition to the academic value of tutoring, Section 2.5 of Chapter 2 contains information of how tutoring can be instrumental in developing metacognition in higher education students. Section 2.5 of Chapter 2 refers to the relation between tutoring and metacognition and

describes the metacognitive abilities of students as their ability to think about their own thinking. The skill of metacognition is regarded as a student's ability to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning. Metacognition as an essential skill for success on a higher education level, however, is rare among students.

Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.2) describes Social Constructivism as a social science theory which claims that learning is best undertaken in social situations. Social Constructivism places emphasis on the active participation of the learner and contends that much of an individual's learning takes place through interaction with peers or adults who have greater knowledge. The social interaction emphasis of the theory is regarded by proponents as the foundation for cognitive development and is supported by Vygotsky's description of learning as a socially mediated process – the very socially mediated process which facilitates discussions in tutoring classes.

The two paragraphs above illustrate the strong relation that exists between tutoring as the central theme for this study and the theory of Social Constructivism. The discussion confirms the academic and metacognitive benefits of tutoring as a support mechanism as well as the benefits of tutoring as a social mediation process to facilitate learning as described in Social Constructivism. The strong relation between the findings of tutoring as a tool to enhance the academic and metacognitive abilities of the tutees and tutors in this study, and Social Constructivism strengthens the applied theory and confirms the use of it as a suitable choice for this study. In addition to the conclusion that the choice of Social Constructivism has proven to be suitable for this study, the use of the theory increased my awareness of the interconnectedness between theory and research. Social Constructivism has informed my understanding of the issues surrounding learning and how knowledge is constructed, and assisted me in making sense of the broader significance of the data; developing the themes and ultimately formulating the findings and recommendations of this study.

6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While every effort has been made to include all possible aspects relevant to this study, some limitations have to be acknowledged. The limitations below mainly emerged as a result of time constraints and the scope of the study.

Only two out of the ten targeted tutees could be interviewed. This constraint came as a result of the unavailability of tutees because of travelling and personal commitment issues. Had more tutees been available for interviews, it could have expanded the volume of data that

represented the views of tutees. Another aspect of the volume of data was the view of the tutee who felt she did not benefit as much as anticipated. Time, however, did not allow me to go back to the tutee for more information. The information from the reflective journals of tutees, together with the interviews, allowed for ample information to analyse and formulate the findings and recommendations. The amount of data collected did not fully meet the aim of this study, especially from tutees.

In important respects the data collected from participants corroborated the literature that was studied in Chapter 2 of the study. The views of participants confirmed the results and findings of previous studies on most of the interrelated topics central to the study. Intentional questioning with a view to probing for counter views could have opened up a space for opposing views. An example in this study is the comment of the tutee who felt that the tutor was not professional and committed to the act of tutoring. More questioning could have revealed greater insight into the merits of the comment, which in turn could have provided a counter view to what was reported about the commitment and attitude of tutors in the findings of this study. It must be acknowledged therefore, that a greater range of perceptions could have emerged: had there been intentional probing for counter views. This may be an important aspect to consider for future research practice.

The tutees in this study were mostly students who failed one or two subjects in the previous year of study. Their exposure to tutoring and their subsequent comments in interviews and reflective journals may not be consistent with those of students who had successfully progressed, but still had a need for tutoring in their home language. The results of this study are not generalizable to all isiXhosa first language students who were exposed to tutoring in their home language. This limitation could possibly be addressed in a tutoring programme for isiXhosa students who participate in a tutoring programme in their home language and who have not necessarily failed.

As the researcher, being an educator at a school in a disadvantaged community as well as having received my schooling in a disadvantaged community during the Apartheid years of South Africa, my own bias might be regarded as a possible limitation. A researcher on the same topic from a different community, a different school and work experience, might have a totally different perspective and interpretation of the issues, resulting in different findings. I believe, however, that it is exactly because of my experiences that I could relate to, and have an understanding of the responses that were shared with me. I endeavoured to be objective and stay true to the data.

6.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to investigate the experiences of the role players in a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa first- language students. Research into the topic of tutoring has mainly been undertaken on the value it adds to the academic and non-academic development of students. The key element of the tutoring programme under scrutiny, however, was that the tutees received the tutoring support in their home language instead of English, which is the LOLT of the institution. This study has established the profound role which tutoring in the home language played where the LOLT is not the home language of the students. The study highlighted the aspect of access to the curriculum and potential subsequent success and throughput rate of students who experienced a high level of under-preparedness when transitioning to higher education in the context of a post-Apartheid South Africa. This study contributes to knowledge on how tutoring in the home language provides isiXhosa students access to the curriculum by assisting them in minimising their struggles with English as the LOLT and overcoming their under-preparedness.

In most instances where tutoring is offered, it is an optional for students who wish to improve their academic abilities. This study emphasises tutoring in the home language as a necessity for students whose home language is not the LOLT of the institution. The playing field in higher education in South Africa remains uneven for students from disadvantaged backgrounds in South Africa. The issue of English as the LOLT at most universities in South Africa and the fact that students from disadvantaged communities lack an adequate command of higher level English due to insufficient exposure to the language, is but one area in which the inequality in South African education is perpetuated. This study highlights the strong link between an improved understanding of the course material and potential success and completion rates of studies when tutoring in the home language is offered to students whose home language is other than the LOLT of the institution. The study provides findings and recommendations which lay the foundation for consideration of tutoring in the home language as an essential service for isiXhosa students registered for an undergraduate qualification at tertiary level.

6.9 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A few possible areas for future research emerge from this study, as discussed below.

A study into the implementation of all the recommendations in this study is a possible area for research. The value of such research lies in the elimination of the gaps identified, as well as a strengthening of the positive experiences shared by the role players. A study into the implementation of the recommendations adds value to the recommendations that the study's findings can determine whether the recommendations could work in practice or not.

In the finding which states that tutors showed more commitment and a more positive attitude to the tutoring programme (see Section 6.3.1), suggestions were made (i) for the inclusion of development of positive relations for mutual respect and trust between tutors and tutees, and (ii) that tutees agree to a contract when entering the tutoring programme. Both the issues mentioned, if included in the tutoring programme, have the potential to influence the commitment and attitude of tutees positively. This is an area which could be investigated.

Another area for possible research could be a longitudinal study of the experiences of tutoring for isiXhosa first-language students. The current study took place over a period of one academic year only and reflects the experiences of the role players only during that particular period. A longitudinal study of tutees' and tutors' experiences may shed more light on how a tutoring programme in the mother tongue of isiXhosa students influences their studies over a long term. Data collected over a period of, for example two or three years, may reveal information that either confirms and/or contradicts the findings of this study.

6.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study provided an overview of the experiences of role players in a tutoring programme for BEd Foundation Phase isiXhosa first-language students at a University of Technology in Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa. Some of the tutees who participated in the tutoring programme were isiXhosa students who failed one or more subjects in their first year of study and had to repeat. The remainder of the tutees were first-year isiXhosa students who anticipated that they might be at risk of failing if they did not receive support. Other role players were isiXhosa tutors, lecturers of the subjects the tutoring were offered in, as well as the programme manager and trainer of the tutors. The university offered the tutoring in the first language of the tutees and tutors.

This study established that isiXhosa Foundation Phase students in the Education Faculty struggle with English as the LOLT and often do not understand the concepts and terms of the course material they deal with, which causes them to underperform in assessments. It has become clear that instruction in English was more of a barrier in the lecture room than a means to transfer knowledge. It was established that, besides their struggles with the LOLT, students experience difficulty in adjusting to the higher education culture, mainly because of their under-preparedness which is a result of the historical imbalances in the school education sector in the country. The struggles mentioned put many isiXhosa students at risk of being unsuccessful, an aspect which is often misinterpreted as them being lazy or incompetent.

Discussion of the topics in Chapter 2 shed light on how tutoring can be employed as a teaching and learning tool to assist struggling students such as the tutees in this study. The data showed how tutoring in their home language facilitated improved cognitive and metacognitive skills that support their navigation through higher education. The results of the study highlighted the crucial role of effective planning and monitoring of implementation for a successful outcome. It was further established that the availability and effective use of sufficient resources should receive strong consideration in such a tutoring programme.

While most of the data and subsequent results of this study corroborated the findings of previous studies on tutoring in general, the most profound finding of this study lay in the fact that the tutoring was offered to the tutees in their first language, which was not the LOLT of the institution. Being able to engage with the course material in their own language, allowed tutees access to the curriculum, which was otherwise inaccessible to them given the English LOLT of the institution. By providing tutees the opportunity to gain support from fellow students who understood and explained to them the course material in their home language, the university took its mandate of creating a supportive environment for study to a higher level. In delivering on this mandate, the university opened up a space for potential improved throughput in South African higher education – an issue which is still a concern after two decades of a democracy. Considering the importance of improved throughput and completion rates for students from disadvantaged communities whose home language was not the LOLT of the institution, tutoring in the home language of isiXhosa students must, however, become an intentional institutionalized priority, instead of a once-off effort as was the case in this tutoring programme. The importance of an intentional institutionalized priority is emphasised by Pather (2013) when stating that carefully planned interventions can be utilized to improve academic performance of at-risk students in the South African context.

6.11 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The journey I embarked on while planning for, conducting and completing this study has left me feeling overwhelmed, then excited and finally humbled. As I progressed from one chapter to the next and realized what such a project really entailed, I felt intimidated by the thought of the amount of reading, creative thinking and time that needed to be put into it. Reading the material on the topics included in the study, I started to feel excited about the vast amount of previous research and the knowledge imparted to me by researchers. Humility and gratitude set in when it dawned on me that, despite my lack of knowledge on the topic and the research process, I too had the opportunity to join the ranks and add to the work that researchers do. Being at the end now, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to be on this journey.

At this late stage of my journey into the research it may help the reader to get a glimpse into my personal situation and put my reflections into perspective. I am a 57-year old educator with 35 years teaching experience at a school situated on the Cape Flats in Cape Town, in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. My outlook on life as an educator is to render service to a community where the learners, who attend my school, are confronted with a myriad of socio-economic constraints such as poverty, drug abuse, violence, teenage pregnancies and more. I view my purpose at the school as an agent of change who has to employ specific gifts and talents to empower and support the youth in this disadvantaged community, in order to help them navigate their journey in a quest to overcome the challenges they are experiencing currently, and prepare for a life that is very different from the one they are living now. I myself grew up in similar circumstances and realize that it was through the support of educators and others who recognized my potential, that I was given the opportunity to study and become an educator. Being an educator is my chance to give back.

At first I thought that the research was predominantly going to be confined to the topic of tutoring. My curiosity about why the students needed the tutoring led me along the road of discovering the related issues such as the link between the struggles of higher education students from disadvantaged communities and the legacy left by Apartheid. I have no experience of higher education teaching, so learning about issues such as language barriers and lack of metacognitive awareness that plays itself out in the higher education atmosphere, was compelling and informative. With the new knowledge about African-language students and their experiences with English LOLT, I could immediately make the connection between their struggles with the English language and that of African-language learners at my school, whose home language is in most cases isiXhosa. I found myself developing a need to want

to make colleagues aware of their needs and explore ways of how they can be supported. Being exposed to the topics of first-year students' transition into higher education and the issue of under-preparedness, I developed a greater awareness of how learners at school could be supported to be better prepared for tertiary education. The implementation of a tutoring programme in the home language of learners seemed for me a natural direction to go in.

The research process itself taught me several skills and provided insights about myself and my career. Once I started to understand the processes and different steps when doing research, I discovered that I liked doing it. My natural flair for following steps logically and to apply analytical thinking was sharpened, while I developed a tendency to read too much in the midst of limited time, simply because I love reading about educational matters. Doing this research made me aware of how much I love the practice of teaching. My awareness was raised about the importance of support for learners at schools in, and students who come from schools in disadvantaged communities. I have come to the realization that the education sector in South Africa needs the expertise of all who can contribute to a state of equal access to education for all citizens of our country.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: EXAMPLE OF CONSENT FORM

[REDACTED]

**CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH STUDY WITH THE
TITLE: "Experiences in a tutoring programme for B Ed Foundation Phase
isiXhosa first language students".**

Dear Student

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) has introduced a tutoring programme for B Ed Foundation Phase isiXhosa first language students at the beginning of 2013. The main aim of the programme is to provide academic support to students. Your involvement in the programme is in one of three ways:

- (a) You have been invited and agreed to receive support thereby becoming a tutee in the programme; or
- (b) You have been selected and agreed to give support, thereby becoming a tutor in the programme; or
- (c) You have been selected by the institution to co-ordinate the activities, thereby becoming the co-ordinator of the programme.

It would be appreciated if you would participate in a study that focusses on the tutoring programme. The study will be conducted by me towards the completion of my Masters degree. The main aim of the study is to find out what the experiences of the stakeholders are during this process, to report on my findings and make recommendations (if any) that can improve future implementation of similar programmes.

This correspondence serves to seek your permission for participation in the study. Your participation would be to allow me to observe one or more of your tutoring sessions, conduct interviews with you and/or to allow me insight into your reflective journal regarding your thoughts and feelings about the tutoring programme. The researcher will inform you of your individual participation and will contact you for convenient dates and times.

Please note that the information gathered during this study will only be used for the purposes of research. The study is independent of your academic programme and it will not be used in any way to prejudice your academic progress at CPUT. Your participation in the study will be completely anonymous and confidential. At no stage will your name be mentioned or your dignity be compromised. Whatever information you share will be used for future enhancement of the programme and will in no way be traced back to you.

You have the right to withdraw from the process at any point, should you not feel comfortable with the way the study is being conducted.

Kindly provide your written consent for participation in one or more aspects of this study, by completing the return slip below.

Your consideration is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance.

Anneline Jacqueline Carnow (Student number 186061757)

.....

RETURN SLIP

I, (name of participant in print), hereby give my consent and agree to participate in the study titled **“Experiences in a tutoring programme for undergraduate B Ed Foundation Phase isiXhosa first language students”**.

I understand the content of the consent letter as given to me by the researcher for the study, and further understand that I may exercise my right to withdraw from the process at any point.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT: 

DATE: 

MEd Research Proposal: Anneline Jacqueline Carnow (2013)

ANNEXURE B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

STUDENT: Anneline Jacqueline Carnow

STUDENT NUMBER: 186061757

COURSE: M Ed

YEAR: 2013 – 2014

The questions below serve only as a guideline to conduct semi-structured interviews with participants in the study:

1. Can you please share with me some of the experiences you have had during your involvement in the tutoring programme? (Question to both tutors, tutees and programme co-ordinator)
2. What do you think were the reasons why you were not successful in the mentioned subjects during your first year of study? (Question to tutees)
3. Which part of the training did you enjoy the most and why do you think you enjoyed it? (Question to tutors)
4. In which way did high school prepare (or did not prepare) you for higher education studies? (Question to tutees)
5. Has the tutoring programme helped you to understand the work better after the lectures? Please give examples of how it has helped? (Question to tutees)
6. Were there any benefits (other than the financial one) for you from tutoring in the programme? (Question to tutors)
7. What can you tell me about the interaction between you and the students in your group during the tutoring sessions? (Question to tutors)
8. How was the tutoring sessions different for you from the lecture classes? (Question to tutees)
9. What was your final result at the end of 2014 in the mentioned subjects? What do you think contributed to the result? (Question to tutees)
10. Tell me about the issues/aspects that made the tutoring difficult/easy for you? (Question to tutors)
11. How often did you meet with the tutors/tutees/lecturers and what were the issues that was discussed? (Question to programme co-ordinator)
12. Did you had to report about the programme in any way – to whom and how regular? (Question to programme co-ordinator)
13. Were there any feedback from the lecturers of the mentioned subjects at any stage during the running of the programme? (Question to tutors)
14. What kind of preparation did you had to do for tutoring sessions? (Question to tutors)

ANNEXURE C: EXTRACTS FROM REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

EXTRACT 1 – TUTOR REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

FP-IsiXhosa Tutor project

Register and Journal

Name of Tutor: [REDACTED]

Date and Time of session: [REDACTED] / [REDACTED] / [REDACTED]

Tutees present:

1	[REDACTED]	5	_____
2	[REDACTED]	6	_____
3	[REDACTED]	7	_____
4	_____	8	_____

Subject: [REDACTED] / Language in Education / Computers in Education

Topic(s) of session: Revision on possible numeracy exam
questions

Reflection:

What worked well in this session? / What aspects do you think made this a good session?

Students were interactive through possible
exam questions discussion. We went through
each question and came up with the matching
answers. I also gave students some tips on
how to answer numeracy question which include
writing full sentences and giving relative examples.

What did not work well in this session? What problems did you experience?

I realised that student explain things in
IsiXhosa but cannot put them in English,
which I told them to try and put in English
because in the exam they have to write in
English.

Language barrier.

Write further comments or suggestions on the back of this page.

EXTRACT 2 – TUTEE REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

FP IsiXhosa Tutor project

(P)

Reflective Journal for Tutees

Name of Tutee: [REDACTED] (optional)

Name of Tutor: [REDACTED]

Date and Time of session: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Subject: Mathematics in Education // Language in Education / Computers in Education

Topic(s) of session: Attributes of Classification,
Conservation of volume, Data Handling

Reflection:

What did you enjoy most about this session? / What aspects do you think made this a good session?

I enjoyed being taught by someone who
speaks my language. I also enjoyed being
in a small group.

What did you enjoy least about this session? / What did not work well in this? What problems did you experience?

The time is short. Everything went well. I experienced
no problem instead I find solutions.

Please turn over

ANNEXURE D: EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Interview transcripts – Example 1

Reasons why students fail Mathematics as a University Education subject.

LI

Um yeah so first of all just your opinion on why you think that kind of thing happens with especially um isiXhosa students and why do you think the whole failure thing – Is it something in the system? Has it something to do with the students? Um in your opinion? Why they do badly? Why our isiXhosa students do bad? Yeah yeah. I think there are many reasons. I think one of the reasons is language but I don't think it's the biggest reason, I really don't. I think a lot of it is a culture shock. Uh-huh. I think some of it is also the way, it's not even about the school, the schools got something to do with it, I think the way they have been taught at schools but that's not a Xhosa thing, that's all the students, okay, but I think generally speaking if I think about it culturally the Xhosa speaking students probably didn't have as much opportunity to think critically, to be more um, to think on a more deeper level and I think something like a didactic subject - how to teach requires thinking at a different level. It's not a content subject where you can just learn it off by heart. Okay okay. So I think the nature of the subject is such that they have to think in a different way, okay, so that's... are you talking only about my subject. I'm talking about your subject yeah; you can speak in general also if you want to. No I'm going to be speak specifically about my subject. So that's one thing, secondly their mathematics are not good, general, understanding of mathematics and as I say it's bad for all the students, and it's worse for some of the isiXhosa students you know. So their own mathematics knowledge is not sound and I mean all the research show that if a teacher has a poor mathematics content knowledge they are not going to be able to teach it as successfully or they have to make more of an effort to teach it successfully. Okay.

So having said all of that um could you then conclude that they were not properly prepared at school for tertiary, um especially um maths at tertiary level. Well okay it's not about the maths generally because they can probably pass a maths paper of some sort; well we have another issue with maths but let's say they can pass a maths paper. But they pass a maths paper in a very formulae way, they have never been taught at that's all the students; it's not only the isiXhosa students. All the students pass maths by relying on a formula or a

S1

①

Recording 10

do not benefit as I expected.
 Maths tutor was always there last year - It was helpful
 this year - we were asked for our opinion - what we know.
 hang in Ed - the tutor is not professional at all.
 Her language she uses - points to an attitude
 of "I passed - you are lower - I'm higher!"
 I do not appreciate it.
 I believe when you're helping someone, it's not because you are better at something, but you're nominated as a person who understands better.
 When she decides not to come, she does not bother to tell us, not unless we ask her. Must we chase her, because we are repeating? When she knows she's not gonna be there, she is supposed to inform us on time. We also have plans, and maybe we want to go somewhere, but we know how important this is. Unprofessional for they selected because of their passport or what? Assignments (same ones) are given in consecutive years. If I am in 3rd or 4th year and a 1st or 2nd year get the same assignment I had before, then the assignment can be passed on, and in that way students score high marks

Students' perception of tutors

Interview transcripts – Example 3

results that you got and you spoke about how you feel the system is not very student friendly, it affected you negatively, yes it's friendly, and so on.

So what I want to come back to is how does the tutoring program – how is the tutoring program – you are in a much smaller group there – how does that differ for you when you are in a lecturing room? Okay it differs in a way that you get to express yourself more freely rather than in class, you know like a big class and there like you get to like listen like clearly from students and the tutee is more clear, everything you hear is like it's a small group like you've said, so like yeah, so when you say you feel, you get to understand and you get to like express yourself and like um because we all don't have that confidence to speak in class, in a big class but during this tutor classes you get to like question and have some questions where you get answers back and you can be corrected; no this this... okay.

Does the language, the fact that because your classes happens in English? Yes the classes happens in English. But the tutoring help that you're getting is in Xhosa. In Xhosa yes. So do you think that the language have anything to do with it, the fact that you're getting the tutoring in Xhosa? Um, mam not really because we don't like do everything in Xhosa. For instance there will be times where the tutee ask questions in English and we have to respond like some students like, we make fun of it, they'll respond in Xhosa and we will say no when you write a paper you won't have to write or respond in Xhosa so say it how you're going to say it when you write your paper and we will respond in English and like correct each other then there and there. So when you correct each other in which language do you do that? In English of course. Oh okay. Yeah.

So but are there times when concepts are being explained to you in Xhosa, in the tutoring program. When we discuss them. We first like um read them in English then discuss them for people to get the idea and make examples in Xhosa, uh-huh, yes, okay. But they not like so difficult that you can't like um translate them in English. Okay okay and that happens in the maths class as well. Yeah. Most of the talking is happening in English. Not really because like the tutees are Xhosa. Okay so what language do you do the maths in? The maths, in English. In class. No no no in the sessions, in the tutoring sessions. Oh in Xhosa and English but mostly in Xhosa, mostly in Xhosa. Because like Maths you don't have to like write lots of essays and as long as you understand the, the concept, the concept, formulae's and what's been asked. And the explanation of that in the tutoring program is mostly in Xhosa then. Yes in Xhosa and language.

Do you think that helps uhm you and the other students, the fact that those explanations happens in Xhosa? Uhm for clarity yes because some people like um, they get the picture when it's like in their own language, like in class, I think that's why even like the studies is so easy

Feeling confident

Value of support in H.C.B.

Understanding math concepts better in H.C.B.

Benefits of tutoring

Benefits

Benefits

ANNEXURE E: EXTRACT FROM THEMES DIRECTORY

first student being SJ1 (names have been omitted and numbers assigned to each person). SJ1: 3, 4, 6 would then be the directory for references to reflective journal of student 1 and the words and phrases appearing on pages 3, 4 and 6 as it pertains to a particular theme. The same application of key codes would apply to interviews. This was a very long process and involved several stages of reading and re-reading, but helped tremendously with the sorting of information and later retrieval.

The table below represents the identified themes of the study and its accompanying directory for later retrieval of the participants' actual words.

4.3 Presentation of themes

Table and directory of themes identified in a study on "Experiences in a Tutoring Programme for B Ed Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first land students:

Key for directory:

1. SJ1 = student journal (student number 1); 2. TJ1 = tutor journal (tutor number 1); 3. SI(1) = student interview (number 1) interview; TI(1) = tutor interview (tutor number 1); LI = lecturer interview (lecturer number 1); Tr = trainer interview; PMI = programme manager interview

THEME (and sub-theme)	DIRECTORY	
	Key for directory	Pages number/s in transcripts for easy retrieval of text
1. Commitment and attitude 1.1 Student commitment and attitude - Impact on implementation - Impact on tutor 1.2 Tutor commitment and attitude - Impact on implementation - Impact on student	TI (1)	1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
	TI (2)	1, 2, 4, 5, 5, 9, 10
	TI (3)	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12
	LI (1)	7
	TJ (1)	2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
	TJ (3)	3, 9, 10, 12, 13
	TI (1)	1, 6
	TI (2)	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
	TI (3)	3, 9
	TI (4)	1, 2, 3
	SI (1)	1, 5
	SI (2)	1
	SJ (3)	7
	L(1)	7
	L(2)	8
	PM	2
2. First year study challenges of B Ed Foundation Phase IsiXhosa first language students 2.1 Challenges in Mathematics in Education, Language in Education and Computers in	TI (1)	2, 3, 6, 7, 8
	TI (2)	2, 3
	TI (3)	13, 14
	TI (4)	1, 3
	SI (1)	4, 6, 7
	SI (2)	2, 10, 11, 12

<i>Education</i>	L (1)	1, 2, 3, 4
<i>2.2 Challenges in Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT)</i>	L (2)	1, 3, 5, 6
<i>2.3 Challenges in general</i>	TJ (2)	4
	TJ (3)	1
3. Benefits of tutoring	TI (1)	1, 3, 4, 9, 11
	TI (2)	3, 6, 8, 9
<i>3.1 Benefits of tutoring for tutors</i>	TI (3)	7, 8, 9, 11, 12
	TI (4)	4
	TJ (1)	1, 4
	TJ (2)	14, 15
	L (1)	6
<i>3.2 Benefits of tutoring for students</i>	TI (3)	13
	TI (4)	1, 2, 3, 4
	SI (2)	2
	SI (2)	5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12
	TJ (1)	1
	TJ (2)	2, 5, 6, 16
	TJ (3)	1, 3, 4, 7
	SJ (1)	1
	SJ (2)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
	SJ (3)	4, 6, 7
	Tr	1
<i>3.3 Benefits of small groups</i>	TJ (1)	4
	TJ (2)	2, 7
	SJ (1)	1
	SJ (2)	2, 4
	SJ (3)	1
4. Management and Implementation of the Tutoring Programme		
<i>4.1 Selection of students and tutors</i>		
<i>4.2 Matching of students and tutors</i>		
<i>4.3 Liaison between role-players</i>		
<i>4.4 Monitoring</i>		
5. Barriers in the implementation phase of the Tutoring Programme		
<i>5.1 Lack of resources</i>		
<i>5.2 Lack of skills</i>		
<i>5.3 Despondency in tutors and students</i>		
6. Suggestions for improvement of the Tutoring Programme		
<i>6.1 Improvement prior to implementation</i>		