

**EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS REGARDING THE USE OF FACEBOOK
FOR MENTORING: A CASE OF A WRITING CENTRE**

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DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotations in this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

Over the last 15 years, many South African universities have established Writing Centres as places to provide academic writing support to their students. The services offered are mostly free and voluntary and as such, there are no strict regulations regarding who should use them, and how often they should visit. Consequently, writing centres especially the newly established ones struggle to monitor the progress of the students they have helped once they have left the place, or even reach students in the places where they continue to write in order to offer additional support to students, which could positively influence their writing self-efficacy.

This **design-based research case study** reports on an intervention run by one such writing centre where social media, specifically Facebook due to its popularity among students, was explored as a technology that can be adopted to reach and offer help to students beyond the confines of its physical space. The study adopted **Social Cognitive Theory** as its theoretical framework. Eight participants from a BTech class in the Public Relations programme were purposively selected and offered an immersive eight-week experience of blended mentoring by the researcher who is also a writing centre consultant. Qualitative data was collected before the intervention using individual semi-structured interviews, and after the intervention using focus group discussions. Findings from the pre-study interviews revealed that participants were mainly concerned about the protection of their privacy if social media were to be adopted for academic purposes. They also revealed that participants mostly preferred seeking help from peers. Findings further revealed that participants based their choice to seek help from a non-peer mainly on emotional reasons - preferring to seek help mainly from people they perceived to inspire positive feelings in them.

Post-study findings revealed a positive shift in the attitudes of participants. Firstly, they were satisfied with the security settings of a closed Facebook group especially that it guaranteed non-intrusion into their personal accounts. Secondly, the social presence of writing centre consultant on Facebook

increased the number of visitations to the writing centre's Facebook site, which also directly contributed to increased face-to-face visits with the writing consultant. Thirdly, using the Facebook wall to reflect on face-to-face consultations increased opportunities for vicarious learning experiences, and thus contributed to the overall increase in the participants' writing self-efficacy for writing task on which they were mentored.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

South African Higher Education institutions have transformed over the two decades since the first democratic elections. One such transformation was the enactment of mergers of technikons and universities that resulted in the increase in the number of students that can now access higher education (Higher Education Act, 1997). This structural transformation also widened participation to include those students that would have traditionally been excluded by the system. However, the transformation of the university has brought new pressing concerns about low retention and throughput rates. These two challenges problematize what has been traditionally envisioned as the core function of universities - knowledge creation. In their role as hubs for knowledge creation, universities have prioritized attending to the cognitive domain of the students where all teaching and learning activities, and any academic support prioritised content knowledge, development of intellectual skills, and achievement of the higher cognitive skills to enable students to be independent learners, and independent, creative, problem-solving users of their knowledge (Conley, 2008; Calhaun, 2006).

On the other hand, concerns about the low throughput rates at universities have resulted in suggestions that more attention should be paid to “the interaction between affective factors and academic performance” (Scott et al. 2009). Paying attention to the affective domain means attending to feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations and attitudes of students. Goleman (1995) succinctly summarises the significance of attending to students’ affective domain in his statement that:

To the degree that our emotions get in the way of or enhance our ability to think and plan, to pursue training for a distant goal, to solve problems, and the like, they define the limits of our capacity to use our innate mental abilities, and so determine how we do in life. And to the degree to which we are motivated by feelings of enthusiasm and pleasure in what we do –or even by an optimal degree of anxiety—they propel us to accomplishment.

Dall’Alba and Barnacle (2007) regard this as an ‘ontological turn’ for higher education, where learning rather than knowledge and skills acquisition is

prioritised. In fact, Gourlay (2009) cited in Hodgson & Harris (2012) regard the very transition into higher education as a social as well as emotional process. The 'ontological shift' in the responsibility of the university to include acknowledging and attending to the affective domain of the students has far-reaching implications for everyone including academic support centres such as the writing centres.

Given the currency of writing as a primary mode of assessment across all disciplines as well as a tool that is used to determine students' academic success (Lillis & Scott, 2007), attending to the affective factors in writing should be prioritized. However, for students to succeed not least as writers is dependent upon them understanding and learning 'socially situated discourse practices' of the academy. Gee (1996: 131) defines 'discourse' as "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group." From this definition, writing in the academe is as a discourse. From this perspective, it would be expected of subject lecturers as insiders of their discourse communities to play a more involved role in inducting students to the writing practices of their disciplines. However, this has not been the case. Given that academic writing is, in fact, a discourse, and mostly a 'high stakes activity' (Elbow, 1997) makes it a social practice (Hodgson & Harris, 2012), a cognitive act (Kellogg, 2008; Flower & Hayes, 1981) and an emotional act (Cameron, et al., 2009; Christie, 2008; Barnett, 2007; and McCleod, 1987). Such views are consistent with two dominant discourses in the writing circles – the Academic Literacies and the New Literacy Studies theories. Their basic tenet is that 'reading, writing and meaning are always situated within specific social practices within Discourses' (Gee, 1996).

1.2 Rationale for the research

This research was prompted by my special interest in the area of academic support, in particular academic writing support. I have observed with interest

the shift in academic support discourse from “access equity” to “access quality,” or what Morrow (2007) refers to as “epistemological access,” to address the high-dropout rates and low completion rates of students at universities. The concept, epistemological access, refers to “teaching and learning strategies that enable [...] students, many from a background of schooling that has not prepared them well for university studies, to learn the kinds of things universities teach,” (Morrow, 2007:10) or simply “access to the goods which the university delivers” (Morrow, 1993: 3 cited in Boughey, 2009: 1). Some researchers like Scott *et al* (2009) advance that institutions need to optimise the performance of their current students by focusing research on the interaction between affective factors and academic performance. According to Shephard (2007), this requires teaching and learning support staff at universities to pay particular attention to the students’ values, attitudes, and behaviours - their motivation to learn and their emotional state whilst learning.

Earlier, I indicated that academic writing is, in fact, a discourse, and therefore is not homogenous across all disciplines. Given Gee’s (1996) argument that discourses are best taught by insiders, subject lecturers as insiders are supposed to be best people to teach their students writing. However, many lecturers, especially those struggling with large classes cannot adequately attend to students’ affective domain in the classroom; and may even be underprepared to assess the affective values and outcomes (Cuseo, 2007). Besides the systemic blockages highlighted by McKenna & Boughey (2014), Engestrom’s (2008) cited in Chokwe (2013) argues that the challenge lies with recruitment system in higher education institutions, where discipline specialists are underqualified, underprepared and inefficient in teaching academic writing in the classrooms since they are mostly not trained as teachers or knowledgeable in matters of student development. On the other hand, Smit, (2012) opines that a major systemic block is the deep-rootedness of the problem can be traced back to the deficit model for educational development in South African universities adopted by historically white universities with a liberal agenda of giving black students a fair chance of success at university during the apartheid regime (Boughey, 2002). This is an era where terms such as ‘underprepared’ and ‘disadvantaged’ became

entrenched in higher education institutions, and in turn pathologised black students as 'inherently deficient' or lacking appropriate language skills. Academic support programmes to 'fix' these pathologies were then established and run outside of the mainstream programmes.

Even though academic and student development programmes have evolved since then, many academic lecturers are still set in their old ways, and still regard it as a responsibility of academic development and student support services to attend to students' writing.

Given the ontological turn in higher education, this design-based study explores the students' experiences regarding the affordances of a Facebook group as a site for mentoring their writing self-efficacy. Norman (1999) defines of affordances as "the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could properly be used" (Norman, 1999). Several researchers champion the importance of asking students their attitudes and experience. For example, Deaney, et al., (2003) emphasise the need to pay more attention to the "student voice" since students are capable of insightful and constructive analysis of their experiences of learning, and are capable of commenting on teaching approaches and contexts that are helpful in their learning. In addition, Tudor & Perera (2010) assert that an awareness of students' attitudes and experiences can positively contribute to student retention and student's acceptance of new technologies to which they are introduced. Similarly, Brooks & Brooks (1993, p. 60) suggest that students' perspectives serve as an "instructional entry point" that sits at the gateway of personalised education. They further caution that operating without awareness of these perspectives is likely to doom students to dull, irrelevant experiences, and even failure (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. 60).

1.3 Research Problem

I have worked as a writing centre consultant and coordinator in a decentralised campus that has multiple teaching sites spread across the city for just over five years. The writing centre is physically located at only one

teaching site. This has severely hampered access for students in other teaching sites who must commute if they require the services of the writing consultant. Students seldom come for a return visit either as a follow-up to a previous visitation, or to give feedback on their progress or performance on the writing task on which they had received assistance from the writing centre.

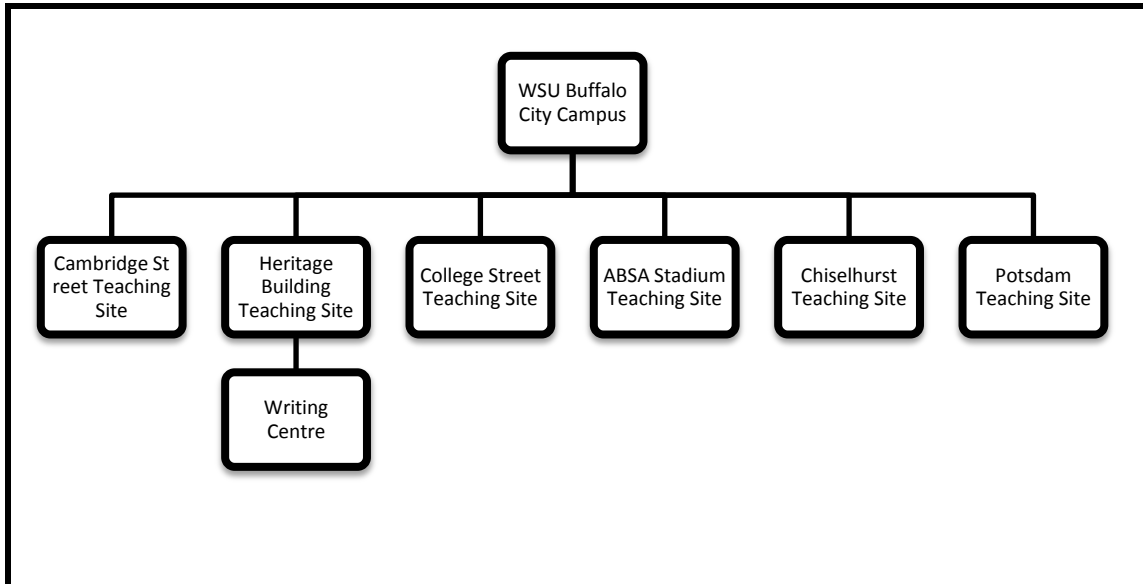


Figure 1-1: A Diagrammatic Presentation of WSU, Buffalo City Campus Structure

In addition to the challenge of location, I have also observed how lecturers who refer students to the writing centre for ‘help’ mainly concentrate on the skills that are in the cognitive domain. On the other hand, I have found, in working with most students, that some of the difficulties they experience in writing are due to “affective roadblocks”, in particular self-efficacy issues, which if they were to be attended to would facilitate learning those ‘crucial’ skills that lecturers regard as priority for their academic performance. Bandura (1997), from whom the construct self-efficacy originates, identifies it as one constituent element of the personal factors in the triadic reciprocal causation model, where action, cognitive, affective, other personal factors, and events operate and influence one another. He defines self-efficacy as “the beliefs in one’s *agentive* capabilities, that one can produce given levels of attainment” on a particular task (Bandura, 1997, p. 382). Even though the emphasis on human agency in the definition of self-efficacy resonates with the

cognitive domain, the triadic reciprocal causation model emphasises its interplay with other factors, including the affective and the environmental.

Ideally, all writing centres should employ writing consultants, who in most cases are Masters and Doctoral students for one-on-one student consultations. However, this is not the case for this particular campus, which only offers Diploma and a few BTech programmes. Also, institutional recruitment policies do not allow for the sourcing of writing consultants from a nearby university that has both Masters and Doctoral programmes. As the only campus writing consultant, my responsibilities include: running face-face consultations with the students that visit the writing centre, running class workshops at the request of subject lecturers, as well as doing all the administrative work that is related to running a writing centre. With a decentralised campus and being the only writing consultant, I am forced to travel across teaching sites, resulting in a writing centre that is transient. Students in each site can only book appointments on designated days, and consultations are limited to a maximum of 90 minutes. Scheduling follow-up sessions or dropping-in at the Writing Centre is difficult even for students who may be in need of urgent help. Being a transient writing centre consultant stands in opposition to the centre's developmental philosophy. The philosophy regards 'sustained talk' between the student and the consultant as key to the development of a student as a writer.

This study was also borne out of the researcher's interest to address the challenge of accessibility of the writing centre to the students, and to find ways of enhancing students' writing-efficacy as one of the affective factors that influence writing performance.

1.4 Relevance of the study

The study was inspired by writing centre scholarship that supports the need for Writing Centres to research ways they can begin to redefine themselves as more than physical spaces that students go to for help, but to create for ourselves enviable sites where transformative work might actually be possible

(Brannon and North, 2000; Harris, 2000; Kinkead & Harris, 2000; Healy, 1995; and Devenish, 1993).

Furthermore, it responds to calls for writing centres to dabble with new technologies, in order to be responsive to the increase in the number of technologically adept students who are not ready to use writing centres that are not ready to adopt new technologies that they (students) are familiar with (Carpenter & Griffin, 2010; Healy, 1995; and Katzman Breuch, 2005).

This study is therefore premised on the belief that writing centres have a responsibility to find alternative spaces that are attractive to technologically adept students in which they can attend to the affective needs of the student writers, and in turn positively influence their writing self-efficacies.

As I mentioned earlier, the focus on attending to the students' affective domain in writing is consistent with the Academic Literacies model, which is the dominant discourse in the Writing Centre circles. It is therefore one of the most relevant studies to be undertaken, considering how it is positioned to respond to national calls for transformative work, as well as its response to the institutional needs whilst simultaneously advancing writing centre scholarship.

1.5 Research Goals

The study is an investigation of students' experiences with using social network sites (SNS), particularly the affordances of Facebook closed groups, as possible sites for mentoring students to influence their writing self-efficacy. As already indicated, this study adopted Norman's definition of affordances as "the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could properly be used" (Norman, 1999). Researchers champion the importance of first asking students their experience of any technology that is intended for adoption. They suggest that experiences inform attitudes, which in turn directly influence the level of acceptance of technology (Lam, et al., 2011). There is also evidence that face-to-face mentoring by writing consultants has a positive influence on students' writing efficacy (Margolis, 2005). However, the researcher is not aware of any existing study that focuses on mentoring via Facebook,

particularly its influence on students' writing-efficacy. This researcher adopted a design-based research approach for this study, and used a case study to offer participants an authentic immersive experience of using Facebook.

1.6 Research Questions

The main research question that framed this research project is: How did the students experience the use of Facebook for mentoring self-efficacy?

To help answer this question, it asked four sub-questions. These questions are listed in Table 1-1 below. I also explain the motivation for asking each question, and the source of data that would help answer it.

Research Question	Motivation for the question	Sources of data
Which efficacy sources did the students identify as helpful?	It is critical to appreciate what sources students identify as useful as this determines the level of student's self-efficacy. Identifying strong and weak sources of efficacy will help the consultant to determine ways of helping students enhance the weak ones, and optimally use strong efficacy sources. Margolis & McCabe, (2006) suggest different strategies to improve efficacy of struggling students, but these can only be effective if one	Pre-intervention interviews, Focus groups, and Facebook Group wall posts.

	has an idea of what and how students use as their efficacy sources.	
How did students perceive the influence of mentoring using a Facebook group on their writing efficacy?	Researchers champion the importance of first asking students their attitudes and experience of any technology that is intended for adoption because attitudes relate to acceptance of technology (Lam, et al., 2011)	Focus groups
How did students use Facebook?	Where an artifact was created, it can provide useful information that may be absent in personal narratives. In addition artifact analysis helps establish trustworthiness	Facebook Group wall posts

Table 1-1: List of research question

1.7 Methodological Approach

Given that this study was borne out of my experiences as a writing consultant struggling to maintain a sustainable relationship with the students due to the transient nature of the Writing Centre; and was intentionally conceived to improve my practice as a writing consultant, I adopted participatory action research (PAR) as a methodology. As a research methodology, PAR bridges

the divide between research and practice by “encourag[ing] practitioners to reflect systematically on their pedagogical practice while implementing informed action to bring about improvement in that practice” (Farren, 2008, online). According to Meyer (2000) PAR is founded on two epistemological principles: i) it privileges the use of insider knowledge of institutions and social systems and challenges the idea of an expert or the need to observe from a distance; ii) privileges the production of localised knowledge that can be used in the location in which the research takes place.

These principles are consistent with this study in that it was centred on my own practice as a writing consultant, and the main concern was to use the knowledge acquired from the experiences of the researcher and the participants to improve the practice at a local level.

Another characteristic of PAR is that it “pays careful attention to power relationships, advocating for power to be deliberately shared between the researcher and the researched: blurring the line between them until the researched become the researcher” (Baum, et al. 2008, p. 854). The experiences of the participants using Facebook as a supplementary consulting space would determine whether it would be adopted as a standard practice for the writing centre, and how it would be used, and generally what future research would be conducted by the researcher around her practice.

Lastly, according to Reason and Bradbury (2001, Introduction), PAR is founded on participatory worldview “that asks of us to be both situated and reflexive, to be explicit about the perspective from which knowledge is created, to see enquiry as a process of coming to know.” This is, in fact, consistent with my own views about knowledge, meaning and reality as constructed in collaboration with others. It is also from this perspective that I decided to partner with the students, to learn from their experiences, and to subsequently use that knowledge to inform my practice as a writing consultant.

1.8 Theoretical framework

Almost all the key constructs in this study; namely online mentoring, writing efficacy and social network are associated with Bandura’s Social Cognitive

Theory (SCT). For that reason, I found it most sensible to choose SCT as the underlying theoretical framework for this study. Bandura (2001, p. 5) described SCT as a “comprehensive theory [that] integrates the personal and social foci of causation within a unified causal structure.” Bandura’s description points to the alternative nature of SCT – it is neither strictly constructivist nor strictly behaviorist. As a theory, SCT “combines behaviourist reinforcement theory and cognitive psychology to describe the learning process in individuals” (Smith & Berge, 2009). A more comprehensive discussion of the tenets of SCT follows in Chapter Two.

1.9 Research design

Since the study was conducted in the field of educational technologies, it adopted design-based research (DBR) as its design framework. As a design framework, DBR responds to calls for research in educational technology that is more organised and to provide a persuasive body of evidence on the benefits of technology in the classroom (Schrum, et al., 2005; Roblyer, 2005; Ross, et al., 2010). Furthermore, DBR addresses some of the criticism that has been levelled against educational technology research that it is characterised by ill-conceived designs that apply fragmented and uncoordinated approaches to studying technology resources and strategies, and methods that lack rigor or are ill-matched to research questions at hand (Roblyer, 2005, p. 192). An exhaustive discussion of the research paradigm, research design, and methodology follows in Chapter 3.

1.10 Phases of the study

As a design-based study, the study comprised of three discernible phases: the informed exploration phase, the enactment phase, and the evaluation of local impact phase. The exploration phase is regarded as the intelligence gathering phase. It involved identifying the research problem, surveying literature and theoretical extrapolation in order to come up with the design of the intervention (Anderson, 2005). This phase was crucial in that it furnished data on the initial perceptions of students, their experiences of using Facebook, and their expectations of the writing mentors. The second phase was the enactment or intervention phase. The third phase of study was evaluation of

local impact phase. It entailed conducting post-intervention group interviews, and analysing data. In Chapter 3, I provide a detailed discussion of the research design. The last phase, which is the evaluation of local impact phase, is covered in Chapters 4 and 5 where findings are analysed and discussed. Similar to the exploration phase, in the evaluation of local impact, I explore how the intervention influenced or changed the initial perceptions of participants regarding using social networks for mentoring for writing self-efficacy.

1. 11 Outline of the dissertation

In Chapter 1, I give the background of the study, the research problem; and the objectives of the study. I further introduce the research paradigm underpinning the study; the theoretical framework; as well as provide a summary of the research design and research methodology.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature pertaining to all main constructs of this study, namely mentoring – how it is distinguished from other support activities, the different models of mentoring models -; social networks, and writing efficacy.

Chapter 3 discusses the design the study – its phases, as well data collection and analysis methods.

Chapter 4 presents findings in the form of a discussion of themes from all data sets. This discussion of findings is linked to existing literature.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings from all analysed data sets, revisits the research questions in order to match these with the findings. Lastly, this chapter also reflects on limitations of the study, and notes the implications of findings.

1. 12 Conclusion

In this chapter I explicated the thesis of the study, which is: If academic support centre are to play a part in helping students attain the highly valued cognitive skills such as reasoning, memory, problem solving, and other mental

skills, which in turn will help them improve their academic performance, they need to consider finding new ways to reach students in order to attend to their affective needs, so as positively influence their self-efficacies. I argue that the currency of writing in higher education requires writing teachers and writing support services to begin paying more attention to students' affective domain; and to explore new ways of better reaching students beyond the physical walls of writing centre in order to facilitate positive change on their self-efficacy. Given the contextual and physical constraints facing the writing centre on which this study is based, it stands to reason that new technologies need to be explored that can support the agenda of attending students' affective domain. Also equally important is the appreciation of the role that experiences of those for whom technology is intended play in determining its acceptance and adoption. Thus, I have indicated that the goal of this design-based study was to investigate the experiences of students of using Facebook for mentoring their self-efficacy. I further outlined how the goal of study naturally aligns with the SCT and interpretivist paradigm. Finally, I provided a description of the design approach of the study as well as the data collection and analysis techniques.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter One, I explained that the purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of students of using a Facebook group for mentoring their writing self-efficacy. The main research question the study asked was: How did students experience the use of Facebook for mentoring their writing self-efficacy? The purpose of this chapter is to situate this study within existing literature and to justify the decisions that the researcher took regarding adopting particular definitions, mentoring framework, or technology. I begin the discussion by reviewing studies on self-efficacy, primarily writing self-efficacy, to justify the relevance of this study. Thereafter, I review various studies that have focused on mentoring, including online mentoring, the different mentoring frameworks that have been proposed, as well as literature on social networks as tools for mentoring. Finally, I elaborate on the suitability of Social Cognitive Theory as the underpinning theoretical framework for this study by highlighting how all key constructs align with the framework.

2.1 Why attend to students' writing efficacy?

In the previous chapter, I highlighted how concerns with low throughput rates at universities have resulted in calls for institutions to prioritise providing epistemological access to students (Morrow 2007), and to redefine their responsibility to include paying attention to “the interaction between affective factors and academic performance” (Scott et al. 2009). The significance of attending to students' affective domain is well encapsulated in Fisher's (2011) statement that, “The confidence that students feel, and their ‘level of comfort’ in negotiating their way through the university, may be a key factor influencing their ability to manage and assess their own learning and to seek help where needed” (Fisher, 2011, p. 55). Issues of self-efficacy and self-judgement fall within the affective domain. Bandura who coined the construct of self-efficacy defines it as “a conception that one nurtures about his or her own personal power to achieve a given level of performance” (Bandura, 2001).

There is abundant literature that supports the significance of attending to students' self-efficacy. One of the most significant studies that I believe is a springboard for anyone who is interested in studying the link between self-

efficacy and academic performance is by Pajares (2003). His study reviewed recent research conducted on self-efficacy beliefs on various academic outcomes. He found that most of the studies consistently showed that there is a relationship between self-efficacy beliefs of students and their writing performance.

Considering that this study investigated the issue of self-efficacy as it concerns academic writing, I only reviewed studies that were relatable to writing centre work. For example, a study by Piorkowski and Schreuer (2000, p. 73-74) underscores the importance of attending to the affective domain of student writers. They identified three variables that affected students' likelihood to seek help on their writing. The first variable was that students who held a collaborative view of the writing process sought more help while those who held an individualistic view did not. The second variable was that students who anticipated that they would receive a negative response to their work did not seek help. The variables were not a surprise as they had found literature on them. However, the third variable, which they had not anticipated was the importance of affective domain in determining whether students sought help or not. Williams & Takaku (2011) also report on two studies they conducted in which they sought to i) examine the relationship between the frequency of writing centre visitations and writing performance, and ii) explore the relation between help seeking and self-efficacy. The first study found that the frequency of writing centre visitation was a predictor for students completing a two-semester writing requirement. The second study also found that students who frequently visited the writing centre outperformed those that did not regardless of their English Second Language (ESL) or native English speaker status. They claim that, if generalised, the findings of the studies indicate that "even students with minimal English proficiency are able, when appropriate help is available, to make significant progress towards mastering academic writing" (Williams & Takaku, 2011, p. 13). The implication of these findings for writing centre consultants is that there is a need to implement programmes that will encourage more sustainable relationships between the writing centre and the students so as to increase chances for students to improve their self-efficacy.

Shah, et al. (2011, p. 8) maintain that “self-doubt, poor self-efficacy, and poor motivation will negatively affect a student’s ability to write well.” They further highlight the significance of self-efficacy in the development of writing competence, especially its predictive power over writing performance. In their study, they investigated the self-efficacy of 120 Malaysian secondary school learners of English and its relationship with their writing performance and competence. Accordingly, their findings are consistent with those of Pajares and Johnson (1996) and Bandura (1997) who suggest that highly efficacious students will expend more effort into their writing, and are “more persistent in seeking writing competence” (Shah, et al., 2011, p.10). They conclude that the study provides further support to calls to pay more attention to the inner processes of students and their beliefs about their capabilities since they might contribute to either their success or failure in school (Shah et al. 2011, p. 11).

Auten (2010) proposes using the self-efficacy concept to define the meaning of ‘help’ that writing centres provide to students as more precise since the goal should be to ‘raise students’ *expectations* that they will be able to complete a writing task,” by building their sense of agency. By the same token, van der Poel and Gasiorek (2012) propose that what is required is for students to be paired with an “efficacy focused” program of instruction that will help them become aware of and meet the academic standards of academic writing. Similarly, Upton (1999) emphasises the importance of dealing with the emotional state of students, arguing that the most important task of all those who help others learn is to be ‘state change facilitators’. This task involves reducing the perception of stress or threat since writing is both a mental and emotional exercise.

Other scholars, including Schmidt and Alexander (2012), observe how students who visit the writing centre have a predetermined view of themselves as writers that is often negative and insecure. There are even scholars such as Shephard (2008) and Reeves (2006) who maintain that attending to the affective domain may in fact be more important since achieving the upper half of the cognitive domain (analysing, evaluating, and creating) can only be

achieved if the affective domain, which includes feelings, emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values, has been attended to. To this end, Traschel (1995) proposes a number of principles to guide writing centre work: i) to be accessible; ii) to be receptive; iii) to try to understand; iv) to respond in ways that are supportive and beneficial to others' growth and understanding wherein the responses the consultant gives prompt students to extend their abilities to give considered and confident voice to their perspectives. On close examination, these principles should go a long way in assisting students achieve a high sense of efficacy.

Out of the all the studies on writing self-efficacy that I reviewed, only two were based on the South African university context. Both studies were conducted in one university by the same authors. The first cohort for the first study was a class of postgraduate BEd students all of whom were practising teachers (Matoti & Shumba, 2011). The second study used the same instrument on a different cohort of first year education students by (Shumba & Matoti, 2012). Both studies found that students lacked confidence in their writing abilities. These findings are pertinent for language practitioners such as writing centre consultants since they are expected to respond to such challenges in their institutions. This shortage of studies on self-efficacy may also be symbolic of the reality of an education system that still prioritizes the cognitive domain over the affective domain of the students.

Given that almost all the studies reviewed in this section underscore the importance of writing self-efficacy as a measure to ensure improved writing performance, which in turn will affect academic performance; it demonstrates the relevance of this study. Considering that there are only two studies that have focused on writing self-efficacy from a South African context, amidst renewed calls to attend to students' affective domain to address retention and throughput challenges further justifies this study. Its position in the academic support further opens the discussion about the need to revise and re-envision the kind of support that academic support services should be offering to students considering the calls for universities to extend their responsibility to their students to include attending to the affective domain.

2.2 Mentoring: What it is

The notion of mentoring is not new in education. The researcher noted with interest that there is no entry in any dictionary on mentor (-ing) as a verb. The only entry in the *Oxford Dictionary* on mentor is a proper noun. Many authors have offered definitions of mentoring, but I shall here only offer three such definitions. For example, Metros & Yang (2006, online) define mentoring relationship as “helping and supporting people to manage their own learning in order to maximize their professional potential, develop their skills, improve their performance, and become the person they want to be.” On the other hand, Ragins & Kram (2007, p. 3) define mentoring as a ‘life altering’ developmental relationship with “a capacity to transform individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.” They outline two types of mentoring functions: (i) the career function, where protégés are helped to ‘learn the ropes’ so that they can advance within the organization; and (ii) the psychosocial function, which is concerned with “[enhancing] the protégé’s personal growth, identity, self-worth, and self-efficacy...by providing counseling, friendship and role modeling” (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 5). This study adopts the definition of mentoring as “a process of mutual growth during which the mentor and mentee engage in cycles of active learning that result in the enhancement of practice and empowerment of those involved” (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, pp. 48-49).

According to Mertz (2004) one of the challenges with defining mentoring is a result of its inconsistent use in various contexts to describe a variety of interpersonal relationships. A good example of the inconsistent use of the term is that of Knox (1974) cited in Burgess (2007) who equates mentoring to facilitating. Likewise, Zachary (1999) also cited in Burgess (2007) challenges this all-inclusive use of the construct to refer to any supportive function performed by teachers. He writes: “Being successful in the teacher role does not guarantee mentoring success; however good teaching practice does inform good mentoring” (Zachary, 1999, p. 37 in Burgess, 2007, p. 51). Mertz (2004) further proposes a framework to delineate mentoring from other related supportive relationships. She argues that to distinguish these relations, the key is to consider *intent* or the reason why the relationship is undertaken for

both the mentor and the mentee, and *involvement* – the nature and level of investment required including physical, emotional and costs. Mertz reasons that this distinction is vital since an educator can play many roles with many people, and yet not all these roles or relationships require the same level of involvement, and the intent of the mentor and the mentee may also not be the same. In fact, Mertz (2004) cautions that most literature on mentoring makes unexamined assumptions about mentors as always being committed to the same goals as the mentee; and mentoring as always inherently good. Yet, the reality is that not all mentoring relationships are mutually beneficial. They can vary widely from being satisfactory, or better, to dysfunctional or even harmful. Therefore, it is critical that during the initiation period of mentoring, the mentor and mentee clarify to each other and agree on the intent of the relationship, since the success or failure of a mentoring relationship depends on the degree of congruency in mentor-mentee attitudes about the ends of the relationship.

Mertz’s conceptual model is presented in the form of a pyramid in Figure 2-1:

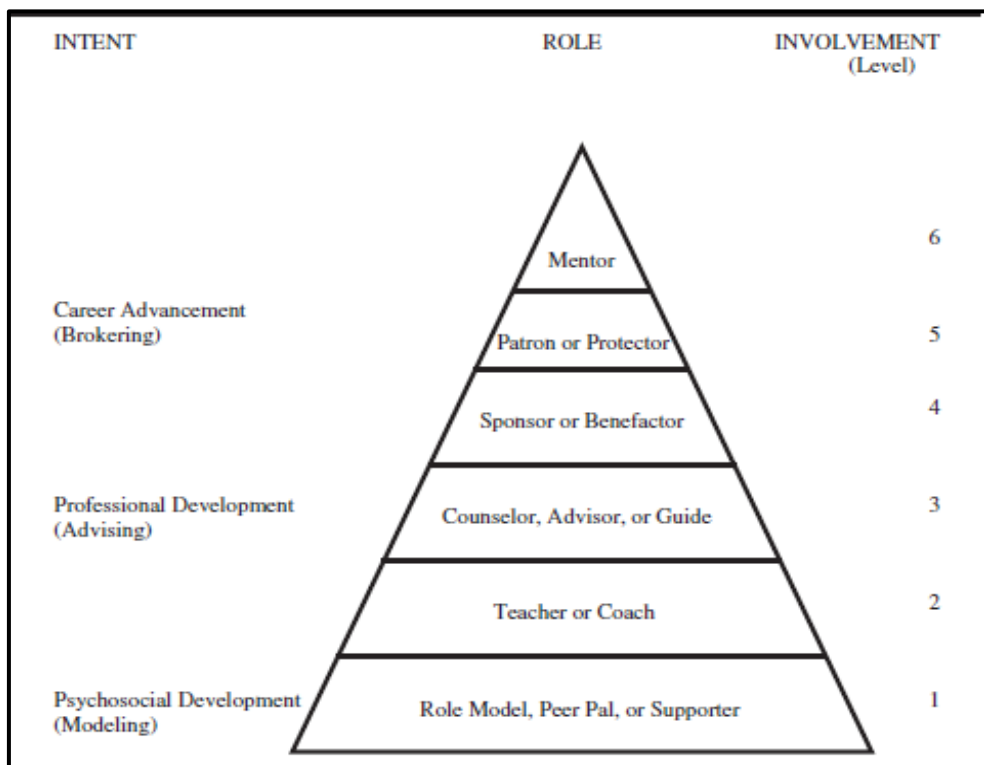


Figure 2-1: Supportive work relationship arranged hierarchically in terms of primary intent and level of involvement (Mertz, 2004:551)

The model is useful in that Mertz' (2004) distinction of roles based on involvement and intent is a positive step towards reaching a consensus or a common understanding of what mentoring is. His categorization of supportive functions according the intent and involvement for this study enabled this researcher to i) appreciate that assuming the role of a mentor implied that the highest intent of mentoring should be the career advancement of the mentee; ii) ensure that intent of the study was clearly communicated and understood by the participants; and iii) consider ways of enhancing involvement. However, the main limitation with Mertz' (2004) model is that it does not outline the functions that a mentor should perform in an educational setting.

To address this shortcoming, Brzoska et al. (1987) developed a model specifically intended for educational settings. The model outlines six functions for the educational mentor: i) informal contact; ii) role modeling; iii) direct assistance; iv) demonstration; v) observation and feedback; and vi) professional development planning assistance.

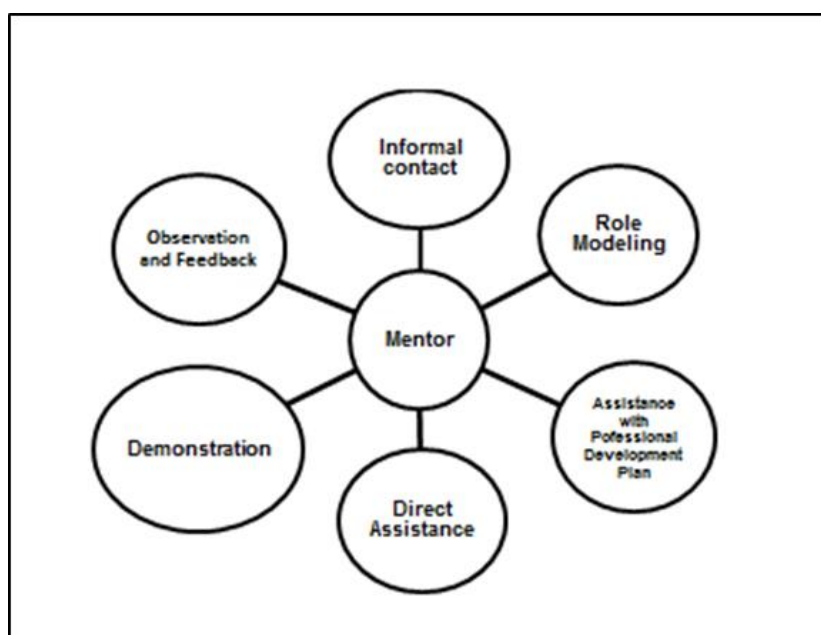


Figure 2-2: Mentoring Functions Model (Brzoska et al., 1987 cited in Wolfe et al., 2008: 101)

The detail in Brozka' model on the functions to be performed by an educational mentor justifies its selection as the most suitable model especially for the intended purpose of this study is, as well as in consideration of its

context. Even so, it is to be noted that there is still very limited literature that educational mentoring especially on how mentors are fulfilling or practicing their mentoring functions.

According to Ehrich, et al. (2001) only when theoretical underpinnings are articulated can the problems with definitions of mentoring be eliminated. They also report that less than a third of educational articles on mentoring that they reviewed made any reference to a conceptual or theoretical framework. What they also found significant was the emphasis that education studies placed on reflection as an essential activity for mentors and mentees used to come to new understandings of their practice.

Considering that this study adopted the definition of mentoring as “a process of mutual growth during which mentor and mentee engage in cycles of active learning that result in the enhancement of practice and empowerment of those involved” (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, pp. 48-49), it fits that Brzoska’s model was selected. To further support the adoption of Brozka et al.’s model, Hine (2000) maintains that in educational settings, mentoring as “a vehicle for dialogue” should serve to stimulate students to be self-actualized. In fact, all mentoring functions that the model lists can be best performed in a collaborative environment where there is continuity and the mentor and mentee engage in cycles of active learning thus enhancing the practice and empowerment of both parties.

Despite evidence pointing to the suitability of Brozka’s model for mentoring in educational contexts, I found that most of the literature on mentoring in higher education seems to draw mainly on Kram’s mentoring functions – the career and the psychosocial functions. This is condemned by Fowler & O’Gorman (2005) and Wolfe *et al.* (2008) who suggest that using Kram’s functions do not adequately address mentoring that should take place in an education environment. They claim that Kram’s model does not include the learning facilitator component, which is a function that focuses on developing students’ meta-skills or transfer skills, self-reflection, and collaborative model.

Since the study investigated the use of Facebook for mentoring, the next section focuses on literature on online mentoring particularly in higher education. I believe social networks offer a collaborative environment that is not time and space bound, and therefore present the mentor opportunities for a high level of involvement.

2.3 Online mentoring

Online mentoring emerged as a result of advances in computer mediated communication such as emails, chat groups, and computer conferencing (Bierema & Merriam, 2002); and it is often an adjunct to face-to-face meeting (Rhodes, 2004). Online mentoring is referred to in various ways, such as: electronic or (e-) mentoring (Bierema and Merriam, 2002), telementoring, cyber mentoring (Guy, 2002, Siegle, 2003), or virtual mentoring (Watson, 2008). Single and Muller (2001) cited in (Dabner, 2011) define online mentoring as, “A relationship that exists between a more senior individual (mentor) and a lesser skilled or experienced individual (protégée) primarily using electronic communications and that is intended to develop and grow the skills, knowledge, confidence and cultural understanding of the protégé to help him or her succeed, while also assisting the development of the mentor (Single & Muller, 2001, p. 108).

According to Bierema & Merriam (2002) there are two distinguishing elements for online mentoring - the boundaryless configuration, and the egalitarian quality of exchange. Mueller (2004) gives a salient description of the first element in his classification of advantages of online mentoring into three areas: logistical, qualitative and managerial. For example, its ‘boundaryless configuration’ is the most visible logistical advantage as it offers both mentor and mentee freedom from conventions of geography and time, and eliminates the physical distance between mentor and mentee. The element about mentoring being egalitarian (Bierema & Merriam, 2002) has been challenged by Lally & Barrett (1999) and Herring (2003). Herring (2003) contends that people naturally bring their culturally learned gender behaviours to social networks. He further advances that there is enough evidence to suggest that women are likely to “participate more actively and enjoy greater influence on

environments where norms of interaction are controlled by an individual or individuals entrusted with maintaining order and focus in groups” (Herring, 2003: 209). By the same token, Johnson (2002) advocates for mentors to be alert to gender differences of their mentees as they play a significant role in identity formation. For, Lui, et al. (2012) claim that qualitative advantage of online mentoring derives from its subversive flattened hierarchy compared classic mentoring.

Another advantage of online mentoring is that it offers the benefit of more thoughtful interactions since online communication does not require instant reaction (Rhodes, 2004). The opportunity for reflection that online mentoring affords the mentor and the mentee is consistent with the learning facilitation component of educational mentoring. Moreover, the six functions of a mentor outlined by Brzoska, et al., (1987), are best performed in a collaborative environment

Having considered what mentoring is in general, the functions of an educational mentor, the advantages of online mentoring, and how these are in sync with the philosophy of Writing Centres of being development and collaborative, it would then seem that there is merit to Diaz-Maggioli’s (2004) suggestion that Writing Centres consultants should extend their services to include online mentoring in order to extend the reach of their programmes beyond the confines of physical space and time.

Bearing in mind that writing is collaborative in its nature, it stands to reason that Writing Centres should be tapping into the available Web 2.0 technologies that can extend their collaborative efforts beyond the physical confines of their four walls (Devenish, 1993; Devenish, 1993). Such re-figuration of writing centres as places to go out from and not merely places students are sent or come into would subvert legacy of writing as “an inherently solitary cognitive act” (Ede, 1989), and lessen the tendency for students to visit the writing centre as a last minute resort. By adopting online mentoring as part of their standard practice, writing centres are also likely address the logistical hurdle of booking appointments for the regulated 45-minute face-to-face consultations that offer limited opportunities for writing

consultants to effect substantive change on the students. In fact, by adopting online mentoring, in particular social media, writing centres can set in motion a paradigm shift for student writers through continuous conversations with writing consultants to begin to regard themselves as part of a community where their voices are valued. This would also be in-line with the Academic Literacies and the New Literacies Approach to academic writing. Writing centre scholarship (Leibowitz, et al., 1997; Lewanika & Archer, 2011) emphasises the importance of fostering environments that promote open communication between consultants and students. One can then infer that online mentoring is indeed appropriate for writing centres. Furthermore, Lui, et.al (2012) reason that when brought in to facilitate interaction between the subject lecturer, writing consultant, and the student, technology holds the potential to flatten the hierarchy. In the process erode some traditional power dynamics that exist in traditional face-to-face consultations perpetuated by the contradicting roles that a writing consultant assumes as a peer to the students, whilst, on the other hand, students may regard him or her as the expert by virtue of his or her seniority and experience.

The additional advantage of using technology in mentoring is the permanent record of conversations that can always be revisited at a later stage encourage reflection, which is mostly absent in face-to face consultations. Such a record can be used to review the development of the mentoring relations, resolve possible misunderstandings between mentoring participants, conduct evaluations of the mentoring process and outcome, and evaluate the efficacy of writing centres (Poon, 2009; Wong & Premkumar, 2007; Rhodes, 2004; Mueller, 2004; and Bierema & Merriam, 2002).

2. 4 The affordances of Social Networks for online mentoring

Whilst there is merit for adopting a mentoring approach to Writing Centre work, the next question should be about the form that the mentorship takes. The issue of accessibility of mentors to mentees is paramount. Bearing in mind that calls have already been made for writing centres to relocate to where the students are (Devenish, 1993; Devenish, 1993), the decision becomes about selecting the best virtual mentoring platform for the kind of

mentoring envisaged. In order to facilitate easy adoption, the selection process should then be based on the affordances of the platform or technology and users' familiarity with it.

Researchers such as Conole (2008) cited in Lui, Macintyre, and Ferguson (2012) espouse that there are real opportunities for mentoring using Web 2.0 since they are best suited for social and situated learning. However, as I already indicated that there are few studies that examine the experiences and attitudes of mentors or mentees about using Web 2.0, especially social media as mentoring space in higher education. This is despite the fact that attitudes should play an important role in framing an activity, and should inform effective practice (Deaney, *et al.* 2003; and Sather, 2012). I also did not come across any study that focuses on using social networks for mentoring writing self-efficacy. This study therefore seeks to occupy this gap.

Therefore in this section, I review literature that examines social networks sites as viable sites for mentoring. I conclude the discussion by positioning all the constructs central to the research question within Social Cognitive Theory, as a way of justifying its adoption as the underpinning theoretical framework for this study. For Grinnell (2009), social media is suited for the work of writing centres as its focus is generally on “conversations, sharing, and participation – all elements of commonality with Web 2.0.” It is also appropriate for bridging the physical distance between students and writing consultants, and to predispose students to writing centres as partners. The boundaryless configuration also allows for interactions to be initiated and continued from anywhere, providing on-demand assistance to students, which is more gratifying than waiting for scheduled face-face meetings (Grinnell, 2009; Rhodes, 2004).

Munoz (2011) observes that since mentoring requires for participants to know something about another person, social media sites have such an affordance of allowing students or mentees a glimpse of the mentor's. Additionally, SNS have the ability to strengthen weak ties, and turning latent ties to weak ties. Given the marginal position of Writing Centre to mainstream programmes, the ties between students and writing consultants always start out as very weak.

The likelihood of the ties being strengthened rides mainly on the frequency of visitations (Williams & Takaku, 2011) – with those students who frequently use the writing centre more likely to strengthen their ties than those who seldom do. Therefore, the social presence of writing consultants in a social network is more likely to strengthen these ties.

In their study, Pollara & Zhu (2011) examined the use of Facebook in a high school and university mentoring project. The purpose was to determine if the implementation of social networking in the form of a private Facebook group would strengthen the relationships between mentors and mentees as well as increase student participation and dialogue outside the group's formal meeting time. The study found that interaction on Facebook positively affected face-to-face relations and strengthened bonds.

Rambe & Ng'ambi (2011, p. 64) champion the selection of SNS that students are familiar with to facilitate adoption. Their own choice of Facebook was informed by the fact that “most learners access Facebook from mobile phones, and the extent that mobile phones are ubiquitous and always available to learners the Social Network, is virtually available 24/7.” They further contend that Facebook “bolstered shy students’ confidence” to seek assistance who would have otherwise found it frustrating to do so in a face-to-face setting such as the classroom. Furthermore, they found that the use of Facebook transformed the role of teacher as informer to that of a facilitator of an information sharing environment. Similarly Selfe (1992) cited in Jones, Garralda, Li, and Lock (2006) claims that on-line environments “offer alternative spaces for academic student involvement because they offer different conversational power structures” than those of traditional settings (Selfe *et al*, 1992:149). Indeed, these findings emphasise the importance of writing consultants who adopt SNS to seriously ensure that the hierarchies are flattened; that in students still feel as a sense of ownership of the space even though consultants still hold administrator rights.

In another study, Briones (2010) sought to determine how Public Relations educators use social media for mentoring. Participants highlighted “the need to maintain a conversation” as one of the purposes for which they use social

media (Briones, 2010). Most participants maintained the view that using social media served to augment face-to-face interactions. They also highlighted other affordances including: two-way connection, an entry point into a community, offer chances for more relaxed and open relationships, and share-ability of resources with students.

On the other hand, Buzzeto-More (2012) explored the efficacy of using Facebook to augment instruction. Her study examined students' attitudes after using Facebook as an instructional tool. The study found students rated Facebook superior to their institutional Learning Management System (LMS) in community building and facilitating discussions. Bosch (2009) reports on the qualitative study that explores the use of Facebook by students at the University of Cape Town (UCT). She justifies her choice for a Facebook group as based on the fact that Facebook is the most widespread site in South Africa. Students cited information or knowledge sharing with friends, connecting with friends during vacation, networking with older students, and most importantly accessing tutors and lecturers instantly in less pressured environments as the main benefits of academic Facebook groups.

Even though there was no literature found on Writing Centres using Facebook either as mentoring or consulting space, there are several studies in the area of language and composition. For example, Kabilan (2010) claims his study was prompted by Warschauer's key note address at a certain conference where he dismissed Facebook as a viable space for teaching and learning of English. Whilst his paper is not in the area of writing or self-efficacy, it highlights the importance of exploring new avenues for teaching and learning in the Humanities, and provides a more plausible explanation to why both the English departments and Writing Centres are behind other departments in their adoption and integration of new technologies for teaching and learning.

Finally, Vie (2008) reports on a nationwide US survey of composition teachers and undergraduate students that examined, what she terms, 'Digital Divide 2.0'. Her study found that while the majority of undergraduate students had SNS accounts, the majority of teachers did not. 23% of teachers reported their ignorance of social networks. Just as Kabilan's study, Vie's findings

reveal the worrisome lack of academic attention to social networks in the field of composition.

2.5 Social Cognitive Theory as a theoretical framework

Consistent with Elhrich et al. (2001) and Carroll's (2004) assertion that mentoring relations should be founded on sound theoretical underpinnings, Mayes & Freitas (2004) and Kirkwood & Price (2006) also call for pedagogical designs to adopt a theory of learning, and adopted technologies to "reflect and align with fundamental educational philosophy." As already indicated in Chapter 1, the adopted theory of learning is Social Cognitive Theory. Its suitability is supported by the claims researchers make that social media, especially social network sites, are founded on the premises of SCT. For example, Smith & Berge's (2009) highlight three components of SCT that manifest in social network behaviors of newcomers: observational learning, imitation, and behaviour modeling. Newcomers observe how long standing members behave first, imitate them, and model their behaviour on them.

I already indicated in Chapter 1 that this study adopted Social Cognitive Theory as its underlying theoretical framework. SCT is concerned with the fundamental aspect of how learning occurs through observation, socialization, and enculturation. It also regards learners as agents who exert influence over their functioning, but the extent of influence is always in accordance with the level of their self-efficacy (Slavich and Zimbardo, 2012). The theory prioritizes human agency (personal, proxy and collective) as central to the purposive and self-regulating human functioning, but also acknowledges that such functioning is socially rooted and richly contextualized. SCT challenges what Bandura refers to as "contentious theoretical dualism that is "jaundiced." Rather, he argues that the emphasis on valuing of personal agency is not necessarily valorising individualism, but should be viewed as acknowledging that a strong sense of personal efficacy is vital for success regardless of whether it is achieved individually or collectively by group members putting their personal capabilities to the best collective use (Bandura, 2002, p. 273). For Brown & Adler (2008), the contrast between social learning and traditional Cartesian view of knowledge is that SCT regards mastering the field of

knowledge as extending beyond “learning about” about the subject matter to “learning to be” a full participant in the field. To accomplish this, students need to be acculturated by those that are already accomplished participants. They are also encouraged to seek knowledge from others when it is needed to carry out a particular situated task.

Considering that the main purpose of the study was to investigate students’ experiences of using a Facebook group for mentoring their writing self-efficacy, all key constructs in this study; namely online mentoring, writing efficacy and social network align with SCT. There are also similarities between social learning that is supported by social networks, and other constructs that have been discussed in this chapter. For example one can relate some of the functions of educational mentor; namely role modeling, direct assistance, demonstration, and observation and feedback to the steps in the learning process. The mentor is guide that models the behavior, which the mentee must pay attention so that (s) he can later emulate. It is a similar case with efficacy sources, which include vicarious learning from others. It is therefore befitting that this study has adopted SCT as its theoretical framework.

To this end then, I believe that this literature review has clearly demonstrated that there is a strong case for using social networks especially Facebook in academic settings to reach students, especially for Writing Centres where face-to-face contact between consultants and students is limited, and yet students may need assistance with their writing when they are engaged in their writing – an activity that is not time or geographically constrained. The popularity of Facebook among students especially their preference of it over institutional LMSes promotes voluntary participation and an enabling environment even for students with heightened affective filters to participate more freely due to power shifts between consultants and students as a result of the perception that the platform is ‘student regulated’ (Rambe & Ng’ambi, 2011). Moreover, there is evidence to support that using Facebook to reach students bridges both the pedagogical and social distance between mentors

and mentees, whilst also positively affecting the offline or face-to-face relationship.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore literature on mentoring, self-efficacy, and using Facebook in educational context. Firstly, literature revealed problems with the use of mentoring as a term. It clearly demonstrated how the term is used interchangeably with tutoring, consulting, and role modelling. The first section of the chapter focused primarily on clearly defining the parameters for mentoring; which also informed the exclusion of literature that would have otherwise been included, especially for writing centres. Mertz's (2004) proposition that one should consider and level of involvement in order to distinguish between mentoring and other support functions was very illuminating. For Diaz-Maggioli (2007) and Schunk (2007), the distinguishing character for mentoring was in the long lasting benefits of mentoring for both the mentor and the mentee. Literature emphasised the significance of reciprocity in mentoring relations. The exercise of reviewing the different models of mentoring revealed how Kram's mentoring model was, in fact, not suitable for academic settings since it did not include a learning facilitator component. Whilst the exercise revealed that there is low research output on mentoring at the writing centres, it still highlighted the significance of attending to the affective domain in writing, especially for writing centres. Also of significance was the finding by Elhrich *et.al* that very few studies conducted on mentoring had theoretical underpinnings. Through matching the intent of the study, the key principles of mentoring, it was found that Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory was the most suitable framework for this study. The literature explored clearly demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between mentoring, self-efficacy, performance. It also highlighted how online mentoring is more efficacious if it used to supplement face-to-face meetings. Whilst no literature exists on writing centres using SNS, there is literature to support the affordances of using social networks for mentoring. A Literature Review Matrix of key texts from which the main constructs and arguments for this study have been drawn appears at the end of this dissertation as Appendix A.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In Chapter 2, I investigated and reviewed studies in the relevant focus areas of this study in order to situate it within existing literature. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research design of the study, and outline data collection strategies and data analysis procedures adopted in the study. I conclude the chapter by reflecting on the multiple roles I assumed as a researcher, practitioner, and participant in the study, and a discussion of quality criteria to establish the trustworthiness of the study.

3.1 Research Design and Methodological Framework

3.10.1 Design-based research

This study adopted design-based research as its design framework. Kennedy-Clarke (2013) argues that there is a 'natural alignment' between design research and research in education. This section provides an overview of DBR in order to highlight this alignment and to justify its suitability. Firstly, DBR is an approach that supports the exploration of educational problems and refining theory and practice by defining a pedagogical outcome and then focusing on how to create a learning environment that supports the outcome (Reeves, Herrington, & Oliver, 2005; Wang & Hannafin, 2005). DBR is a 'socially-responsible' interventionist research best suited for a researchers and/ or practitioners who are strongly committed to solving real life or practical problems in real world settings. The main motivation behind design-based research is to make learning research more relevant for practice by employing methods that make possible the connection between educational theory, designed artifact and practice (Pardo-Ballester and Rodriguez, 2009; Kennedy –Clarke, 2013). The focus for DBR is not limited to designing and testing an intervention, but it acknowledges that any intervention embodies certain theoretical claims about teaching and learning.

Wang and Hannafin (2005) list the following characteristics of design-based research:

- i. *It is pragmatic.* Researchers address practical issues to promote fundamental understanding about design, learning, and

teaching. It regards theory as inextricably linked to practice; and the purpose of research is to refine both theory and practice as well as to provide new possibilities. *It is grounded.* It applies research methods that are grounded in relevant research, theory and practice to develop future innovations and designs. It is also grounded in real-world contexts where participants interact socially with one another within design settings.

- ii. *It is interactive, iterative, and flexible.* There is high emphasis placed on collaboration among participants. Participants in DBR are not treated as “subjects”, but co-participants in both design and even analysis of an intervention. The research is characterised by the continuous cycle of design, enactment and analysis and resign.
- iii. *It is integrative.* DBR uses a variety of methods from both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms depending on the needs of the research, and to increase objectivity, validity, and applicability of on-going research. The researcher triangulated the data collection techniques in order to increase the credibility of the study.
- iv. *It is contextual.* DBR researchers emphasise inquiry that produces demonstrable changes at the local level as necessary evidence for the viability of theory (Barab and Squire, 2004). This study was conducted in an authentic and localised context. It is to be noted that this study blended two authentic social settings: face-to-face setting and an online setting.

3.10.2 Participatory Action Research Methodology

In Chapter 1, I mentioned that the research methodology adopted for this study was PAR. The tenets for PAR perfectly match those of DBR. These are

- i. As a research methodology, PAR bridges the divide between research and practice by “encourag[ing] practitioners to reflect

systematically on their pedagogical practice while implementing informed action to bring about improvement in that practice” (Farren, 2008, online).

- ii. PAR is founded on two epistemological principles: i) it privileges the use of insider knowledge of institutions and social systems and challenges the idea of an expert or the need to observe from a distance; ii) privileges the production of localised knowledge that can be used in the location in which the research takes place (Meyer, 2000)

In this study, the researcher brought together her knowledge of learning design, theories of learning, and writing centre scholarship to inform the design and purpose of the intervention, which would naturally refine her practice as a writing centre practitioner. Similarly, the study’s grounding in relevant research, theory, and practice can be construed in all the phases of the study. For example, decisions regarding the theoretical framework, choice of tool, and the design were informed by the findings from studies reviewed in the preliminary or exploration phase of the study. The fact that this study was an intervention required that the researcher actively interact with the participants in an authentic environment. The very construct of ‘mentoring’ that is central to the intervention is both dialogic and social in nature. The success of the intervention depended on the development of trust between the researcher and the participants; and this could only be achieved when their interaction was sustained over an extended period in authentic social settings. Moreover, investigating the experiences of participants required the adoption of a dialogic approach to data collection, such as semi-structured interviews, and Facebook wall posts. The study is, in fact a second iteration of an ongoing study that the researcher had begun as part of a requirement for the fulfilment of the postgraduate programme she had enrolled. This is one of the strategies of DBR, where the researcher can conduct small-scale studies in micro-phases that can be formatively evaluated and refined before undertaking a full-scale study. It is recommended that each refinement is regarded as an independent piece of research in itself because it may

address different research questions, population group, data sample, and methods of data analysis from the previous or following iterations (Kennedy-Clark, 2013). As such, this study reports the findings from the second micro-phase of a study still in progress. The study is built on the findings of the first micro-study. Whilst the research questions posed in this phase and the participants were different from the previous phase, the context remained the same. I already indicated in Chapter 1 that this study was conducted in a blended environment - a local Writing Centre and a closed Facebook group, both of which were administered by the researcher.

3.2 Description of the study

Drawing from the discussion on the characteristics of DBR, the remaining section of this chapter describes how this study followed the phases outlined in Dabbagh and Ritland's (2003, 2005) Integrated Learning Design Framework (ILDF) - a "flexible, guiding framework that positions design research as a socially constructed, contextualised process for producing educationally effective interventions with a likelihood of being used in practice" (Bannan-Ritland, 2003: 21). The framework has four phases: informed exploration, enactment, evaluation: local impact, and evaluation: broader impact. Figure 3-1 is a diagrammatic presentation that explicates the interface between ILDF and design-based research:

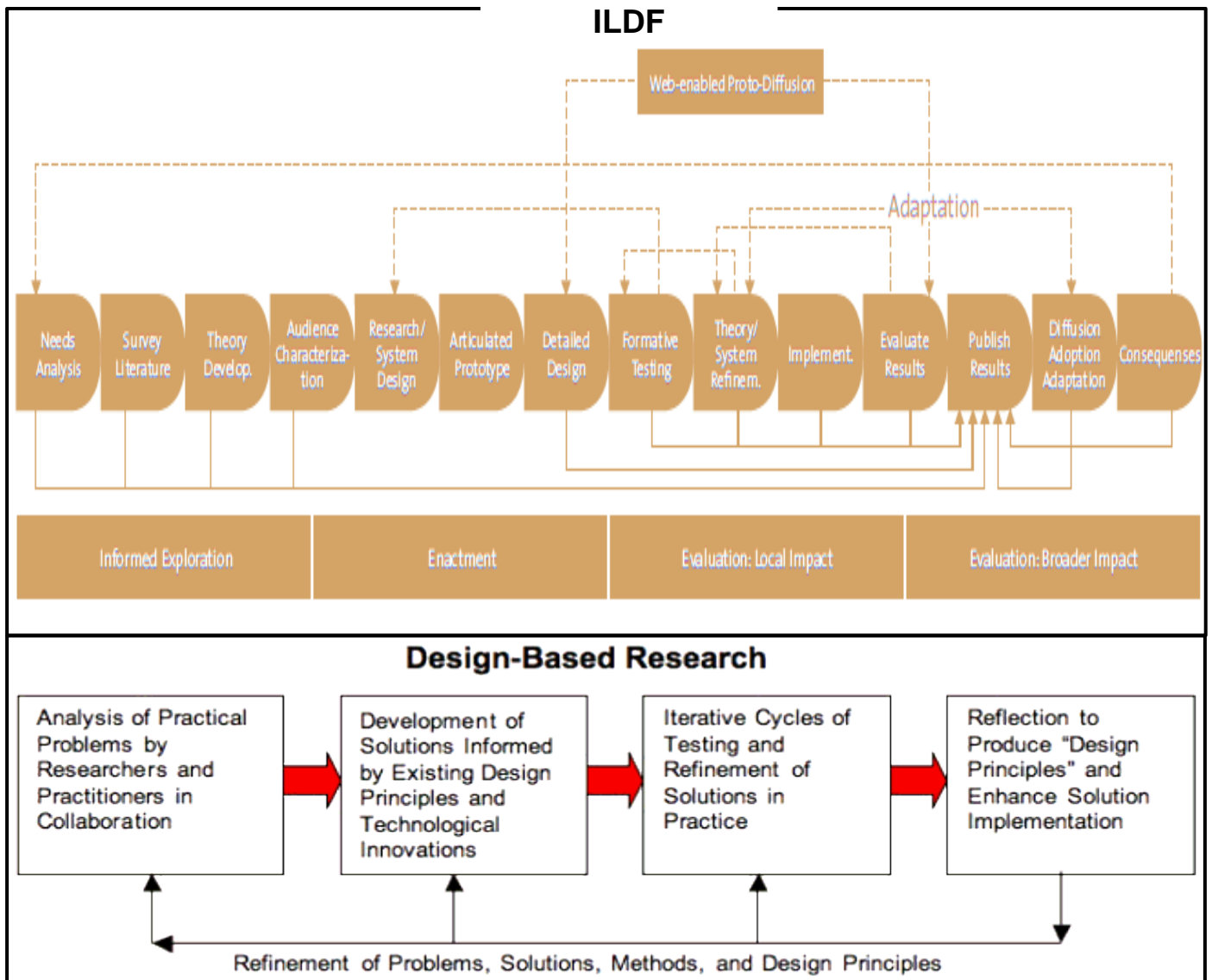


Figure 3-1: ILDF-DBR Interface (Bannan-Ritland, 2003:22; Reeves, 2006: 59)

To ensure consistency, the discussion thread adheres to the different phases outlined in the framework beginning with the exploration phase, to enactment phase, and the evaluation phase.

3.3 Informed exploration phase

As educational technology research is conceived when the researcher identifies a problem that they want to study, the exploration phase is regarded as an intelligence-gathering exercise to equip the researcher with ammunition to tackle the problem at hand. The phase includes not only literature review;

but also needs analysis and theory, surveying the context. It addresses questions such as: i) what is the current practice; ii) what needs is the researcher addressing; and iii) what are the specific learning goals? The phase also includes the characterisation of 'end-users' or participants – their backgrounds - and the description of the context for which the intervention will support. Lastly, it also raises questions about theories of learning on which work is based; and explores existing evidence for the effectiveness for the conceived intervention (Bienkowski, 2012: 323-324).

The first two chapters of this study can be regarded as its exploration phase. For example, in Chapter 1, I defined the research problem, drawing from a host of sources including my *personal observations* as a writing consultant who has worked closely with students, conversations with lecturers who refer their students to the Writing Centre for help, and students. I also conducted an extensive *literature review* on all the constructs central to the study and existing learning theories in order to gain a holistic view of the phenomenon.

3.4 Pre-intervention Interviews

In addition to exploring existing research, I used *pre-intervention interviews* to collect preliminary data of the participants.

Researchers such as Vedel et al. (2009) and Campbell et al. (2000) recommend that for intervention studies to succeed, they should be needs-driven and not solution-driven interventions, and should be tailored to the target setting and target participants. This requires that a researcher should perform a diagnostic analysis of the context and the needs analysis of the participants. In addition, he should investigate current practices, perceived issues, and expectations of the target participants with an eye to determine the defining features of the intervention. This approach to an intervention naturally aligns with DBR and ILDF, which both begin with needs analysis.

Following that the theoretical framework grounding the study is Social Cognitive Theory, and the study investigated the experiences of students of using Facebook for mentoring self-efficacy, the focus of the pre-intervention

interview was on the early contextual factors that may have affected the participants' self-efficacy, namely: family, schooling, and peers. I also sought to understand the experiences of the participants using Facebook, and their attitudes regarding its use for educational purposes.

I had used the Smith and Osborn's (2003) guidelines to prepare the interview schedule (Appendix B) for the semi-structured interviews. There are several advantages to using interviews to collect baseline data including: i) they give the researcher insight to numerous perspectives held by research participants due to their open-endedness; ii) increase the chances of building rapport with the participants from early on into the study; iii) they allow for the exploration of ideas that would have otherwise not been considered early in the study; and iv) they encourage reflection by research participants which contributes to insights into the phenomenon.

The interviews elicited information about participants' socio-economic background – family capital, schooling, their writing efficacy beliefs, attitudes about mentoring, and the use of social media in higher education.

3.4. 1 Selection of participants

Participants were drawn from a fourth year (BTech) Public Relations class. The first three participants were purposively selected. They all worked with the same research promoter, who had first approached me, in my capacity as the writing consultant, to assist her students who were struggling to write their Literature Review chapter. The remaining participants were identified and recommended to me by the purposively selected participants. This type of selection is called the snow-ball method.

The details of participants are provided in Table 3-2 below:

Participant	Gender	Age
A	Female	23

B	Female	25
C	Female	24
D	Female	23
E	Female	24
F	Male	22
G	Male	24
H	Female	25

Table 3-1: Details of research participants

3.4. 2 Task selection

Since self-efficacy is task-specific, the mentoring intervention was based on a specific task, which in this case was writing a literature review. The research promoter had indicated that the students needed extra support in writing a literature review for their minor research project.

3. 5 Enactment Phase

I mentioned that this study builds on a previous micro study that investigated the affordances of Facebook to increase interaction between the writing centre, students and their subject lecturer. In this second phase, I decided to adapt the same technology as local impact evaluation of the micro study had demonstrated success. The study had investigated the affordance of Facebook for collaborative interaction between the student, writing centre consultant, and the subject lecturer. In addition, there is compelling evidence from literature reviewed in Chapter Two to justify the choice of Facebook.

During the first week, I met all the participants at the Writing Centre to introduce myself as well as a writing consultant. Since it was the first time for most of the students to visit the Writing Centre, I explained to them the role of the Writing Centre as a support service. I also spoke to them in detail about

the developmental agenda of the Writing Centre, and its implication on how I work with students as a collaborator who is more interested in students developing as confident writers. I then outlined what would be entailed in our collaboration – the promoter’s brief, my role as a writing mentor, the technological intervention that would be part of the intervention, and the duration of the intervention.

Thereafter, I scheduled one-on-one meetings with the participants. All the meetings were held at a consulting room at the Writing Centre as I perceived it to be a neutral setting instead of holding the interviews in my office. The seating in the consulting room is intentionally designed such that it diminishes the distance between the student and the consultant, which I also felt was imperative. During one-on-one meetings, I explained the purpose of the study as well as explained in detail the construct of self-efficacy to the students especially in relation to the task selected for the intervention. After the meetings, participants joined the Facebook group which was purposely created for the intervention.

After joining the group, students could either visit the writing centre, or post on the group wall. I held administrator rights for the group. During the 8-weeks, participants were expected to visit the writing centre for face-to face consultations and to work with the mentor on their drafts. As their mentor, my role also entailed liaising with the research promoter to ensure the consultations did not depart from what they required from students.

Following the guidelines on the functions of an educational mentor (Brzoska, et al., (1987), consultations with research participants departed from the standard consultations in that there were no restrictions to the duration or the number of visitations. Participants were allowed to set appointments with the writing consultant via Facebook and to post anything that was related to the writing task on the wall. As the researcher, I also kept track of the progress of participants as well as the frequency of their visitations and could initiate scheduling appointments for those students that had not visited or posted on the wall in more than a week. The intervention lasted for eight weeks, and ended with students submitting their final draft proposals to their supervisors.

3.6 Evaluation within local context

According to Bienkowski (2012, p 325), “Evaluation is largely concerned with assessing the impact of an intervention on specified outcomes in a way (ultimately) that causality can be strongly inferred.”

At the end of the eight-week intervention, two focus group interviews were conducted with three research participants in each. I had originally planned on conducting one focus group with all research participants. However, after failing to get the research participants together in one seating, I resorted to a more pragmatic approach. I arranged at least two occasions to meet with the research participants. The first focus group interview was conducted two weeks after the intervention. Five students had indicated their availability to sit for the first interview, however only three students availed themselves on the scheduled day.

The second focus group interview was conducted two weeks later, and again only three participants showed up. In total, only six of the eight participants sat for the focus groups. The first of the three absent participants, a foreign student, was away visiting her family. She had left immediately after semester examinations, and had only returned two weeks into the new semester. The second participant could not attend on both occasions because her new employer had recently moved offices to another location making it difficult for her to travel.

Just as with baseline interviews, an interview guide was prepared for focus group interviews, which comprised questions which mainly required participants to reflect on their experiences of mentoring as phenomenon or event under study. Participants were asked to reflect on (i) their attitudes on writing self-efficacy for task on which they had been mentored; (ii) changes in participants’ self-regulation habits including help-seeking, (iii) experiences of the different functions performed by the writing mentor on Facebook, (iv) attitudes of using Facebook after the mentoring event, v) their preference between face-to-face consultations or Facebook wall posting, (vi) and the

different functions performed by the mentor in comparison to the expectations held before the mentoring event.

The findings from the study are presented in a completed dissertation in partial fulfilment of a postgraduate qualification. In addition, the researcher regards this second iteration as a springboard to a larger scale study wherein blended-mentoring will be offered to all students enrolled in a course; and a framework for mentoring is developed.

3.7 Broader impact evaluation phase

The current study is only limited to the local evaluation phase. Since this study was conducted in partial fulfilment of a formal qualification, the researcher will pursue further iterations to the design after the successful completion of that qualification. Further iterations will also form part of an extended formal study that the researcher will enrol for immediately after graduating in the programme for which the current study is part. The extended study will include extending the duration of mentoring as well as the number of participants to the whole class and other programmes as part of the adopted practice for the writing centre. Findings from the third iteration shall be published as a part of the researcher's doctoral studies. Meanwhile, dissemination of findings from this study will be via conference and seminar presentations.

3.8 Data Analysis Framework

Given that the goal of the study to investigate students' experiences of using Facebook group for mentoring, I collected data using interviews, focus groups, and harvested Facebook wall posts. Due to the richness of the textual data provided by these data collection tools, I adopted thematic content analysis (TCA) as a data analysis framework. According to Braun & Clarke (2012, p. 57), "TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences." It also enables the researcher to identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities.

TCA is epistemologically free, and thus compatible with a range of theories and paradigms. TCA is also a recommended approach for novices in qualitative research, as is the case for this researcher.

The phases of TCA suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) are outlined below in Table 3-2 below. Also included in the table are snapshots of how the researcher conducted Phases 2-4 using data collected. There are no snapshots for Phase, which involves transcribing the interviews. Phase 5 and 6 are covered extensively as separate chapters of this dissertation.

No	Phase	Description of the Process	Sample snapshots of Phases 2 - 4 analysing pre-intervention interviews	
1	Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas		
			Extract from the Interview	Initial Codes
2	Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collation of data relevant to each code	<p><i>I: My parents were kind of people who were like, "Do your homework, do you homework," without looking at your books. If my brother is not there to actually assist me then I would have to just do the homework whether is right or wrong, I'd just do it and take to school either way</i></p> <p><i>I: Your brother?</i></p> <p><i>P: My brother was born in 1983, and I was born in 1989. I. So there was that gap between you two.</i></p> <p><i>P: Yes. And then.... since we had my neighbour, my friend's dad. At least he was one of those of kind of educated people, so I could just consult [him] at times.</i></p>	<p><i>Uninvolved parents</i></p> <p><i>sibling as source of help</i></p> <p><i>older sibling as a source</i></p> <p><i>Educated elder</i></p>
			Potential Theme 1	Potential Theme 2
3	Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme	<p>Uninvolved parents</p> <p><i>When it comes to writing and everything else, we can put her aside because she is not exposed to all that stuff, but when it comes to supporting me, she was always there. Even when I was growing up, she was always there; trying by all means to support me, giving me that mother's support and love</i></p> <p><i>My parents are very supportive, they support me since I started at Walter Sisulu University, but my parents are not educated; they never went. I am the first in my family to get into university so they supported me in my first year financially and they paid all my fees but unfortunately my dad retired so that was the end but they were very supportive.</i></p>	<p>Siblings as source of self-efficacy</p> <p><i>My parents were kind of people who were like, "Do your homework, do you homework," without looking at your books. If my brother is not there to actually assist me then I would have to just do the homework whether is right or wrong, I'd just do it and take to school either way</i></p> <p><i>I would say that I forced myself to learn because in our family my younger brother since we started school together he was born in 1985 and I was born in 1984 so we helped each other throughout the school year</i></p>

			<i>Revised Theme</i>	<i>Revised Theme</i>
4	Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.	<p>Theme 1: Uninvolved parents</p> <p><i>Focuses on the degree to which parents take on an active role in their children's education. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) highlights the importance of parents as the earliest source of self-efficacy. They suggest that there is a positive relationship between the parents' level of self-efficacy, their construction of their role as parents and their level of involvement. Most of the participants highlighted how their parents were not directly involved in their education, but only served as their source of support.</i></p>	<p>Theme 2: Limited mastery experiences.</p> <p><i>Looks into the kind of writing instruction experiences participants had in high school and at university. Most participants indicated that their teachers had not offered much writing instruction in high school. Rather, the focus seems to have been on teaching literature for most participants. The only kind of instruction they seem to have received in their Diploma programme only limited in their first year.</i></p>
5	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme	Phase 5 & 6 are covered separately as Chapters 4 & 5	
6	Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.		

Table 3-2: Braun's Phases of Thematic Content Analysis with snapshot of TA for pre-intervention interviews

3.9 Thematic Content Analysis of Facebook Group Wall Posts

Earlier, I described how the enactment phase of the study included enrolling using Facebook group. At the end of the eight week period, the postings became part of the artifact produced. Norum (2008)) posits that artifacts serve to enrich a study by providing data that is not available from interviews and observational data. An artifact tells a story about the person or people who produced it, how it was used, who used it, and the beliefs and values associated with it. In addition to interviews, I also analysed the group wall posts to determine the purpose for which participants posted on the wall posts.

3.10 Establishing Trustworthiness of the Study

3.10.1 Member checking

Proving trustworthiness or validity of the study remains a contentious issue in qualitative research. In the case of this study, which adopted TCA as its data analysis framework, the biggest challenge to establishing trustworthiness is the researcher's complete immersion in whole research process; unlike in traditional approaches where bracketing is used as some guarantee of objectivity. In the case of this study, as a researcher, I had to consider other means of establishing its trustworthiness. Following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) suggestion that member checking is "the most critical technique of establishing credibility," I shared the interviews with the participants to check and verify. Only three participants responded confirming that they had read their interview transcripts and were satisfied that they truthfully presented their views. One participant specifically requested that the researcher not reveal their names, especially if the data were to be presented to their lecturers or used for institutional conferences. The researcher assured the participants that none of their identities would be revealed.

3.10.2 Methodological rigour

Methodological rigor also determines credibility. This study adopted TCA as its data analysis paradigm. I have outlined the detailed process of analysing

transcript that begins with verbatim transcription of audio interviews up to translating themes into narrative accounts. This rigorous process has to be applied across all data sets. The consistent application of the process across several cases lends credibility to the process of data analysis. Moreover, data was collected from different sources, namely pre-intervention individual interviews, Facebook wall posts, and post-intervention focus groups. The advantage of triangulating data is that it enables the researcher to distinguish true information. In addition to that, as a confirmatory approach, triangulation can overcome challenges related to a single-method, single-observer and single-theory biasness and thus can be applied to confirm the research results and conclusions (Denzin, 1989 in Hussein, 2009).

3. 11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the research design of this study and the research methodological approach. I discussed how the tenets of DBR and PAR match, and are perfectly suited for an intervention study. Through the discussion of the design, it was demonstrated how the study is a qualitative study, and justifications were made for the choice of DBR as the most suitable for the study. As a holistic approach, DBR enables the researcher to demonstrate the link between the learning theory, technology and practice. By applying the ILD framework, I outlined how the study was conceived, and how it will be conducted and evaluated.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the study adopted design-based research as its design framework. In discussing its characteristics, I indicated that DBR is an interventionist approach, intended for researchers who are interested in solving real life problems to improve practice by aligning educational theory, designed artifact and practice. I further outlined the research methodology used in the study. In this chapter, I present the findings from all data sets, including pre-intervention interviews, Facebook wall posts, and focus group interviews.

4.1 Data analysis of pre-intervention interviews

4.1.1 Focus on family

As I had mentioned earlier, I had come into the study with research questions in mind. As a result, I prepared the interview guide to focus on certain areas one of which was on parents as primary efficacy sources. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) regard parental involvement as a powerful enabling and enhancing variable in children's educational success. They acknowledge that is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition in itself, but its absence eliminates opportunities for enhancement of children's education; and its presence creates these opportunities. The main theme to emerge out this focus area was limited parental involvement, and four sub-themes identified were: i) education as a constraint to the level of parental involvement; ii) parents as a source of verbal persuasion; iii) lack of parental involvement; iv) siblings as a source for modelling.

Most participants highlighted either their parents' lack of education when asked about their parents' involvement in their education. Only one participant cited his parent as highly educated professional who actively participated in his academic activities. Most participants, with the exception of this singular case, cited their parents' lack of formal education, as the main reason for their parents' limited involvement in their academic activities:

G	<i>My parents are very supportive, they support me since I started at Walter Sisulu University, but my parents are not educated; they never went. I am the first in my family to get into university so they supported me in my first year financially and they paid all my fees but unfortunately my dad retired so that was the end but they were very supportive.</i>
D	<i>Because my mom is not educated, but she is the one who is always motivating me to always do my homework and schoolwork all the time.</i>

Hoover- Dempsey & Sandler (1995) advance that one of the reasons a parent becomes involved in his child’s education is because the parent has a sense of personal efficacy for helping his child, or he believes he has the skill or knowledge necessary to help. Based on the statements by participants about their parents’ lack of formal education, one can assume that the parents could not be efficacy sources for modelling since they lacked the necessary knowledge to do so.

In spite of their parents’ inability to assist directly with academic work, participants still highlighted the role of their parents as motivators. Some participants acknowledged their parents as their efficacy source for verbal persuasion:

A	<i>Because my mom is not educated but she is the one who is always motivating to always do my homework and schoolwork all the time.</i>
F	<i>She has really been supportive I think because I was the only male child at home, there were a lot of problems when I was in high school I was unruly but she found a way to guide me and give me focus on education as well as paying transport, fees and tuition.</i>

The point made about parents being motivators is reiterated by Gafoor & Ashraf (2012: 608) who write, “Helping and encouragement are common parent actions that are likely to influence student self-efficacy. Parental

support, especially emotional support, is likely to influence students' self-belief."

There were, however, exceptional cases of participants, whose sentiments about the role of their parent played as motivators stood out as opposite to those held by most of the participants. These participants stated that their parents were not involved or showed no interest in their school work:

H	<i>There was never that culture that my mother would pay attention to me coming back from school and checking my homework, there was never anything like that rather than that she would focus on did you do your chores, did you go to school? But as per how well I did at school and what I am doing she did not.</i>
E	<i>They are not; to be honest as I was growing up I have learnt to be strong as an individual. Like, they do contribute when I want money for books and all, but sometimes they hesitate. Sometimes they don't. So I have learnt that I should be strong on my own because there is no one.</i>

One possible explanation for this is provided by Hoover – Dempsey & Sandler (1995) who posits that the choice for parents to be involved or not in their children's education is a result of their construction of their parental role. Where such construction does not include being involved in the child's education, then the parent lack the inclination to do so.

In addition to parents as the early sources of efficacy, some participants further identified siblings as a source of support:

H	<i>Actually, my younger brother because she was born in 1985 and I was born in 1984, we started school together. We helped each other throughout the school years.</i>
E	<i>My parents were kind of people who were like, "Do your homework, do you homework," without looking at your books. If my brother is not there to actually assist me then I would have to just do the homework whether is right or wrong, I'd just do it and take to school either way</i>

Ali, et al.(2005) claim that whilst there is no research that has examined sibling support in conjunction to parental support to predict efficacy beliefs of students, there seems to be evidence to suggest that support from siblings coming from lower socio-economic status backgrounds may have a stronger impact on the development of self-efficacy beliefs than parental support. They predict that the cause of this may be that siblings are regarded as more accessible role models and perceived to be better sources of support than their parents whose self-efficacy levels are low due to their lack of education. It is assumed that the age difference between the siblings would determine the nature of assistance they offered the participants. For example, if the gap is closer, the sibling will be a source of vicarious experience. In case where the sibling is much older, he or she is more likely to draw from his own experience to model for the younger sibling.

4.1. 2 Focus on schooling

The second focus area of the pre-intervention interview was on schooling, in particular the type of writing instruction offered at high school. According Pajares & Johnson (1996) students' confidence about writing capabilities have roots in elementary or middle school and become pronounced by high school. In addition, Jones, et al. (1997) claim that there is a direct relationship between the quality of instruction students receive and their self-efficacy. For example, if the quality of instruction is high, students are likely to acquire skills in time and make more adaptive generalisations than they would with lower quality of instruction. Themes emerging from this focus area included: limited writing instruction offered, and preference for explicit instruction. For example, some participants stated that their teachers prioritised teaching literature rather than writing, while others were ambivalent about the kind of instruction they received:

H	<i>I would say that anything that I learnt about English I got it from junior school, but as far as my high school teacher she would just teach us literature - reading and stuff, but more than that like teaching grammar and all, she did not.</i>
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E	<i>Well he liked to read books, so we were always reading and reading and not so much writing.</i>
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Perhaps, one can explain the teachers' preference for teaching literature over writing in terms of their (teachers') writing self-efficacy. Since evidence illustrates the relationship between self-efficacy and task performance, one can assume that the teachers had high self-efficacy for literature instruction than writing instruction. Therefore, their diminished writing self-efficacy would affect the amount of effort they put in teaching writing in their classrooms. This would be consistent with findings in a study conducted by Banda (2009) on a group of second year Xhosa speaking students enrolled in an English Communication course. The students revealed during interviews that their primary and secondary school teachers avoided teaching the formal aspects of English. Banda (2009) further cites Chick (1992) who suggests that "the situation tends to occur because the teachers were themselves unfamiliar with the formal aspects or grammar of English. Instead, the teachers focused on English literature, which they in turn translated into isiXhosa in the process of teaching" (Banda, 2009, p. 16).

4.1. 3 Focus on writing instruction received at university

Since writing still remains the main currency that new university students must acquire to succeed, as well as one of the foundations of academic engagement, I was interested in the kind of writing instruction that the participants had been offered by their lecturers. O'Neill, et al., 2012 (p. 520) insist that "that writing instruction is an activity shared by K–16 teachers, not one in which teachers at lower levels "teach up" to those at higher levels or teachers at higher levels "blame down" for what students "should have learned" by the time that they arrive at college." In addition, I enquired about their self-regulating behaviours, in particular help-seeking; as well as their task readiness. Several themes emerged from the interviews including: limited writing instruction offered in the PR programme; negative emotions as hindrance to help seeking; very busy lecturers; and invisible writing centre.

Most participants stated that they had only received instruction on writing only in their first year:

<p>G</p>	<p><i>I am not going to lie. In Public Relations, they are not more into writing. It is just more of theory after theory; and if you want to excel in writing you have to practice on your own. I remember when I was doing Broadcasting, there was two choices that I had - Journalism and Public relations but I was very interested because we were introduced a little bit to Journalism and Public Relations. So, I do not want to be a journalist as you know when you are a journalist you always run behind people chasing for stories; I didn't want that. So, I chose Public Relations because I wanted to work from the office wearing suits and all. So the experience when I got into Public Relations, they are more detailed in writing and I heard that journalism specializes in writing, which is exactly what I wanted; but writing in Public Relations is not that much. So, I could use some assistance on how to write.</i></p>
<p>E</p>	<p><i>No, because we would just write the test and the lecturer give you your marks. We were just taught that you have to write as PROs of the future; and there was no baseline on this is how you are supposed to write apart from the one I learnt from Mrs Fish in first year.</i></p>

Participants also regarded help-seeking in a positive light. However, they provided varying responses when probed about their experiences of seeking help from their lecturers. They highlighted negative emotions such as fear, pride as a hindrance to help-seeking. They further indicated that they were reluctant to approach lecturers for help. The reluctance seemed to be based on negative feelings they harboured either based on experience or attitudes:

<p>E</p>	<p><i>I think that according to our lecturers in our department some of them are not helpful and some of them are. With some of them you go and then you get there and the lecturer is not in a particularly good mood and then you back off anyway so that doesn't help and you just have to go and do whatever you want to do alone.</i></p>
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A	<i>I am scared that you would think that I am stupid that at this tertiary level going out and asking for skills in writing. Sometimes your ego you will not want to accept that you can't do something.</i>
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One theme that emerged, which I had not anticipated, was the participants' ignorance about the existence of the writing centre. All participants indicated that they had never used the writing centre or even heard of it in spite of the fact that the researcher had worked with some of the lecturers in the Public Relations programme including the lecturer with whom I had initiated the study. In fact, I believe that the indicated obscurity extended to all students in the whole PR programme.

A	<i>To be honest, I never heard of it. I only heard of the writing centre when X and Y were training at the CLTD</i>
D	<i>Yes, I have heard about it but I don't know what it does and how it can assist us as students.</i>

Based on the participants' statements about limited writing instruction offered in the PR programme, it is reasonable to believe that most students would not have been inclined to visit the writing centre, nor were lecturers referring them to the writing consultant.

When asked about the level of preparedness for the writing task, all participants felt they were ill-prepared, and unclear about the requirements of the task. None of the participants had any experience of writing a literature review, which meant they had no performance experience to draw from:

B	<i>That's the thing I have been struggling with. I don't want to lie; I have been struggling with that. You write, you take somebody's research, let's say so and so, and that's it. I have got nothing like that's of relevance to what I am doing, let's say so and so says this, so how is this relevant to what I am doing? It never got that far. I just write so and so said, that's it, and then next,</i>
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	<i>something like that.</i>
F	<i>I am not really comfortable I am still thinking about the books and how to do the literature review in itself and the right way to do it and so I am looking at different people who have written different things.</i>

4.1. 4 Focus on Facebook

Since the aim of the study was to investigate the experiences of students of using a Facebook group for mentoring writing self-efficacy, participants were also asked questions about their present usage of Facebook, and their views regarding using Facebook for educational purposes. Three themes that emerged were: i) Facebook as social tool; ii) invasion of privacy; and iii) groups as preferred spaces

Most participants indicated that they used Facebook primarily to socialise with friends:

A	<i>To socialize with my friends and to make new friends because we do make new friends on Facebook.</i>
E	<i>I am not that active on Facebook, I use Facebook to interact with my old friends since I may not call everyone or you may not even have a number of that particular person because we change numbers and lose phones, but I do use Facebook once in a while.</i>

In addition to socialising with friends, some participants also mentioned using Facebook for educational purposes. However, I need to highlight that these participants were still using Facebook to discuss classroom issues with classmates, a no lecturers were involved:

G	<i>I think if a lecturer opens a group it will be good, as I was in second year my lecturer opened a group for our second year class as this helped a lot. When we were writing tests and assignments she would just post on Facebook and there was no need to go in front of the class to announce.</i>
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	<i>It's then easy for anyone to access on Facebook.</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>Yes. But if there is a group that is there for academic purposes, I think it is going to be relevant.</i>

Participants indicated their reservations regarding the use of Facebook for academic purpose. Their main concern was privacy – how the presence of lecturer in a ‘social space’ would infringe on their privacy:

<i>A</i>	<i>Firstly it's a friend zone it is where I need to relax I don't need my lecturers to be telling me about anything. With the lecturers you have a professional relationship so you do not want to mix like being friends with your boss or senior manager, I wouldn't be friends with him on my Facebook</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>I wouldn't be able to freely express myself knowing that my lecturer is my friend on Facebook.</i>

4. 2 Content analysis of Facebook group wall posts

Since interviews provide mainly self-reported narratives, their limitation is that they do not provide sufficiently rich evidence or detailed information to fully understand the interactions that may have taken place among the participants. Even though semi-structured interviews are good for capturing the participants’ experiences and beliefs in their own voices, there is always a chance of interviewees overlooking or simply forgetting some of the acts that they regard as mundane. On the other hand, Facebook wall posts provide a recorded history of these acts, which allows a researcher to observe extensive naturally occurring interaction that would be difficult to analyse using existing methods (Back, 2013). Therefore, in order to present a more holistic view of the experiences of the participants, I also performed a content analysis of Facebook wall posts of the private group. The purpose of the analysis was to discern how Facebook was used in the intervention. Five themes emerged from the data that included: i) tracking and checking on students by the

mentor; ii) booking of consultations by students; iii) sharing of files with students; iv) updating and reflecting on face-to-face consultations.

4.2. 1 Tracking and checking on students by the writing mentor

One of the affordances of Facebook group is that one can see who has seen the post. Another is the tagging facility, which when used enables the post to appear on the personal wall of whoever is tagged. The posts revealed that the writing mentor used the wall to track students who had not visited the writing centre for face-to-face consultations as well as to check on their progress.

Khanyisile Ngodwana

July 15, 2013

Good afternoon, and welcome back; I hope you had a good break. I was hoping to meet all of you together before break, but that did not happen. I need your feedback regarding the kind of help you received from the Writing Centre. I already met up with [REDACTED] over the break period. I now need to meet up with the rest of you before things get hectic. I need that feedback to complete my own study. Can we meet here on Wednesday; say 10: 30 in the morning?

Seen by 7

Participant 1 Ok

4.2. 2 Booking of consultations by students

Most participants used the group wall posts to book or cancel consultations.

Participant 1

May 27, 2013

Hi CC...cn i pop by 2mrw

Seen by 7

Khanyisile Ngodwana That would be great. What time?

May 27, 2013 at 6:18pm · Like

Participant 2: me too cc Khanyie can I come see you

May 27, 2013 at 6:23pm · Like

Participant 1: Anytym frm 9 oclock i cn b all urs

May 27, 2013 at 6:24pm · Like

Khanyisile Ngodwana Make it 9:30, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], your time is 11o'clock

May 27, 2013 at 7:24pm · Like

Participant 1: Great

Participant
May 14, 2013
Good morning everyone. Sis Khanyi is it possible to see you today at 11?
Seen by 7
Khanyisile Ngodwana: Yes, [REDACTED]. I can't wait to see you
May 14, 2013 at 7:48am · Like

Students seem to have capitalised on the immediacy at which they could secure an appointment with the mentor. Based on the findings from baseline interviews, it can be assumed that the introduction of Facebook addressed the challenge of accessibility of the Writing Centre, and increased the visibility of the writing centre. The monumental shift from an invisible writing centre to an ubiquitous centre would inevitably lead to increased number of visitations by the students, and subsequently their writing efficacy (Williams & Takaku, 2011). By booking online, both the mentor and the students could also decide on the most convenient times.

4.2. 3 Asking for help from the mentor

In addition to booking appointments online, some students also used the wall posts to ask for help. By posting on the group wall, they could receive instant feedback from the mentor. Depending on the nature of questions posted, the writing consultant could discern how to respond to the student's post. For example, in the first extract the writing centre consultant provides emotional support, and schedules a consultation for the student whilst she provides a direct response to the question posted:

Participant
May 9, 2013
I need help im stuck now i cnt move from this point...wat im supposed to write in research methodology under population and sampling selection?
Seen by 7
Khanyisile Ngodwana Don't panic. Let's meet tomorrow morning, so that I can look at the draft. In the meantime tell me what you want to do, and how you are stuck
May 9, 2013 at 5:50pm · Like
Participant: Todae i have to go somewhere. so can we plz meet monday morning? I wil explain everything when we meet
May 10, 2013 at 6:59am · Like

Khanyisile Ngodwana That's okay. I teach from 9.30 to 11, so let's make it 11.30.
May 10, 2013 at 9:22am · Like
Khanyisile Ngodwana I tried posting earlier but I guess it failed. I will only be able to see you after 11:30; I am teaching Mondays
May 10, 2013 at 4:10pm · Like

Participant
May 14, 2013
Hi sis kanyi.I've hit a brickwall with my topic.When i search for literature reviews,i find almost nothing about wiseup.The information that i have refers to learning management systems.Should i use it? I also searched for government policies regarding LMS ,there's nothing there really.
Seen by 7
Khanyisile Ngodwana: Check Blackboard; that's what it is. WSU decided to rename it WiseUp, but it's actually Blackboard
May 14, 2013 at 7:01pm · Like
Khanyisile Ngodwana Any luck [REDACTED]?
May 15, 2013 at 11:35am · Like

4.2. 4 Sharing of files with students

The mentor also used to group to share files for students. Lee & Anzai (2006) highlight the importance of “modelling a process of sharing to mentees [as] an invitation to the process of giving and sharing among colleagues.” The text below demonstrates how the writing mentor also served as a resource person to the students by sharing files and advising on their relevance to the students. Also worth noting is that whilst the file was intended for a specific student, other group members also had access to it.

Khanyisile Ngodwana uploaded a file.
May 23, 2013
For you [REDACTED]
Gqamane_2010.pdf
Portable Document Format
Download Upload Revision
Seen by 7

Khanyisile Ngodwana uploaded a file.

May 23, 2013

Here is the E-learning Strategy, hope you find this useful

e_LearningStrategy - Siphelo.pdf

Download Upload Revision

Seen by 7

Khanyisile Ngodwana: Here is a url to another article

<http://connection.ebscohost.com/.../effectiveness-wiseup...>

May 23, 2013 at 1:40pm · Like · Remove Preview

4.2.5 Updating and reflecting on face-to-face consultations

Both the students and the mentor used the group wall either to reflect on face to face consultation. For example, in the first extract immediately below, the student reflects on the session she had had earlier with the mentor and what she has learned from her session. The posts also serves as a feedback to the mentor. The mentor responds by welcoming the feedback, followed by a suggestion to the student on what they will cover in the next consultation session clearly demonstrating continuity in the relationship between the student and the mentor.

Participant

May 20, 2013 · BlackBerry Smartphones App

Thanks sisi Khanyi, now I know what I am going to do when am writing my research en how the literature review is suppose to be done.

Seen by 7

Khanyisile Ngodwana: Glad I could be of help. I have articles that you may find useful, can I post them here or will you come and collect. I recommend Google scholar when you are searching for literature. Also look at other people's dissertation to see what questions they asked, and to identify the gaps in literature.

May 21, 2013 at 10:08am · Like

Participant

May 9, 2013

Today's session was full of insight. All the blurry pictures in my head are starting to clear out. I think I now have a better idea of how I want to structure my research. I have re-structured my topic to: "How does Wiseup affect student-lecturer communication"? (study of Btech Public Relations class: Chiselhurst site.)

Unlike ·

Seen by 7

You and 2 others like this.

Khanyisile Ngodwana: How is it going [REDACTED] Are you making any progress with your lit review? I am looking forward to our next meeting. I think you and [REDACTED] need to meet up and chat; I can see a possibility of vicarious learning there.

May 13, 2013 at 3:20pm • Like

In the next extract, it is the mentor that posts to reflect on the session she has had with two students. In the posts, she continues to share a lesson with all group members based on what she may have observed during the consultation. She provides advice on how to complete the task. One of the two students on whose session the mentor is reflecting, responds by liking the post. Another student responds to the post by booking a session with the mentor. It could be said that the post served as source of motivation for other participants who are given a window to see what is happening in different consultation sessions.

Khanyisile Ngodwana

May 14, 2013

I enjoyed today's face-to-face session [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. One lesson I want to share with all of you, is that your literature review precedes your research questions, and your choice of methods. I know some of you some may be disheartened when I tell to retract your steps since you are already set on a particular topic.

Let me suggest this: - You obviously have an area of interest, which you'd like to research on. First thing you do, is go and ch...

See More

Seen by 8

[REDACTED] likes this.

Participant 1: Cc Khanyi wanted 2 meet wth u 2dae bt didn't knw which time wl b convinient 2 u, I'm available Frm 1pm evydae and can I plz hv ur number

May 14, 2013 at 3:37pm • Like

Khanyisile Ngodwana: From 1 until when?

May 14, 2013 at 3:39pm • Like

Participant 1: I have an hour wth u evrydae sis Khanyi so plz alert me a convinient hour from 1 o clock and al be there.

May 14, 2013 at 4:48pm · Like

Khanyisile Ngodwana Make it 1 then

May 14, 2013 at 7:02pm · Like

Participant 1 : K Sis see u at one today.

May 15, 2013 at 7:56am · Like

Participant 2: Wow at last I got the access to facebook and happily to say I can comment on this page. Sis Khanyi let me first apologize for not making it today also want to thank you for the good monitoring session we had on tuesday. Now I can say I know how to take the first step of the research.

May 17, 2013 at 8:45pm · Like

Through performing a content analysis of the Facebook group wall posts, the researcher was able to identify the various use of Facebook in the mentoring intervention. However, what the wall posts do not reveal are the perspectives of participants regarding how Facebook was used, and its influence on their self-efficacy.

4.3 Thematic Analysis of focus group interviews

As already mentioned in Chapter 3, focus group interviews were conducted with research participants where they were asked to reflect on their experiences using Facebook. Two main themes emerged from the focus group interview; i.e. mentoring as a learning opportunity, and Facebook group as a relevant mentoring space.

4.3.1 Mentoring as a learning opportunity

Participants regarded their experience of mentoring as being very informative. They could identify the cognitive shift from when they joined the study to what they knew after the study especially in relation to the writing task on which they were mentored:

G	<i>My experience before I came to you I thought that when we talk about literature review, we just go to someone else's studies and take exactly his or her literature review, but you told me that you have to read the entire study and take the parts that you feel you like and state your own views as well. So, you take parts that are relevant to your title or your topic so that is exactly what I</i>
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	<i>learnt</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>I didn't know anything. I was nervous about the whole research especially the writing part, but now at least I am a bit confident; and I know what is expected to be done with the literature review.</i>

Participants also recognised the mentoring intervention as a self-efficacy raising experience, by relating instances of role-shifting – from help-seeking to help-offering. Participants further reported on instances where they learned from other's posts, and instances of co-operative learning among themselves:

<i>B</i>	<i>Yes. We helped so many people with their literature review because we did learn a lot here; and our peers were really not clear about literature review because the whole class didn't know about literature review. But from what we have learnt, we can discuss it with our peers and tell them that this is how it is supposed to be; and also of how you have to conduct literature before coming up with a topic, which is something that they also didn't know; and we cleared the myth about literature review and methodology by actually telling them that literature review would actually be more easy than research methodology.</i>
<i>H</i>	<i>I was thinking that I was helping the IT students as they are also doing their research I was helping them with their literature review as they do not know anything and they were not given anything or any guidelines so you try to sit down and discuss it and I also realised that when I was looking at my own study that I could change that because as I explained it became more clear.</i>

I was interested in how the intervention participants' perspective about the extent to which they interacted with the mentor. Participants highlighted the online visibility of the writing mentor on Facebook:

<i>F</i>	<i>I think it assisted a lot on my side. In how? The posting you did when you had an individual session with ██████, then you forwarded something on literature review that will assist her. You did for me as well and ██████ I think. Even though we dodged your messages, we didn't dodge it ... them intentionally; we were busy. We would see Sis Khanyi is wanting us, but we would dodge; but it was a very interesting anyway.</i>
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B	<p><i>I also think that it added value in terms of pushing us and motivating us because sometimes if for instance you had gone to the PR4 and said, "Guys I am available at the writing centre and that we can come at any time," I doubt anyone would have come, and even if they came, it would a few times. But now that we have this group on Facebook, it is much easier that even if you were stuck you would be able to go on Facebook and schedule a meeting.</i></p>
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In addition, participants spoke of the degree of comfort they felt in their interactions with the mentor. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences regarding how Facebook was used for mentoring. Themes emerging from this data set would assist the researcher to answer the main research question: How did students experience the use of Facebook for mentoring their writing self-efficacy? A major theme that emerged from the analysed data was Facebook group as educational space. Several subthemes were identified including: Facebook wall as space for vicarious learning; increased visibility of writing centre; and Facebook groups as safe learning spaces.

G	<p><i>I mentioned two or three things. The key thing that I talked about was that you have to push us, which is exactly what you did because you are calling us right now. Secondly, that you don't get frustrated by us, which is exactly what you did because the other time I came to you as an individual and I asked so many questions but you didn't get frustrated, and you kept answering me in a polite manner. Thirdly, I also mentioned motivation and your motivation that you gave me is when I came to you posted on Facebook that you had a nice session. So, that made me feel like I did something fruitful by going there because a lot of people would come to you, but by you writing that you had a nice session with me it motivated me.</i></p>
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When students were asked to reflect on their experience of using of Facebook during focus group interviews, there was a notable positive shift in their attitudes. During the pre-intervention interview participants had indicated that they perceived the adoption of Facebook a threat to their privacy if Facebook. Participants commented on how the mentor's explanation of how the group would work alleviated their apprehension about their loss of privacy.

4. 4 CONCLUSION

The chapter, I set to outline the data analysis framework for this study, which is thematic qualitative content analysis. I provided insights into the connection between the selected data analysis framework, the goals of the study, and the research methodology framework. Furthermore, I also provided a detailed description of the Braun's framework for data analysis with snapshots of how these was carried out using data sets collected during the study. This was then followed by a detailed analysis all data sets used. In the next chapter, I provide an in-depth discussion of themes, which also includes an incorporation of literature and the researcher's insights.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In Chapter 4, I presented the findings from the data sets that were analysed using qualitative thematic methods. Due to the narrative nature of data presentation, one can also observe the beginnings of interpretation and analysis, since I organically threaded my thoughts and ideas about the data. However, the analysis of data in Chapter 4 is elementary. In this chapter, I pull all the data together, and elaborate on the findings by integrating literature into the discussion.

Equipped with knowledge of existing theories of learning, self-efficacy, affordances of social media, and evidence from existing studies on the use of social media in the classroom, the study set out to investigate the experiences of students of using a Facebook group for mentoring writing self-efficacy. To achieve this goal, the following research questions were addressed:

- **Research question 1:** *What efficacy sources did the students use?*
- **Research question 2:** *How did students use Facebook?*
- **Research question 3:** *How did the students perceive the use of Facebook for educational mentoring*
- **Research question 4:** *How did students perceive the influence of mentoring using a Facebook group on their writing efficacy?*

Having realised that to ask the participants their attitudes towards using Facebook for educational mentoring without them having any frame of reference in terms of actual experience was inadequate; this study was designed as an immersive intervention where students experienced first-hand the use a technology one which their perspectives on its use were investigated.

Literature suggests that such intervention studies should be phased, and that a researcher should first perform a diagnostic analysis of the context and the needs analysis of the participants (Vedel et al., 2009 and Campbell et al., 2000). The researcher is further expected to first investigate current practices, perceived issues, and expectations of the target participants with an eye to

determine the defining features of the intervention. As a result this study began with pre-interview intervention interviews of the participants that addressed all the areas mentioned. This was followed by an intervention which involved using a Facebook group for mentoring, thereby granting the participants first-hand experience on which to base their opinions. At the end of the intervention, participants reflected on their experience of the intervention, their perspective on the efficacy of the intervention and its influence on their writing self-efficacy.

This section integrates findings from all sets of data used in the study to reveal how they help answer the research questions that were posed during the informed exploration phase. In addition, the discussion weaves the findings from this study with existing scholarship and theory. Finally, implications are drawn for the writing centre practice, at least in the local context, and future research.

5.1 Revisiting Research Question 1

As I indicated in Chapter 2, it is critical to appreciate what sources students identify as useful as this determines the level of student's self-efficacy. Identifying strong and weak sources of efficacy can help a writing consultant to determine ways of helping students enhance the weak ones, and optimally using strong efficacy sources. Researchers such as Margolis & McCabe (2006) propose different strategies to improve efficacy of struggling students, which can only be effective if one has an idea of what and how students use as their efficacy sources. In the pre-intervention interviews, I focused my attention on the family, particularly the parents, as the first source of social learning. The focus on parents was mainly on their level of involvement in terms of their learning since literature reveals that there is a positive relationship between the level of involvement of the parents in their children's education and the children's efficacy. Even though influence of parents as self-efficacy source is strongest in childhood before the child is exposed to other sources, the researcher believes that parents play such an important role in every child's life that their influence is long-lasting.

Most participants in the study had reported that their parents were not as involved in providing direct academic assistance to them. Instead, some participants recognised their parents as their motivators, and also providers of financial support. The most prominent reason cited for the lack of involvement was the parents' lack of education. Hoover – Dempsey suggests that the key to determining whether the parents will be involved in their children's education lies in the parent's sense of efficacy to assist their children; their construction of their role as parents; and the opportunities and demand for involvement presented by the children and school. Based on these reasons, I believe that in most of the cases, the parents lacked a sense of efficacy to assist their children because they lack mastery experiences, and as such could not provide any vicarious experiences to their children through modelling. Secondly, since the reported lack of education is also linked to family capital, the parents would have worked with limited resources, and thus, would naturally prioritise their role as providers – concerned with providing financial support to their children. On the upside though, Hoover-Dempsey highlights that there are cases of children who report the lack of parental involvement, but still have a high sense of self-efficacy.

Some participants reported siblings as their source of efficacy rather than their parents. This is consistent with Social Cognitive Theory, which also highlights siblings at first, and peers later as the second early source of efficacy. In fact, siblings and peers are considered a good source of modelling and verbal persuasion due their likeness to the counterparts.

Coincidentally, only a few participants were satisfied with the instruction they received from their teachers and lecturers in both high school and at university. Whilst they had a positive attitude towards help-seeking, they were reluctant to seek help from their lecturers, and many felt comfortable asking for help from peers. Parents, teachers, and lecturers as adults were, in a sense, a weak source of efficacy.

In expressing their expectations for the mentoring relationship, students indicated their desire for a mentor who was “sensitive”, “caring”, “patient”, “available”, and “informative”. These expressions gave insight into

participants' vulnerabilities and highlighted the value that participants placed on emotions as an area of focus in establishing and maintaining mentoring relations. The expressions also highlight how self-efficacy sources can either be weakened or strengthened depending on the emotions that they invoke on the participants. The implication for this study, was for the mentor to find ways to positively address the participants' emotional vulnerabilities to positively influence the participants' perception of her (the mentor) as an efficacy source. For example, the researcher had to establish rapport with the students, which involved explaining to the participants how the intervention would work, and the functions that the writing consultant would perform; establishing a safe environment; and providing assistance timeously.

Evidence from the artifact produced show that the mentor initiated most posts; and participants seldom initiated any posting. Notheless, the participants always responded to the mentor, and could schedule face-face sessions with her. Contrary to Ivala & Gachago (2012), de Villiers, (2010) and Bosch (2009) who reported increased informal exchange of course related questions and discussions among students following the introduction of Facebook groups in the classrooms, the nature and content of posts on the Facebook group wall did not reflect similar results. Perhaps this has to do with the marginal position that the researcher still occupied. In this study, unlike in other cases where students were introduced to Facebook groups as an integral part of the course, the configuration of the Facebook group could be regarded as being problematic. Not including the lecturer or the research promoter on the group may have decontextualized writing centre support. It can even be argued the configuration of the group in this study, with just the writing consultant offering writing assistance away from the classroom, and not involving the subject lecturer or the research promoter perpetuated the view of writing as isolated from the course. It is also likely that students did not consider this particular Facebook group as a relevant platform to post subject related questions since the researcher was neither a subject specialist nor a research promoter.

During focus groups, participants reported that they also used other members' wall posts particularly the ones where they reflected on the experience of attending a consultations as source of vicarious learning. They reported on how they felt motivated to put more effort on their work based on the wall post making reference to others. This confirms the view that, "[t]he impact of modelling on perceived self-efficacy is strongly influenced by the similarity to the models. The greater the assumed similarity, the more persuasive are the model's successes or failures" (Bandura, 1994, p. 72). The participants' sentiments regarding learning behaviour based on other participants' actions on the wall echo Ng'ambi's (2011) findings that students who discerned their peer's engagements were vicariously spurred to act likewise.

A 'typical' one-on-one writing centre consultation between a consultant and a student does not open 'any window' for students to see what is happening with their peers. Using Facebook group wall as a space for reflection provided further learning opportunities for other group members. Students still enjoyed the benefits of private face-to-face consultations. In addition, they were given a window to learn from peers.

Furthermore, the participants' self-reporting of their modelling of tasks to other students is a clear indication of success of the mentoring intervention as self-efficacy-raising. Modelling as a source of efficacy can also be regarded as a sign of high self-efficacy. Only when participants have mastery experience of the task are they able to serve as social models for others. By taking on the new role as models for others, participants proved that their self-efficacy for the task had also improved.

5.2 Revisiting Research Questions 2&3

In Chapter 2, I indicated how existing studies provide compelling reasons that justify the use of social networks in higher education. Personally, one overriding reason was the ubiquitous use of social networks by students, which I could capitalise on to reach them where they are. In addition, the availability of social network sites via mobile phones, which are also

ubiquitous among students, would exponentially increase the opportunities for interaction with the participants.

Sub-questions 2 and 3 address the two factors that Pollara & Zhu (2011) and Lam et al. (2011) propose are important to consider before adopting social networks for academic purposes: i) whether merging the educational and social environment is possible or even desired by the users before it is done; ii) their attitudes and experiences of the technology targeted for adoption since attitudes relate to acceptance. In the case of this study, two sets of data were used to investigate the students' attitudes during pre-study interviews, and their perspectives post-study focus group interviews. The pre-intervention interviews focused on the current experiences of students using Facebook, and their expectations of how Facebook would be used.

Participants indicated that they used Facebook mainly to socialise with friends and their classmates about classroom related issues. They neither interacted with any of the subject lecturers nor took part in collaborative learning on Facebook. The findings are consistent with those from studies by Selwyn (2009) and Madge, et al. (2009) where they also found that where students socialised with classmates, the activities did not move beyond simply coordinating their studies. These findings resonate with those of the 2012 EduCause Centre for Applied Research (ECAR) Report that "most students prefer to keep their academic and social lives separate, and they see social networks as more about connecting with friends and less about doing academic activities" (Dahlstrom, 2012: 25).

Since participants reported exclusively using Facebook for socialising with friends; they were sceptical about it being used for educational purposes. They were concerned about what they viewed as bridging the divide between what they perceived as their personal space and the learning space. Despite their scepticism, participants agreed to "give it a try" as long as the mentor did not encroach on their private space. Tu & Mclsaac (2002) highlight the importance of addressing privacy concerns when social networks are adopted for educational purposes, especially for functions such mentoring students. Privacy is said to be one of the key factors that affect social presence, and

subsequently social interaction in online environments. Likewise, Rambe (2013) advises lecturers to develop strategies for balancing students' demands for privacy and academic provisions of meaningful support. Such strategy could include in-class training sessions to address security and privacy settings, or creating private groups that are only accessible via an invitation (Hurt et al. (2012). The participants highlighted their preference for Facebook groups as more appropriate learning spaces.

There was a remarkable shift in the participants' perspective of Facebook after their experience of using Facebook for mentoring. They reported their appreciation of the roles the mentor played online especially as she met all the expectations they held before the study. Most of the functions that participants highlighted included providing resources, checking-in with the participants, providing encouragement, and simply listening and being patient with the students. At close examination, these functions align perfectly with the functions of an educational mentor outlined in Chapter 2. Furthermore, participants regarded the online presence of the mentor as an important factor in sustaining their participation in the intervention. The participants testified to having been encouraged by the mentor's persistent checking-in on them. By observing other's positive reactions to the mentor's posts, they were encouraged to do likewise.

These findings highlight the significance of online social presence in reducing the attrition rate of participants in mentoring interventions. The social connectedness of the mentor with the students reduced the feelings of isolation by participants, and directly enhanced as sense of community for the participants. Based on the findings from this small study, it can be assumed that the reconfiguration of the writing centre to comprise an online component will result in more sustainable relations between students and the centre, which is likely to increase the chances of effecting lasting positive behavioural change on the students. This will also provide the writing centre with more opportunities to assess their efficacy in assisting the students by going beyond simply providing 'mute' statistics on the number of students who visited the centre.

5.3 Revisiting Research Question 4

Findings from the pre-study interviews showed that the participants had low self-efficacy for the writing task. This could be attributed to several factors: limited academic parental involvement due to lack of education; limited writing instruction offered at both high school and university; no mastery experience of the task. In addition to these factors, participants did not have any experience of working with the Writing Centre. In contrast, data from focus group interviews after the writing intervention revealed that students viewed the mentoring as a self-efficacy raising experience. Most of the students attributed their improved understanding of the task to the mentoring experience.

Participants reported successfully completing the writing task on which they had received mentoring. This earned them the most valuable source of efficacy – mastery experience. In addition to their own mastery of the task, the students were exposed to numerous vicarious experiences from the observing the wall posts of the other participants. Most importantly, participants indicated their enhanced self-efficacy by modelling to other students how the task should be performed. They related how they were able to assist their peers on the writing task on which they had been mentored – a clear indication of increased self-efficacy.

5.4 Limitations of the study

The first limitation of this study is in its design as a design-based study, which is by its nature is context specific, and oriented towards solving a particular problem. As a result, transferability of findings from such a study into another context is always difficult. Any researcher who may be interested in adopting a similar study will need to acknowledge that the contexts, the participants, or even the problems will be different; and the result will not necessarily be the same. In Chapter 3, I indicated that this study is in fact, the local impact evaluation. Further reiterations are still necessary for theory development. An additional limitation to the generalizability of the results is due to the task-specificity of self-efficacy. Therefore, the findings from the design-based

intervention are specifically for the writing task; and cannot be generalised to any other writing task.

Secondly, the lack of student-initiated posts is most concerning. Due to this, the researcher cannot conclusively and confidently say that using a Facebook group directly contributed to the enhanced writing self-efficacies of the participants. However, given the high number of posts where students booked a consultation following a post that reflected on the consultation held, the researcher can conclusively state that using a Facebook group directly contributed to an increased number of visitation, and thus indirectly contributed to increased writing self-efficacy of the research participants.

Lastly, the limitation of this study is that it stopped at only asking students their experiences on the influence of using Facebook for mentoring their writing efficacy after the intervention. Since efficacy beliefs are not reliable predictor of future performance, it would be ideal that further studies be conducted to evaluate the relationship between writing self-efficacy and performance. For example, in the next iteration this researcher aims to investigate the extent to which such a self-efficacy intervention can influence the student's academic performance. Be that as it may, the shift in the students' attitudes from those they expressed during pre-study interviews is a sure step in the right direction.

5.5 Recommendation for future research

Given that in reviewing literature, the researcher identified a gap in the studies related to attending to writing- efficacy for university students in spite of the significant role academic writing has in determining academic performance; it is recommended that more studies be conducted in this area. Also, given that scholarship highlight conversation as central to the work of the writing centres, by documenting and publishing on their practices, writing practitioners will be extending the reach of their conversations thereby contributing to growth of a vibrant community of practice.

Secondly, based on the fact most mission statements and goals underpinning writing centre practice highlight the need to develop students to become confident writers, it stands to reason that practitioners should document how

they are attending to affective issues as a means to bolster their students' writing self-efficacy.

Thirdly, there is scholarship that advocates for the exploitation of liminal positions of writing centres to become spaces where transformative work is possible (Brannon & North, 2000). Such transformative work should include spearheading the transformative agenda to attend the students' affective domain, by documenting and publishing on the innovative ways practitioners are using new technologies to attract and respond to the needs of technologically-adept students.

5.6 Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations that are associated with design-based research, especially the generalizability of findings outside the context in which the study was conducted, the relevance of this study cannot be doubted. The originality of this study lies in having systematically gathered data on current practices, issues, and expectations of the participants in order to determine the main features of an intervention, which is generally recognized as a condition for successful implementation. This is also a first study that has integrated three important areas in writing centre scholarship, namely writing self-efficacy, mentoring, and adopting new technologies.

The reality is, from the beginning, writing centres were conceived as places where students struggling with mastering writing went to be offered help. It is true that to beginning from the period of Stephen North's landmark essay "*The Idea of the Writing Centre*" (1984) onwards, writing centres have redefined their roles, and the help they offer students. One can also track the evolution of theoretical paradigms over the decades. It is easy for those that work in the writing centres to define themselves and their practices along the lines of dominant discourse, which at present is social constructivism, if not for not any other reason but for 'political correctness'. That being the case, this study adopted as its theoretical paradigm, a 'middle-of-the road' theory, Social Cognitive Theory. From a social-cognitive perspective, writing is regarded as a social and emotionally charged act (McCleod, 1987)

The bulk of literature focuses on writing as a social act. Taking into consideration, the arguments to attend to the affect domain of writing, it is imperative that writing centre practitioners start interrogating the effectiveness of their practices; to start asking questions like: how much does the 'help' they offer students influence their self-efficacy; how do we measure our efficacy in helping students become highly self-efficacious writers at least in the task we helped them with; do we even know where students go after they leave the writing centre; can we reach out to them wherever they are?

Considering the amount of literature that has been reviewed in this study that underscores the importance of attending to the emotional state of a student, there is a definite need for Writing Centres to consider revising their operations, in particular the duration of their consultations. Granted that extending consultation times may eat away on the spare time of writing consultants who are mostly post-graduate students, at least considerations need to be made about official virtual hours to suit each Writing Centre.

Through a review of literature on ways to attend to self-efficacy, this study identified mentoring as a construct that not only aligns with SCT, but seems the most appropriate strategy to adopt if one needs to affect change at that level. Mentoring requires that one cultivates a sustainable trusting relationship with one's students. However, for that to be possible there needs to be measure in place to enhance accessibility.

Finally, there is abundant literature on reconfiguring writing centres from physical spaces to virtual spaces. However, there is a dearth of literature on how writing centres adopting new technologies is lagging behind by a few years to decades. There is movement in the mainstream programmes in higher education globally towards adopting social media for academic purposes because of their ubiquity among the students. It would be deemed reasonable to believe that academic support services, who have always lamented their peripheral positions, should be leading that movement as way of enhancing their presence and their relevance. If not for any other reason, the position of writing centres as support hubs for students to achieve proficiency in writing, which in turn will contribute to their retention and

success should be reason enough for writing practitioners to actively participate in the discourse and to review their practices to align with the new scholarship, and adapt to accommodate technologically-adept students.

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APPENDIX A: Literature Review Matrix

Author	Mentoring	Online	Social	Efficacy	Significance to this study
Auten (2010)				<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposes using self-efficacy concept to define the meaning of help writing centres offer to students
Bandura (1984, 1994, 2001)				<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originator of the concept of efficacy. Provides the tenets of Social Cognitive Theory His theory is adopted as a theoretical framework for this study
Bierema and Merriam (2012)		<input type="checkbox"/>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies two characteristics of online mentoring; namely boundaryless configuration and egalitarian quality of exchange.
Bosch (2009), Ng'ambi and Rambe (2011), deVilliers (2010)			<input type="checkbox"/>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies on Facebook based on South African university classroom contexts
Brzoska <i>et.al</i> (1987)	<input type="checkbox"/>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present a mentor functions model specifically for mentors in higher education, which highlights the various functions an educational mentor is expected to perform.
Conole (2008)			<input type="checkbox"/>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposes using social media for mentoring as they are most suited for social and suited learning.
Diaz-Maggioli (2004)	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposes a shift from writing centre consulting or tutoring to mentoring. Her definition of mentoring is adopted for this study.
Ehrich <i>et al.</i> 2001	<input type="checkbox"/>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the significance of grounding mentoring on theoretical underpinnings.
Fowler &	<input type="checkbox"/>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criticize Kram's mentoring as unsuitable for educational settings as it lacks learning

O’Gorman (2005)					<p>facilitation component.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce Brzoska’s mentor functions model.
Hine (2000)	<input type="checkbox"/>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlights how online mentoring can be a “vehicle for dialogue” between lecturers and students
Kabilan (2010)			<input type="checkbox"/>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates how Facebook can be used language teaching and learning.
Matoti & Shumba (2012)				<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The only study on writing self-efficacy that is based on the South African university context
McCarthy (2012)			<input type="checkbox"/>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First major study on mentoring using Facebook in a university context
McCleod (1987)					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seminal work that redefined writing as not only a cognitive act, but also an affective act.
Mertz (2004)	<input type="checkbox"/>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a framework to distinguish mentoring from other supporting roles. Introduces key constructs in mentoring, namely; intent and involvement
Morrow (2007)				<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduces the concept of epistemological access.
Mueller (2004)		<input type="checkbox"/>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classifies the advantages of online mentoring into three areas: logistical, qualitative, and managerial
Murphy, 2011	<input type="checkbox"/>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Her study found that mentors’ perceived similarity rather than real similarity with mentees by mentor is a better predictor of quality of mentorship. This highlights the importance of matching process during the initiation phase of a mentoring relationship.
Pajares (2003), Pajares et al. (2003, 2001, 1996)	<input type="checkbox"/>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He reviewed several studies on self-efficacy beliefs and writing performance, most of which found a positive relationship between the two.
Pollara & Zhu (2011)			<input type="checkbox"/>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study found that face-to-face interactions between mentors and student mentees were positively affected by interactions on Facebook group.
Poon		<input type="checkbox"/>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasises the significance of permanent records derived from online interactions for

(2009)					evaluation of programmes.
Ragins and Kram (2007)	<input type="checkbox"/>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classifies the functions of mentoring into two categories – psychosocial and career functions. • Almost all models including Brzoska draw from their model
Reid (2011)			<input type="checkbox"/>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights the ubiquity of Facebook among students
Scott <i>et al.</i> (2009)				<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasises the need for higher education to refocus on the interaction between affective factors and academic performance.
William and Takaku (2011)				<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study found a positive relationship between the number of visitations to the writing centre and students' writing self-efficacy.
Wong & Premkumar	<input type="checkbox"/>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide useful guidelines for those interested in starting mentoring programmes in higher education.

APPENDIX B: Pre-interview Schedule

Opening

A. (Establish Rapport): (Introduce myself), e.g. My name is _____ and I am going to be working with you as a writing consultant mentor for the next eight weeks....

B. (State Purpose) I would like to ask you some questions about your background, your education, some experiences you have had, in order to learn more about you.

C. (Motivation) The information I'll obtain today is going to be helpful to determine the areas of focus for mentoring in order to cater for your needs and to hopefully meet some of your expectations

D. (Time Line) The interview should take about 20minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

Focus on family

- Socio-economic background of participant
- Extent of parental involvement in participant's education
- Perspectives regarding the extent to which their involvement has influenced our writing capabilities?

Focus on high school

- Name of school, type of school
- Fond memories about the school
- Attitudes regarding the quality of writing instruction you received and level of teacher involvement in helping you develop your writing school

Focus on university

- Experience as a first year transition to academic writing
- Kind of support received from your lecturers and peers
- Feelings about asking for help on academic writing from lecturers?

- Perceived benefits to be derived by students if they sought assistance from lecturers?
- Perceived challenges regarding seeking help on writing from lecturers?
- Experience using writing centre services

Focus on writing task

- Any previous experience on the task
- Any specific training or instruction on doing a literature review?
- What kind of literature review related tasks have you done before?

Focus on Facebook

- Present uses of Facebook
- Views regarding lecturers using Facebook with students
- Your expectations? My role, your role?