

**Hospitality Management students' understanding of and response to
assignment feedback at a University of Technology**

By

Evonne Singh

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University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg**

Supervisor: Dr S M^cKenna

Abstract

This research is a case study investigating how students respond to formative assessment feedback. The study centres around gathering and analysing data on the way in which students perceive and interact with assignment feedback when it is provided to them in a process orientated, drafting-responding approach rather than a product approach. This study also aims to reveal whether the feedback provided by a lecturer is used by students to make changes to the overall quality of their revised assignment. Within this context, I also explore students' opinions and expectations of feedback. The participants in this study are students from the Hospitality Management Sciences Department based at the Durban University of Technology. The participants are from a diverse group in terms of demographics such as age, gender, racial breakdown and language.

This research was informed by the interpretive research orientation with overlaps from the social constructivist and critical paradigms. Data collection involved two aspects. The first aspect consisted of document review, that is, copies of all student participants' assignment drafts and their revised copies along with the associated lecturer comments. The second aspect included transcripts of semi-structured interviews conducted with students between May and June, 2007. During the interviews, copies of the students' draft and revised assignments were used either as a point of reference or as tools to stimulate, tease out and probe each student's thoughts, perceptions, understanding and experiences of the feedback provided within the drafting-responding process.

I used the data repertoire from my field texts to produce my research text and used Nvivo as a data management tool to identify, group and code recurring themes or to highlight any unique differences within the data transcripts. Discourse analysis was used to analyse the interview transcripts.

Findings are that feedback is predominantly perceived by student participants as error correction rather than as a springboard to advance their learning via guidance from a more informed other. Moreover, high stakes assessments dominate the way students are assessed, from school through to tertiary level. This results in a student body that is mark and 'cue' orientated rather than learning focussed. These characteristics in turn, propel students' learning towards the competitive rather than focussing on learning from each other or learning as a community. Another theme that emerged is that students' lack of past experience in using feedback as a process-orientated approach meant that they were ill-equipped to deal optimally with the qualitative feedback provided in this research context.

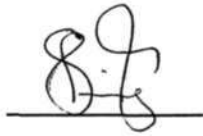
Several issues regarding conflicting literacy practices also emerged. For example, differing academic practices were observed between school and tertiary levels. Students also

exhibited an inability to adopt the norms and values desired by the tertiary discipline due to a lack of shared understanding between lecturers and students, as well as difficulties resulting from differing mediums of feedback, including differing perceptions of feedback between lecturers and students. Despite these and other findings, students felt that they did benefit overall from having a drafting-responding process for their assignments. They especially welcomed the qualitative nature of comments provided, the combination of verbal and written comments, the combination of in text and cover comments, the ability to get timely clarity from the lecturer and the scope to dialogue and develop a 'relationship' with the lecturer.

This study supports the need for assessments to be positioned for the *purpose of learning* rather than merely focussing on the *assessment of learning*. Essentially, when assessments shift from dominant high-stakes to low-stakes, it can encourage students to adopt a deep and active approach to learning (Elbow, 1997). A roll-over effect is that lecturing staff can realign their teaching to respond more fully to students' needs.

Declaration

This study represents my original work and has not been submitted in any form for a degree or diploma to any tertiary institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, cursive letters that appear to be 'E.S.', written above a horizontal line.

Evonne Singh

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that feedback from educators is a vital part of the learning process. Moreover, it is well documented that students pay more attention to feedback on written work that is in progress, rather than on the comments on a final draft (Flower, 1979; Paxton, 1995). Hounsell (2003: 67) elaborates on this theme by noting that,

it has long been recognised, by researchers and practitioners alike, that feedback plays a decisive role in learning and development, within and beyond formal educational settings. We learn faster, and much more effectively, when we have a clear sense of how well we are doing and what we might need to do in order to improve.

This type of feedback, usually referred to as formative feedback, has been described as consisting of descriptive comments advising on how to improve one's performance (Geysler, 2004). What enhances the benefits associated with formative assessment is that it has the potential to benefit not only the student, but the lecturer and the overall process and quality of learning and teaching too (Biggs, 1999b). For example, by providing meaningful feedback in a process-orientated approach, students may be empowered to take responsibility for their own learning. In this research context, the term 'process-orientated approach' means that rather than submitting one copy of an assignment for summative marking, a student is afforded multiple opportunities to submit an assignment in varying stages of completion. Thus, students are allowed to draft, receive feedback and then revise their work prior to a final submission. Importantly, a process-orientated approach towards assignments will enable students to use recursive practices to develop and improve their work (Zeiser, 1999). Simultaneously, the lecturer is afforded an opportunity to monitor student progress (Biggs 1999b), and in turn to use feedback to advise and facilitate students in ways that they had not previously been able to (Vygotsky et al., 1978; Rowntree, 1987; Brown and Knight, 1994; Atherton, 2005b).

Literature on assessment matters abounds and large volumes of research are dedicated to researching aspects of assessment from the lecturer's, institution's and researcher's point of view. For example, research in the area of assessment which investigates what academics can change, improve or innovate, is common (Black and William, 1998). Research has also focussed on feedback in relation to different types of assessment tools, for example portfolios (Baume and Yorke, 2002); tests (Cox and Dison, 1971; Brown and Knight, 1994); essays (Jessup, 2000, Patterson, 2005) and journals (Todd; Mills, Palard and Khamcharoen, 2001). I found that an inextricable and common theme of these studies is the importance of feedback. However, while the literature supports the notion of assessment feedback supporting learning (Black and William, 1998), there are varying opinions of how to go about implementing it for

the greatest success and each of these opinions and findings are influenced by individual situational circumstance and contextual factors (Smith and Gorard, 2005). Thus, as argued by researchers such as Hattie and Jaeger (1998) and Higgins et al. (2002), greater clarity and investigation are required on how students actually use feedback. Of importance too, I believe, is the gap identified by Falchikov (1995) and Carless (2006) that students are often overlooked as a vital resource to inform practice. This oversight compounds the mismatch between student feedback needs and the feedback supplied. For example, a student's response in a study conducted by Carless (2006:231) is revealing: "no tutor has ever asked us what kind of feedback we would like." More research is therefore needed to find out how students interact with assessment feedback and in particular, how students then use assessment feedback (Gipps, 1994; Falchikov, 1995; Bardine, et al., 2000; Higgins et al., 2002); as well as what type of feedback students find useful.

1.1 Focus

In light of the above, this case study will explore and integrate information relating to four issues pertaining to feedback and its use. The study will emphasise lecturers' provision of feedback within the framework of a process-orientated approach at the Durban University of Technology (hereafter referred to as DUT¹). It will include aspects related to the form and tone of feedback (Bardine, et al., 2000; Rowe and Wood, undated) and the impact this has on the students' perceptions and use of it. This study will also probe students' perception on the inclusion of a formative assessment practice, that is, a drafting-responding approach for an assignment, instead of a product- related assessment practice as used previously to assess students for the subject Food and Beverage Operations II. It will also determine whether a process-orientated approach makes a difference to the quality of students' work. Moreover, in a bid to provide feedback that fits student needs, it aims to identify, discuss and explain those feedback aspects that students identify as lacking, useless or helpful.

A review of the available body of literature yielded an additional dimension to this study: most of the research pertains to university studies where the essay type of assessments dominates the platform on which findings were based (Paxton, 1995; Brown et al., 1997; Zeiser, 1999; Chanock, 2000 and Thomas, undated). This study presents a very different context by looking at feedback on an assignment type of assessment at a University of Technology; specifically, the Durban University of Technology.

¹ DUT was formed in 2002 by the merger of ML Sultan and Technikon Natal. During the period 2002 to 2006, the institution was known as the Durban Institute of Technology. It changed its name after all Technikons in South Africa came to be known as Universities of Technology.

1.2 Rationale for study

Research such as that carried out by Ramsden (1992); Smith and Waller (1997) and Gipps (1998), indicates that a shift in the teaching approach from traditional to constructivist, has necessitated a change in the learning and teaching focus. That is, from learning for assessment to learning from assessment (Stiggins, 2002; Earl, 2003). This means that it is critical for academics, from school through to tertiary education, to simultaneously assess, plan and devise improved and new ways of approaching, conducting, engaging with and handling assessments (Black and William, 1998; McDonald and Boud, 2003). An integral part of the shift in the learning and teaching cycle points towards the use of more formative assessment practices and in turn, the provision of timely and quality feedback (Sadler, 1989; Brown, et al. 1995; Hattie and Jaeger, 1998) that is focussed on enabling students to take charge of and manage their own learning (McDonald and Boud, 2003). In fact, an observation made by Taba (cited in Cross and Nagle, 1969: 1362) remains as pertinent today as it was, when made in the 1960's:

the quantity and quality of the concepts and ideas an individual can use seem to depend on the quantity and quality of stimulation he has had, plus the amount of effort he has put into active thinking.

However, while there is great potential for the improvement of students' work, research indicates that students continue to fall short of 'closing the gap' (Ramaprasad, 1983; Black and William 1998) created between what students have achieved and what they still needed to achieve, in order to be competent. This outcome is compounded when students are provided with what they deem as inadequate feedback (Bardine et al., 2000; Carless, 2006; Glover and Brown, 2006). Thus it would seem that however well-intentioned the feedback provider, research indicates a misfit between feedback provided and feedback desired (Warden, 2000; Loel, 2004, Careless, 2006). This status is fuelled by, among other issues, differing student-lecturer perceptions on the same texts (see for example Bardine et al., 2000; Carless, 2006), which contribute a host of implicit difficulties to any attempts to bridge the learning gaps identified (Black and William, 1998).

I believe that lecturer cognisance of the theory supporting and relating to feedback as well as probing and evaluating student perceptions on lecturer feedback may go some way in helping all participants to move towards a shared understanding of feedback (Black et al., 2003) by gaining insight into the way students think, deduct and understand phenomena. For example, by understanding the student perspective on issues relating to what they regard as useful or useless feedback, and whether they prefer verbal or written feedback and why. In this way, lecturers may gain insight on how to bridge the divides created by differing student and lecturer perceptions about feedback. In turn, such information could prompt lecturers to adapt their practices to reduce potential problems, while fostering conditions that maximise learning

and teaching gains (Black et al., 2003; Earl, 2003). However, if the information gathered in an exercise like this is only used to adapt feedback after a set piece of work is completed, that is, if the research is entirely product-related (Paxton, 1995; Barnett, 1989; Zeiser 1999; Kasanga, 2004), it may render much of the data useless. Additionally, the context of one assessment may be very different to another assessment context thus, although adapted to address and fit purpose, the feedback generated may no longer be relevant enough to make any real difference to students' ways of knowing for a specific piece of work. Worse yet, product-related feedback has been accused of being so specific, that it is rarely portable to other pieces of work.

However, if an academic was armed with insights into student perceptions of feedback (Klenowski, 1995 and 2004) along with deliberate attention to quality feedback that is focussed on 'feeding forward', the research could lead to multiple gains for all participants in the learning and teaching cycle, including enhancing the overall quality of learning and teaching. Furthermore, a process-orientated approach heralds an active attempt to shift students' learning focus because academics are now involved in facilitating students in recognising their achievements and progress in relation to previous performance, rather than as a mere comparison with others (Gipps, 1994). Well structured formative assessment may be seen as key to evolving student learning as well as one's academic practices (Black, et al. 2003; Earl, 2003).

Geyser (2004) defines formative assessment as assessment that takes place while learning and teaching is in process. That is, assessment is used as a facilitative tool to feed into and enhance the learning and teaching cycle while the student and lecturer are engaged in the learning-teaching process. In this cycle, the students and academic's strengths and weaknesses are diagnosed, and immediate feedback is provided. However, research like that of Black (1993) warns that a description like Geyser's on formative assessment has to be more inclusive as it could be misleading, especially to a novice lecturer. Black (1993) elaborates by arguing that the act of providing the feedback is just one aspect of formative efforts, but that feedback is only formative if it is actually utilised to improve learning. Thus, if feedback is not utilised, it is formative only in "purpose but not in function" (Careless, 2003:2). For assessment practices to be truly formative, lecturers will have to have to get a clearer understanding of what 'formative assessment' actually means and thereby inform and ground their practice (Black, 2000).

This inclination towards formative practices indicates a shift in focus from assessment as an add-on experience at the end of learning, to assessment that encourages and supports deep learning (Black et al., 2003; Geyser, 2004). To highlight this deep approach to learning and meaning making, academics need more insight and understanding of "how students construct views of their world of learning and ... more about how individuals combine and use the

various processes of integration of information; the importance of cognitive processes that students employ must be highlighted" (Hattie and Jaeger, 1998:119). However, McDonald and Boud (2003:210) assert that this does not mean that students are exempt from the equation; on the contrary, they argue that students have a pivotal role to play by "taking responsibility for assessing their own work." Thus by among other things, engaging in, being part of the assessment process and reflecting on their experiences, students may be motivated to adopt a deep approach towards learning (Heywood, 1989; Gibbs, 1992). A deep approach is regarded as a prerequisite for significant and meaningful learning that will last, the type of learning that is associated with and valued in higher education.

However, this does not mean that all students are self motivated or that they approach their academic tasks in the same way (Biggs, 1998). Research indicates that students approach learning in different ways; for example, students may use either a surface approach or deep approach to learning and the different approaches are thought to lead to significant differences in the quality of learning (Boud, 1995; Gravett, 2004). Additionally, students tend to alternate between their approaches at any given time (Volet and Chalmers, 1992). Authors like Ramsden, 1988; Biggs, 1990 and Brown et al., 1995 have indicated that this switching between approaches could be led by the assessment practice adopted. Lecturers therefore need to be alert to this and plan assessments that foster a deep approach to learning.

This brings two aspects of assessment to the fore. That is, learning for assessment and learning from assessment (Butler and Winne, 1995; Earl, 2003; Barrett, 2004). In a nut-shell, constructive assessment practices based on sound assessment principles can be used to focus assessment for learning (Earl, 2003; Barrett, 2004). These assessment practices are enhanced when students and lecturers are engaged in "collective inquiry" (Gravett, 2004:29). That is, student-student and lecturer-student collaboration as it enables all the participants in the learning-teaching cycle to work towards a shared understanding of learning (Gravett, 2004). When framed in this manner, the student is involved as an active and key participant in the learning process. Under these circumstances it is clear that a paradigm shift takes place in the unfolding learning and teaching; with the student replacing the lecturer on centre stage.

Smith and Waller (1997:274) highlight this shift by stating that "learning in a constructivist epistemology involves personal self-reflection" to advance new ways of knowing. This means that students may actively "transform, and extend their own knowledge" by using "new information to activate their existing cognitive structures or construct new ones" (Smith and Waller, 1997:272). Thus the drafting-responding process used for the assignment in this study presents a backdrop that it is desirable and facilitative in encouraging students to reflect and build upon their learning experiences and experience various cognitive processes, while their work is in progress. I believe that formative assessment practices when coupled with staff development initiatives, may also give lecturing staff a reason to think about educative

practices from a theoretical angle as well as from the students' point of view. This will hopefully foster a deeper reflection on their own teaching practices with follow through into their teaching-learning cycle (Black et al., 2003). The ideal outcome, based on the work by Schön, will result in both the lecturer and the students being empowered as reflective practitioners involved in and benefitting from the processes of 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1983; Schön 1987).

I want to point out that the hospitality discipline, in which this study is located, has a very practical focus, which means that the genre of research and presentation of data is different to that in disciplines such as philosophy. Thus, it may include students comparing and implementing theory in practical ways in order to gain insight on what works and why. For example, students may learn the theoretical aspects of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), however, this theory is not useful if the student is unable to apply and adapt its principles to different practical contexts. For example, what are my Critical Control Points if I run a steakhouse as opposed to a seafood restaurant? Or if menu items change what impact does this have on the CCP, and inter alia, on food costs, menu pricing, staff skills, etc. In affording students with opportunities to merge, adapt and apply relevant theory in practical contexts, lecturers create opportunity for students to grapple first-hand with real-life situations they may be faced with when they enter the Hospitality industry. Thus, theory is the infrastructure supporting and informing subsequent practical application.

While my research will draw on other research in the area of feedback and student writing, it must be noted that my research is positioned specifically in a University of Technology environment. This makes this particular research project especially valuable in the context of looking at feedback in this sub-section of the Higher Education landscape.

1.3 Personal background to the study

In 2003, one of my duties as a new lecturer at the DUT involved the assessment of student assignments. From the outset, my focus was on learning and teaching and the improvement thereof. To aid this goal, one of the initiatives I undertook was to focus on assignments, an aspect of assessment which had previously always been carried out as a purely summative task. This meant that a student submitted an assignment and the 'product' was then assessed to determine pass or fail. Under these conditions, even when a student submitted work that contained aspects that could be improved upon if they had been given some guidance (Vygotsky et al., 1978); they were not afforded the opportunity to revise their work. Neither were they afforded the tools, for example through qualitative feedback, to develop their knowledge further. This meant that students completed sections and their associated testing procedures and began new ones, while perhaps not approaching learning differently in relation to what they knew previously.

I wanted to assess whether giving students an opportunity to improve their work before they obtained a pass or fail judgment for a final assignment would make a difference to the quality of their work. Based on this desire, I decided to include a feedback loop in the assessment of my students' assignments (Earl, 2003). I did this with the intention of providing students with cues via an 'active audience' while they were still engaged in the process of completing their assignment. This was done to actively engage students in reflecting, building upon and directing their thoughts, to improve their understanding and transform their learning (Earl, 2003). To this effect, I set up a system of providing verbal feedback on the assignment draft so that students could receive and use the qualitative feedback to assist them in their revision process. Students were encouraged to use this feedback to improve their work by making changes as they desired. The assessment system, including the potential benefits of adopting such a system, was explained to students to encourage them to make maximum use of this opportunity to improve their work "at no cost" (Johnstone, 1990:57). This meant that the draft copy was not awarded any marks (Smith and Gorard, 2005; Baruthram and M^cKenna, 2006). In fact, Sadler (1989:121) observes that the use of grades "may actually be counterproductive for formative purposes."

Assignments were undertaken in pairs and the onus was on the students to set up one-off informal feedback sessions with the lecturer during which their draft work would be reviewed. During these informal sessions, students provided drafts at various stages of completion, to outline and present their assignment. I gave verbal feedback on the drafts which students could incorporate in their final submissions for summative marking. This system required time and commitment from both the students and myself. Post-evaluation of this system revealed that leaving the setting of feedback appointments to the students' discretion was not a good option, as not all students took advantage of the offer to consult. At this stage, I achieved a similar conclusion to Carless (2006) who in his article titled '*Differing perceptions in the feedback process*' found that although students argued the importance of feedback to feed forward, when presented with this opportunity, not all of the participants in his study collected their feedback. The students' actions informed my decision for 2004. I decided to add another aspect to my initial intervention by making it compulsory for students to participate in a feedback-consultation cycle. I wanted to see if this stance would make a difference to students taking advantage of the opportunity provided.

Other outcomes of the informal exercise were that after verbal feedback, some groups showed improvements in their final submission. For example, students were able to apply menu planning guidelines more effectively in terms of dish selection, composition, colour combinations, cooking methods, seasonal availability of ingredients, etc, to devise menu ideas to suit special themes. However, what I regarded as diligent persistence from both myself and some of my students, to assess and revise their work, did not result in the kind of quality final submissions that I had expected after our consultations. That is, while students

were able to select a variety of starters, mains and desserts suitable for a given theme, they were not very accurate when it came to balance and flow when selecting the final dishes for a themed table d' hôte, three course meal. Despite what I deemed an adequate introduction and further discussion of the proposed topic, as well as the assessment criteria and feedback cycle, I found that my students were not faring as well as I thought they would. My belief that the students had understood, internalised and accepted my verbal feedback on the assignment was not well grounded. This finding was supported in the literature of studies conducted by Gibbs et al. (2003) and Carless (2006).

Warden (2000:575) states that, "Even if teacher comments are clear, it is not certain that the students, whom the comments are aimed at, can understand such feedback." Carless (2006:221) elaborates by bringing responders' attention to the often unidentified fact that, "feedback is generally delivered in academic discourse which students may not have full access to." In this context, Carless refers to discourse as "simply the language in which the tutor comments are encoded" (2006:221). It became clear to me while reading through my students' final submissions and subsequently chatting to them, that some of my students had not grasped certain key concepts in my comments. Further to this, the informal chatting revealed that students would have appreciated more guidance in the form of written comments to supplement those given verbally (Gibbs et al., 2003) in order to help them "shape and build their [our] ideas" (Peel, 2003). This indicated to me that in giving feedback, I would need to consider how students interact with and use feedback provided to them (Hattie and Jaeger, 1998), as well as consider the discourse underlying my students' academic beliefs, approaches and practices.

After the summative assessment of the assignment, it therefore became clear that there were discrepancies between what students and what I had interpreted as a clear course of action which had to be taken in order to correct problem areas identified. These remained as areas that were uncorrected or needed further revision. Several possibilities could be attributed to this scenario including: quantity of feedback (McKeachie, 1999) and quality of feedback given (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006); unsuitable feedback form, for example, verbal feedback which means that students often forgot what they should be correcting (Falchikov, 1995; Parkerson, 2000; Gibbs et al., 2003); students not understanding the feedback given (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002; Loel, 2004); students not knowing how to use the feedback given (Lea and Street, 2000; Loel, 2004); timing of feedback (Kulhavy, 1977; Rowntree, 1987; Kulik and Kulik, 1988; Dempsey, Driscoll, and Swindell, 1993); students misunderstanding the feedback they were given (Quinn, 1999; Dohrer, 1991; Loel, 2004); students not making time to change their work after receiving feedback; students being satisfied with the standard of work they had already produced (Rowntree, 1987); tone of feedback affecting the acceptance thereof (Johnstone, 1990; Straub, 1997; Parkerson, 2000; Read et al., 2004; Rowe and Wood, undated) and lecturer appropriation of the student's work (Sommers, 1982; Struab, 1996;

Torrance and Pryor, 1998; Patterson, 2005). By the term lecturer appropriation of student work, I refer to the reality that sometimes academics become so engrossed in providing commentary to aid student writing that they may deviate from guiding to overwhelming and controlling the students' writing. For example, by focussing on grammar rather than content and meaning at the draft stage or by providing ambiguous comments. Moreover, in this scenario, the student may be encouraged "to believe that their first drafts are finished drafts, not invention drafts" (Sommers, 1982:151).

In addition to the aforementioned aspects, academic literacy studies (such as Heath, 1983; Barton, 1994; Gee, 1996; Boughey, 1999; Volbrecht, 2002 and McKenna, 2004; Batt, 2005) indicate that while academics may recognise an excellent piece of work, what is expected in many assessments is not always made known to the students. As a result, they attempt to pick up whatever 'signals' they can in their attempts to engage with otherwise unfamiliar "academic literacy practices" (MacMillan, 2000:152). But what signals do students pick up? What conflicts are contained in lecturer comments and what understanding do students obtain from feedback? What do students do with their feedback? These issues all raise the question of how students perceive feedback they have received and in turn, whether they use the feedback provided to make a difference to their work.

Similar to studies conducted by Hounsell, 1987; Sommers, 1982, and Zamel, 1985, I also found myself giving a lot of feedback to my students but I did not know what kind of feedback was really useful to them. I needed to find out what feedback students found useful and also what they had found to be of no use to them. Griffin, (1982); Ballard and Clanchy (1988); Mitchell (1994a); Higgins et al., (2002) and Patterson (2005), all emphasise the need to look at how students make meaning rather than just looking at surface errors. While being mindful of Patterson's (2005), caution to avoid ignoring superficial errors like grammar and spelling, was I paying more attention to the copy-editing aspects and not enough to the content? It is my intention therefore to gain insights from the students' perspective, on how feedback may be altered to fit, facilitate and encourage student learning. Related research questions that arose from this experience were: Which aspects of the feedback were regarded by students as useful and which were not?

1.4 Reflective practice

As already indicated, this research was conducted in a University of Technology (UoT). UoTs were formerly known as Technikons. According to the National Research Foundation (NRF), "Technikons [Universities of Technology] are renowned for their "career-focussed, hands-on approach to education and training. Their interface with industry has enabled them to structure courses with practical applications and to deliver graduates with knowledge that is immediately relevant in the workplace" (2003:n.p.). This type of vocational focus meant that

staff members with the requisite "workplace experience and expertise in their field of study" rather than those with a strong research background, were sought for learning and teaching purposes at Technikons/Universities of Technology (Powell and McKenna, unpublished). My extensive industry experience stood me in good stead for being employed by the then Natal Technikon in 1999, but I felt uneasy about 'gaps' which I identified as needing to be addressed. I have now identified those gaps in the literature as my perception that my "pedagogical content knowledge" (Shulman, 1986 cited in Klenowski, 2004:218) was underdeveloped. I felt like I was teaching on a fence: on the one side, I had a wealth of subject-related expertise. On the other side, however, I felt poorly equipped to translate this content expertise into innovative lessons and assessments (Black et al., 2003) as I only had my own experiences as a student to draw from. My desire to bridge the gap created by my transition from industry to higher education has seen me adopt a dynamic but critical outlook towards my teaching and learning abilities and practices. To this effect, I completed my B.Tech at the then Durban Institute of Technology and thereafter enrolled for my M.Ed with University of KwaZulu-Natal, UKZN (formerly University of Natal).

As an academic at a UoT, conducting research has been arduous because the bulk of my studies were undertaken while I was compelled to carry my full academic work load. Winberg's article (2005) titled "*Continuities and discontinuities in the journey from Technikon to university of technology*" indicate that my situation is not unique. A more recent article by Powell and McKenna (unpublished) also has reference. For example, Powell and McKenna (unpublished) argue that despite our institution's nomenclature change from Technikon to a University of Technology, a slower transition to address the Technikon-inherited teaching load hampers the research capacity aspired to by the new namesake. Thus, the work load of academics has reference for learning and teaching as well as research activities, within this research context.

While the reasoning above frames my personal situation and research context, staff across the teaching spectrum cannot ignore that the snow-ball effect resulting from the transformation of Higher Education in the last decade has made it necessary for us to become what Schön (1982 and 1987) terms a 'reflective practitioner'. That is, an academic who is able to embrace the concept of active 'life-long' learning. For example, what worked for one student cohort may not necessarily work for others. Additionally, rapid changes in technology have advanced new ways of doing things. Posner (1985 cited in Cole et al., 1995), argues that, "Reflective teaching will allow [the lecturer] to act in deliberate and intentional ways, to devise new ways of teaching rather than being a slave to tradition, and to interpret new experiences from a fresh perspective" (1995:18). Kearns' journey (1991) as described in her article "*The Player's Vision: Students Writing about Their Writing as Writing*", is a case in point. Kearns describes how for ten years she relished her role as an error hunter and corrector of her students' texts. She indicates that hers was a gradual realisation that "To

write well students must be evaluated well" (1991:62). This meant "their writing must be responded to rather than just corrected and graded" (Kearns, 1991:62). While this enlightenment may occur overnight for some, other lecturers may take longer to arrive at realisations of this nature, and some do not ever (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Rowe and Wood, undated). As Posner (1985 cited in Cole et al., 1995) states, the key is to be open to the possibility to change and not get stuck into one perspective of the learning and teaching process.

This latter outlook is ideally positioned to help us learn from both our and others' practices in order to inform future practices. However, it must be noted that for deep learning to take place, this reflective practice needs to extend to students too. For example, Kearns' student, Luke, shows the following insight after his teacher had adjusted her teaching approach to allow her students to reflect on their writing practices "I start out good but stop. I should describe her face ... Next time I'll try a metaphor not just quotes from the story" (Kearns 1991:63). This collaborative approach with emphasis on reflective practices for both students and lecturers, indicates an endless potential for professional growth and development and presents a platform for identifying learning and teaching incidents and areas which may have been otherwise undetected (National Research Council, 2001).

After reading this thesis, you may conclude that my long drawn out journey was simply laborious, whilst other seasoned practitioners may scoff disdainfully at what may be viewed as my inherent lack of skills. However, I take heart from the fact that many volumes of research on assessment matters suggest otherwise. For example, citing Black (1997), the National Research Council (NRC, 2001: 80) lends support to my journey by pointing out that,

a teacher cannot successfully implement all of the changes overnight. Successful and lasting change takes time and deep examination. It becomes critical to root professional-development experiences in what teachers actually do.

This suggests that one's past experiences and practices are invaluable and are essential building blocks for one's future practices (NRC, 2001). I have therefore chosen to view my pursuit of learning and teaching as tiny steps that will continue to inform and modify my practices.

My pursuit of evolving learning and teaching is two-fold: where my students are and how they will navigate the sometimes un-chartered waters to reach their destination; but also where I am and where I want to be, with regards to my academic ability. This ties to doing something that I enjoy and enjoy doing well so part of my aim is to re-look at my existing academic practices with the aim of improving such practice where shortfalls or better ways of knowing and understanding are identified. Angelo (1999:2) states that, "involvement in assessment

efforts typically 'counts' for little or nothing in pay or in tenure, retention and promotion decisions". He surmises that when "most academics 'do assessments', personal and professional values motivate them. And the strongest of those intrinsic motivators is undoubtedly the desire to improve student learning" (ibid:2). Angelo's findings are echoed in more recent research carried out by Linkon (2005: 29), which found that "few rewards exist ... Faculty rarely receive any compensation or recognition either for participating in assessment or for demonstrating improved student learning." Angelo (1999) has labelled such lecturers' involvement in such altruistic assessment practices as intrinsic motivation. For me it is not about a label, but rather, about what I truly want to do.

Apart from the above, I believe that the very nature of our jobs as lecturers, positions us ideally to gather and examine data about students' understanding and perceptions and to make adjustments to our teaching on the basis of our interpretation of that information. However, far from being the one-eyed lecturer in the land of the blind (an insightful piece of self reflection from one of my colleagues), I do not claim to have the best learning and teaching practices. Rather, I believe that awareness and reflection creates in me a willingness to review my practices in order to promote active learning, dynamic teaching and a need to separate that which works from that which does not in a bid towards improving practice.

1.5 Context for this study

Second year Hospitality Management students are required to spend one semester at the DUT and the other semester in industry. The semester that students spend in industry is invaluable. Argyris (1960) indicates this when he states that the impact of an organisation on an individual is dependant on the individual, the organisation and the context. Although students are required to complete a similar range of assessment tasks while they are based in industry, they draw different personal development, growth and experiences from the on-site training programme (Moore; 1990).

Hospitality Management students enter different sectors of the hospitality industry when they are involved in work-integrated learning or when they qualify, thus, every attempt is made to lay the foundation to prepare students adequately for their integration across the industry sectors. For example, while based at the DUT, students complete two assignments for the subject Food and Beverage Operations II. The nature of the assignments, which are discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three, are directly related to and complement the theory and practical applications which students have covered to date. They are also relevant in the sense that they aim to closely mimic what students could expect to be involved in or be aware of when they work within the industry, either as a team or on their own.

For the second assignment which was used in this study, students were given a hypothetical 'blank building in a specified location' and were required to choose to apply either a coffee shop or restaurant concept to the site. This project included:

- a consideration of target market when selecting and designing the menu and its related components;
- a copy of the proposed food and beverage list and related components;
- equipment and placement thereof, including equipment model and suitability in terms of menu items and out-put volume;
- kitchen and restaurant layout, including workflows for the establishment
- recommendation of a suitable food production systems to suit the specified menu.

(Refer to Appendix A for full assignment details and Appendix B, for a list of related marking criteria. Note that these pieces of information were supplemented with detailed classroom discussions).

Twenty-two students enrolled for the subject Food and Beverage Operations II in 2007. Each student was required to submit his/her own assignment which comprised two copies. One was the draft, which was marked and given qualitative feedback, the other was the revised final version.

It is the students' reflections on this process that were gathered as data for this study. The process of data collection and analysis are discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

1.6 Overview of the thesis structure

This chapter has provided an outline of the purpose of, and rationale for the study. In Chapter Two, the literature that contributes to the development of the theoretical framework guiding this study will be discussed. Following this section, the focus will be on formative and summative assessment practices. I will draw attention to multiple shortcomings that dominant high-stakes assessments may contribute towards the assessment landscape. I will emphasise that such shortcomings may be mitigated in the presence of a process-orientated approach. Simultaneously, I will concede that the process-orientated approach is not without problems and that the process-orientated approach may indeed be hampered by the DUT's past academic appointment policy. The chapter will end with suggestions that improved communication and dialogue between student and lecturer may be a way to counter some of the problems associated with a process-orientated approach to writing.

The research methods and methodology which inform my predominately interpretive research orientation, is described in Chapter Three. A description and explanation of my research process, trials and tribulations encountered and perceived, and the data collection is included.

An analysis of the data is undertaken in Chapter Four. Part of the discussion will be led by theorising the possible influence and impact that students' past engagement with feedback has on their current interaction with and perception of feedback. The later part of my discussion will focus on differing students-lecturer perceptions of feedback. Threaded in these discussions are insights into what students perceived as helpful, difficult or unhelpful feedback.

Chapter Five completes the study, by providing conclusions, making recommendations, as well as outlining shortcomings associated with the drafting-responding process outlined in this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1 Introduction

To understand the impact that summative and formative assessments have on learning and teaching it becomes necessary to firstly review the literature on the role of assessment in learning (Elton and Launillard, 1979; Crooks, 1988; Brown and Knight, 1994; Black and William, 1998; Boud et al., 1999; Geysler, 2004) as well as to identify different modes of assessment which may be used by academics. The role of feedback is pivotal in these assessment inquiries.

In this study, I highlight how key dynamics associated with feedback may influence the way feedback is provided, handled and interacted with. As such, the following aspects which appear in the literature associated with feedback are described and discussed: dominant assessment and feedback practices (Biggs, 1996); shifting paradigms of learning and teaching (Smith and Waller, 1997); quality of feedback (Gipps and Simpson, 2002); helpful/useful feedback (Flower 1979; Paxton 1995, Kasanga, 2004; Scudder, 2003); unhelpful/useless feedback (Rowntree 1987 and Butler 1988); timely feedback (Brown, et al. 1995; Rowe and Wood, unpublished); student diversity (Shay, 2003) and differing perceptions of feedback by students and lecturer (Bardine et al., 2000; Carless, 2006).

In discussing these aspects, I try to ground as many of them as possible in the context of DUT. I conclude the chapter by advocating the importance of reflection, dialoguing and the adaptation of one's practices in order to maintain a dynamic learning and teaching culture. Theoretical evidence from the literature on assessment and feedback has been examined in order to provide a framework to support my analysis of the data in Chapter Four. The literature is also called upon within Chapter Four, especially where unexpected issues arose, which needed further theoretical contextualisation.

2.2 What is assessment?

Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching and an important tool for all stakeholders i.e. teachers, students, parents, policymakers, administrators and employers (Nicolettou, 2001) as it provides useful feedback to help inform our future learning and teaching practices. Pellegrino defines assessment as "a process of gathering information for the purpose of making judgments about a current state of affairs," much like a judge making a verdict in that a judge must consider all the evidence (2001:n.p.). Even by these simplistic definitions, the dual function of assessment for both future learning and current measurement may be seen to harbour within it the potential for conflict, differing perceptions and the

implication of power relations. These aspects, including a deeper understanding of different assessment practices, will be teased out and discussed in Chapters Two and Four.

2.3 Assessment methods

There is no shortage of assessment methods that exist to enable staff to carry out assessment tasks. The diversity of assessment modes which exists today means that there are many options available for lecturing staff to draw from. However, Angelo (1999:5) posits that "It's the ends toward which, and the ways in which we use those tools that are the problem." The range of arguments, debates and recommendations over the years either in support of or against one or a variety of assessment methods bears testimony to Angelo's argument. However, the reality is that there is no single right way of assessing (Black, 1997). What works satisfactorily for one lecturer in his or her particular context could be enhanced in another context but be unfruitful in yet another context. For example, when researchers Smith and Gorard (2005) carried out a small scale study on formative marking through comments without grades, replicating some key aspects of a pioneering study conducted by Black and Wiliam (2003), they concluded that unlike the pioneering study which led evidence of student improvement due to the controlled feedback intervention, the evidence from their study indicated that sometimes when assessment practices are put into different contexts, they can yield very different results to the original study (Smith and Gorard, 2005).

With reference to Table 2.1 (a summary by Biggs 1999b, on some brief points on assessment modes and the related learning being assessed), an assessor is open to the full assessment buffet and is literally spoilt for choice. However, I believe that all these assessment options are of little value unless practitioners also incorporate "self-examination, reflection, and continuous improvement" (Angelo, 1999:5) as part of their assessment plan, to inform their learning and teaching practices. There is therefore, the implication that in creating a progressive learning and teaching environment, academic staff should ideally aim to integrate their awareness of the related literature with their own learning and teaching practices and those of other academics. This should be done in a constant process of reflection, evaluation and adapting, in order to inform future practices (Black, 2000; Earl, 2003; Black et al., 2003). This would not only allow lecturers to determine where they are in the teaching-learning cycle at present in relation to where they want to be in the future, but could also inform them on how to best negotiate the path to their goal, within their personal, institutional and greater educational context (Ewell, 1997). Formative assessment may therefore be entirely woven into the fibres of our teaching practices (Shepard, 2005).

TABLE 2.1 BIGGS' SUMMARY (1999) ON ASSESSMENTS

Types of assessment tasks and the kind of learning assessed

Assessment mode	Most likely kind of learning assessed
Extended prose, essay-type Essay exam Open book Assignment, take home	Role, question spotting, speed structuring As for exam, but less memory, coverage Read widely, interrelate, organise, apply, copy
Objective test Multiple choice Ordered outcome	Recognition, strategy, comprehension, coverage Hierarchies of understanding
Performance assessment Practicum Seminar, presentation Posters Interviewing Critical incidents Projects Reflective journal Case study, problems Portfolio	Skills needed in real life Communication skills Concentration on relevance, application Responding interactively Reflection, application, sense of relevance Application, research skills Reflection, application, sense of relevance Application, professional skills Reflection, creativity, unintended outcomes
Rapid assessments (large class) Concept maps Venn diagrams Three-minute essay Gobbets Short answer Letter to a friend Cloze	Coverage, relationships Relationships Level of understanding, sense of relevance Realizing the importance of significant detail Recall units of information, coverage Holistic understanding, application, reflection Comprehension of main ideas

Source: Biggs (1999b:70)

When presented with an array of assessment methods, I think that it is important for lecturers to ensure that the assessment method selected is fit for purpose (Pellegrino, 2001) and at the same time aim to ensure that it is as natural a process as is possible (Daines et al., 1993 cited in Nicolettou, 2001). The latter is especially important when placed within today's UoT restructuring context. For example, despite a blurring of "boundaries between university-type programmes and ex-technikon-type programmes" (Powell and McKenna, unpublished), teaching and learning programmes within UoTs are essentially still geared for practice. That is, they lean towards maintaining and sustaining career-focussed education. This reality means that it is important, when selecting assessment modes for students enrolled for the Hospitality Management Diploma, that consideration should be given to the way in which students' progress will be monitored and assessed when they enter the hospitality industry. For example, is it their aptitude for test-taking skills that our students are going to be valued for or their ability to synthesise, apply, integrate, motivate, adjust, and create, in relation to contextual demand? In line with this, what type of assessment will be more suitable than a standardised test in providing suitable mediums for students to build their meta-cognitive skills?

Biggs (1999a:170) states that assignments are a good way of mobilising students into "research type activities." I believe that when project based assignments are issued for the subject Hospitality Operations II, students immerse themselves in research by having to synthesise and actively apply information gathered, to suit the stipulated assignment context. For example, the students' assignment in this research entailed them researching about different food preparation systems and then deciding which food preparation system was most suitable in terms of the menu they had devised. Although students carried out research, they were not expected to use the data gathered to debate why one food preparation system was better than the other nor were they expected to quote authorities on food preparation systems in order to make claims or validate statements. For example, researcher X has indicated that food system 1 is best suited to coffee shops ... However; the opinion of researcher X has been nullified by researcher Y²... Rather, in the Hospitality discipline, the research genre entailed students researching, selecting and applying the principles of a particular food preparation system along with menu planning guidelines, in order to advise a suitable menu for the target market at a given location. Within this research context, student creativity, interaction with others and input is not only expected, it is valued (Gibbs, 1992).

An added benefit is obtained when the nature of the topic is practical and not isolated from aspects that students may expect to be involved in upon entering the hospitality industry. As posited by Dewey, a forerunner in the field of experiential learning, "education is development within, by and for experience" (1938:17). Dewey's statement highlights the need for and importance of providing students with authentic educative experiences, especially those that allow students to integrate their personal experiences with their developing academic learning. He also championed the need for students to work in association with others – especially as he believed that experience modified the person undergoing it and that this modification affected the quality of subsequent experiences (Dewey, 1938 and Mezirow, 1994 cited in Rushton, 2005). Essentially, as noted by Rushton, "it encourages transformation; a process where the student is facilitated in an exploration of how they view themselves and the world" (2005:511).

I believe that the scope of benefits associated with assignments is further enhanced by virtue of their flexible nature which makes them, according to the literature, a "divergent assessment practice" (Torrance and Pryor, 1998:153). This means that students are afforded an opportunity to develop, present and motivate. This is a more open-ended response than a standardised test where they are expected to mimic a preset response "quickly and accurately" as an indication of "good learning" (Biggs, 1996:7 also see Boud, 2000; Linkon, 2005). In the former, students engage more actively with their task and in the process, develop and utilise more of the higher level cognitive skills. In general, this benefit is

² Hypothetical example indicating that the genre of research and data presentation is different when applied to the Hospitality discipline.

invaluable in developing our students' abilities as it moves away from the drudgery and promotion of rote learning that is evident in a testing culture towards the cultivation of what Biggs (1999b) identifies as deep learning. Chapter Four yields some interesting and relevant data from the participants in this research that speak directly to the type of learning gains they experienced when involved in tests as opposed to an assignment. This indicates that the quality of learning is directly correlated to the assessment method used.

An experimental study carried out by Tynjala (1998) also showed that the quality of learning corresponds to the type of assessment method used. Tynjala's comparison between two groups of students indicated that the group which studied through interactive assignment type assessments displayed quality learning gains and higher order thinking skills for an exam to a greater extent than the other group which studied individually using lectures, textbooks and exams. Tynjala (1998) attributed the former group's responses which displayed use of higher order and critical thinking skills, to the divergent type assessment they were involved in as well as the fact that these students were able to work with and learn from each other. Thus as discussed earlier, not only does the assessment mode need to fit the purpose, it also can be manipulated to direct students' learning gains.

For a variety of reasons, some lecturers may be unaware of the finer details associated with assessment. For example, the timing of feedback, the range of assessment modes available and the theory underpinning different modes of assessment and in turn, how this may impact on learning (refer to section 2.8.1 to 2.8.11). For example, if a lecturer is not aware of the range of assessment modes available, the bulk of the lecturers assessments may focus (unchallenged) on "assessment of learning" tasks rather than tipping the balance in favour of tasks that focus on "assessment for learning" (Stiggins, 2002:761), which can present a fuller picture of students learning. While the benefits and characteristics associated with learning for assessment as opposed to assessment for learning will be elaborated upon later in this chapter, I believe that it is important to note how the requirements of assessments may vary when conducted at UoT as opposed to at a University.

2.4 Assessment at a UoT and University

A review of the literature indicates that University students are mainly assessed through essay writing. This form of assessment requires the student to utilise available resources in order to create a sound academic argument (Paxton, 1995; Brown et al., 1997; Zeiser, 1999; Chanock, 2000; Thomas, undated). Ballard and Clanchy (1988:65) elaborate on this requirement by saying,

The term argument is used in a special sense in relation to academic essays. It does not mean that you must necessarily 'take sides' or present only one point of view.

Rather it means that you expose the topic through a clear and consistent development of ideas, using adequate evidence

While this type of approach is fundamental for university students in meeting the assessment norms of the academy, it is unlike the norms applied to and expected of students attending the DUT who are enrolled for the Hospitality Management Diploma. These students' focus is centred on integration and application of theory subjects with practical subjects while using the formal (but not traditionally academic) language structures of the discipline.

There are, however, some commonalities for both categories of students. For example, Paxton's claim (1995:189) that

academic literacy is a very specialised skill. Students have to learn what constitutes legitimate knowledge in the discipline and they need to learn to use the language of the discipline correctly,

holds true for students within both UoT's and Universities. While Hospitality Management students at the DUT are not required to put forward an argument that supports their hypothesis, when presenting an assignment, these students are expected to plan, organise, forecast and make sense of both practical and theoretical aspects that are contextually relevant within the larger framework of their discipline. Regardless of the assessment mode, feedback is key to advancing learning and ways of knowing at both UoTs and Universities.

2.5 So what is feedback?

'Feedback', a term originally coined by Weiner (1948 cited in Falchikov, 1995:157); has been defined as

verbal and nonverbal responses from others to a unit of behaviour provided as close in time to the behaviour as possible, and capable of being perceived and utilised by the individual initiating the behaviour (Benne et al., 1964 cited in Falchikov, 1995:158).

The Oxford Dictionary (2002) defines feedback as "comments about a product or a person's performance, used as a basis for improvement." From these definitions, as well as from authorities like Black and William (1998), Hattie and Jaeger (1998), Ramprasad, (1983), Sadler (1989) and personal lecturing experience, there is indication that for feedback to be useful, it should provide information about what was not achieved while also acknowledging that which was achieved in relation to a specific task. Concurrently, it should provide timely information on how to improve (Rowe and Wood, unpublished). Within an educational context, the literature encourages practitioners to embrace the concept of feedback as a tool of assessment that can feed forward (Bardine et al., 2000; Carless, 2006; Glover and Brown,

2006), with the onus resting on the student to take the necessary action to close gaps which have been identified in their work (Sadler, 1989). Feedback has thus evolved from a constructivist perspective where student participation is seen as key to success (Rushton, 2005).

However, the literature indicates that written feedback to students can be provided as 'comments only', 'comments with grade' and 'grade only' (Butler, 1988; also Etkina, 2005). This raises a central issue for exploration in this study: what form of written feedback best enables and enhances student development and knowledge transformation (Rushton, 2005) for students undertaking the elective Food and Beverage Operations II at the DUT. This is one of the issues I explore through the analysis of data in Chapter Four. Research indicates that the feedback form and the way in which it is provided (that is, product or process related), may be informed by the type of assessment adopted (Biggs, 1996; Nicolettou, 2001). Black (1995) elaborates by stating that assessment judgments may be purely summative, formative or summative with built-in formative aspects.

2.6 Summative assessment

Summative assessment refers to assessments that are graded and which count towards the final mark for a course, that is, for "the judging of final achievements" (McDonald and Boud, 2003:209). Qualifications are thus awarded to students based on assessment tasks that measure student competency at the end of a course against specified learning outcomes (Nightingale et al., 1996). These assessments make use of grades to act as performance indicators for pass or fail judgments and are therefore high-stakes (Knight, 2002; Stiggins, 2002). Research indicates that in order to develop our students and their learning optimally and to foster student reflection, lecturers should focus greater attention on the inclusion of more opportunities for students to practice before their work is judged (Elbow, 1997; Stiggins, 2002). This effectively means that low-stakes efforts should be incorporated to improve "the quality of students' high-stakes writing" (Elbow, 1997:7). However, this does not mean that traditional paper and pen tests do not have their place in higher education assessment. On the contrary, as indicated by Cole et al. (1995) and Gibbs and Simpson, (2002), summative assessments are helpful for certification purposes; to indicate how students score when compared to each other; and to help students reflect on their test-taking skills and behaviours. However, the opportunities for feedback and a deep approach to learning on high stake summative assessments are limited and this raises many related problems (Rowntree, 1987; Hatch and Gardener, 1990; Gipps, 1994; Cole et al. 1995; Elbow, 1997; Biggs, 1998; Stiggins, 2002), a few of which will now be discussed.

Firstly, receiving feedback as a mark or grade is the least useful form of assessment as these grades do not tell students much about how or why learning occurred or how they can improve (Barrett, 2004; Wiggins, 2004). Rather, marks or grades merely focus on informing a

student about how well they have performed in relation to others in the class, who have taken the same test (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002; Monty, 2003). While feedback in the form of a grade at the end of a passage of work can indicate whether learning has occurred, the scope of description is limited (Lunt, 1993). Moreover, Monty (2003) warns that academics must be aware of the varying quality in the resulting learning. For example, Monty (2003:44) asserts that "humans learn best through active thinking." Thus, he argues that although learning occurs when one memorises facts, for example, like "remembering lists of phone numbers" (2003:44), it is different to active thinking. Monty further argues that although memorisation has its place, in learning, "deep learning must engage the brain and spur thinking" (2003:44) That is, it must develop meta-cognition.

Furthermore, a mark or grade does not provide a realistic view to the student, teacher or potential employers of what these students are competent at or capable of (Knight, 2002). For example, standardised pen and paper tests do not tell us anything in particular about the individual's diverse talents and ability (Rowntree, 1987, Monty, 2003). Effectively, a student's 60% pass does not tell a prospective employer about the character or ability of the person to be employed nor does it tell him explicitly where the person's strengths or weaknesses lie. It also does not provide information on how to improve the person's understanding of concepts or practices or present an opportunity for the development of "higher-level thinking" skills (Monty, 2003:44). Feedback as a mark or grade fails by omission to provide any concise detail about the student's individual abilities or performance (Rowntree, 1987) or as Woolf (cited in Hatch and Gardner, 1990:421) indicates, it fails "to make recommendations which will be of direct benefit in her next literary effort." The same concept applies if a student is merely told whether she "has passed or failed" as this type of feedback merely serves to inform the student whether or not she has met the required standards, assuming she even knows what these standards are (Rowntree, 1987:25).

Although the controversial Cox (in Cox and Dison, 1971) has lauded the existence of standardised exams and based all students' successes on their ability to sit for and pass examinations. Within a University of Technology, I believe that such a dominant focus on high-stakes summative assessment practices is not appropriate for preparing our students for "what they [students] were expected to do after they had graduated" (Boud, 1995:41; also see Spady, 1994; Monty, 2003; Knight and Yorke, 2003 and Yorke, 2005). That is, a dominant high-stakes testing culture entails inter alia "teaching to the test" (Monty, 2003:44), and values rote learning to "raise the level of skills tested" (Heywood, 1989:244 also see Monty, 2003). This high-stakes testing culture trivialises the need for aspects like context, understanding, analysis, application of knowledge and skills to new tasks, reflection, evaluation, assessing, synthesis and revision and to recognise that "everything is in process of change" (Rogers, 1967:91). Van Heerden (2001, cited in M^oKenna, 2004:265) sums it up eloquently:

In class [students] know vicariously, learn by memorization, and write by copying and shifting information - because this is what they perceive the lecturer requires. In industry they know directly, learn by doing and write by transforming knowledge.

Thus, I concur with researchers like Elbow (1997) and Stiggins (2002) that the dominance of a high-stakes testing culture needs to shift.

Additionally, if assessment practices for the Hospitality Management Diploma are dominated by standardised test and exam type assessment practices, it may give students who are poised to enter the Hospitality industry a false sense of their abilities (Knight, 2002; Stiggins, 2002). Especially if they have been rewarded for their ability to excel in test-taking skills, students may find little use for this skill in an industry that requires the individual to, for example, "write reports ... get along with fellow workers" (Hatch and gardener, 1990:421), interact with clients (Biggs, 1996) and solve real-world problems (Rowntree, 1987; Knight, 2002; Wiggins, 2004; Monty, 2003) in a "pluralistic society" (Chickering and Reisser, 1993:8). The latter abilities are especially significant for Hospitality students, as standardised tests which focus on individual effort (Diederich, 1974 cited in Wineburg, 1997), downplay and distort the contribution that social processes and cultural identity (Dewey, 1938; Linkon, 2005) may contribute towards an individual's knowledge construction, abilities and achievements (Vygotsky et al., 1978; Chickering and Reisser, 1993; Lunt, 1993; Wineburg, 1997). In an industry where employee, employer and client (in the South African context) are potentially from diverse cultures, such an oversight may be crippling for the student's success and for the industry at large (Chickering and Reisser, 1993).

Moreover, students may also be given the misleading impression that 'reality reads like a textbook' and problems may only be solved within a rigid framework with no room for flexibility or the need to consider cultural context (see Lunt, 1993; Gipps, 1994; Cole et al., 1995). There must therefore be a balance in the type of assessment methods selected for the assessment of Hospitality Management students. Moreover, these methods should allow students opportunities to practice through applying their theoretical subject knowledge in an "authentic" or "ecologically valid" manner (Biggs, 1996:8) and or to "new and ill-defined situations" (Monty, 2003:44). This will simultaneously allow space for students' social and cultural layers and awareness to be integrated with their developing discipline specific literacy practices in order to present a fuller picture of their learning (Vygotsky et al., 1978; Lunt, 1993).

Secondly, if standardised tests and exams are used as the sole or dominant method of assessment, they will fail to permit students to demonstrate what they have learnt, as different students place varying degrees of emphasis on what they perceive as important to them. The academic staff will therefore be presented with an "incomplete view of students' abilities"

(Cole et al., 1995:3). A dominant testing culture promotes conformity as it presupposes students within a particular grade to be a carbon copy of the other students within these exclusive categories (Lunt, 1993). However, people cannot be defined by a number as each is unique in their ways of knowing, reasoning, understanding and making meaning within given contexts (Lunt, 1993). A paradigm which presents students as clones of each other provides a limited glimpse of students' abilities and development (Lunt, 1993; Kegan, 1994) and does not allow a learner to indicate what he has learned (Spady, 1994) nor does it encourage in the student an ability to "self-regulate" (Butler and Winnie, 1995:250) nor does it encourage skills crucial to higher level thinking like synthesis and reflection (Tynjala, 1998).

Additionally, if mainly standardised test and exams, which are regarded as convergent assessment practices (Torrance and Pryor, 1998), are adopted, it may condition students into a pattern of rote learning (Monty, 2003) as convergent assessment practices are aimed at discovering "*whether the learner knows, understands or can do a predetermined thing*" (Torrance and Pryor, 1998:153). It further situates teaching in the traditional paradigm - with the lecturer as the keeper and maker of all knowledge (Ramsden, 1992), "the sage on the stage" who knows it all (Zachary, 2000:3), and presumes that the students have nothing meaningful or noteworthy to offer (Smith and Waller, 1997). But, in reality, depending on the context, an individual may be given more than one opportunity and be presented with more than one method to get something right or to improve (Rowntree, 1987, Hatch and Gardener, 1990). In fact, Wiggins (2004:n.p.) argues that

Mastery ...is not the answering of simplistic and discrete questions correctly, but the solving of complex challenges which requires responding to the feedback provided as we problem-solve or perform.

This implies that in order to be competent in the real world, it may be essential that part of our student development entails empowering students, for example, by providing them with opportunities to "adjust in light of feedback provided" (Wiggins, 2004:n.p.). Separating learning within an institution from that of real life could be detrimental to the concept of lifelong learning (Rowntree, 1987; Cole et al., 1995). However in reality, this need is alarmingly overlooked when one considers that the majority of tertiary institutions are still dominated by high-stakes summative assessment practices (Gipps, 1994; Boud, 1995; Biggs, 1996; Maryellen, 2003; Yorke, 2003; Rushton, 2005; Carless, 2006 and 2007), which are largely driven by memorisation rather than focussing on the introduction and promotion of low-stake assessment practices which have been proved to enable and improve meta cognitive development and active learning (Black and William, 1998; Monty, 2003).

Thirdly, when high-stakes standardised assessments dominate, it spawns a student body that is preoccupied with a culture of valuing marks, grades or the ranking of students. This type of

behaviour has, amongst other things, been shown to shift student focus from the 'rewards' associated with student development and achievement, that is intrinsic motivation, towards those 'rewards' like grades and praise, which are classified as extrinsic, (see for example Vroom, 1964 and 1982; Rowntree, 1987; Larsen, 1998; Gibbs and Simpson, 2002 and Monty, 2003). This shift in focus is amplified when 'rewards' are perceived by students as being in "short supply" (Rowntree, 1987:51). Students within this context may be encouraged to pursue the coveted title of being the 'top student'. However, this pursuit would be realised at the expense and understanding that there must then be a worst student (Rowntree, 1987; Kegan, 1994). So instead of creating a culture of learning as a community and from shared experiences (Dewey, 1938) or learning from a more informed other (Vygotsky et al., 1978; Atherton, 2005b), attributes which are valued of workers in the Hospitality field, students may instead focus on the promotion and glorification of individual benefits reaped in a competitive assessment culture (Rowntree, 1987; Carless, 2006). Holt (cited in Rowntree, 1987:51) refers to this as "the ignoble satisfaction of feeling that one is better than someone else." Thus cultivated, this stance is also in a dire polarisation to Spady's (1994) 'well meaning' Outcomes Based Education (OBE) intent which aims at promoting practices "for all learners to be able to do successfully" (1994:1). Again, in this scenario, if students are only rewarded for individual efforts with scant attention to working within a team, these students will have difficulty dealing with group dynamics when they enter the Hospitality field. In my years of experience within the Hospitality field, a competent employee is one who is able to balance team work and individual efforts for successful operation in the organisation as a whole.

Moreover, when students' focus shifts to the mark, they may not care about understanding and making meaning (Cole et al., 1995; Butler, 1988). Instead, they hone in on the mark and use strategic practices like rote learning to build their self-esteem (Biggs, 1996, Rowntree, 1987; Butler, 1988). Further to this, Vroom's expectancy theory (1964 and 1982) should alert academics to the background mechanics of learning. For example, students who expect to receive rewards may be motivated to put greater effort into a task than other students who do not expect a reward. This in turn implies among other things, that this variable has the ability to influence how students approach learning. Moreover, this research indicates that conditioning students to expect and accept some sort of labelling in order to obtain rewards like "marks...passes...permission to continue and so on" (Rowntree, 1987:46) can have a lasting and debilitating impact on students' current and future learning. Additionally, in this context, one cannot help ponder how these reward-motivated students would maintain their performance levels in the absence of such rewards.

The way in which marks shift the feedback process has been highlighted in a study conducted by Butler (1988). She used a controlled experiment with three groups of students to compare the learning gains achieved when three types of written feedback namely, 'comments only', 'comments with grade' and 'grade only' are provided. Her study revealed that the 'comments

only' group achieved significant learning gains, whilst the other two groups made no progress over a series of assessed tasks. Hence there is an implication that in certain contexts, in the absence of marks, students can and do focus on developing their abilities (also see Carless, 2002). Moreover, I believe that the philosophy of 'comments only' in a process-orientated approach to learning has potential for portability to other assessment tasks and could therefore be more reflective of deep learning. This is unlike for example, an exam, which provides a limited and time-specific glimpse of a students' understanding (Brown, 1999). Thus marks may be counter-productive to formative assessment efforts (Sadler, 1989).

Fourthly, high stake assessments have implications for self efficacy (Elbow, 1997, Carless, 2002). Self efficacy plays an important role in the assessment equation as it refers to an individual's belief in their ability to carry out a set task successfully (Dweck, and Leggett, 1988). For example, Gipps (1994) argues that traditional tests and exams, regarded as high-stakes, may lead to those students who are not good at test taking developing motivational and self-esteem issues which in turn could lead to them becoming disinterested and "devoured" by the assessment (Stiggins, 2002:761). In this context, Stiggins (2002:761) personified assessment as an all consuming "dragon" thus "causing students [them] to give up." However, if the focus can be shifted towards low-stake assessments coupled with formative feedback and emphasis on the personal and ongoing performance of individuals (Gipps, 1994; Bandura, 1997; Elbow 1997; Gipps and Simpson, 2002), I believe that there is a distinct possibility for the engagement and retainment of active and motivated learners. These learners, with greater opportunity to become flexible thinkers, may be encouraged to use the system to advance their learning and to develop faith in their own ability.

Research indicates that feedback which emphasises learning goals leads to greater learning gains than feedback that emphasises self-esteem (Dweck, 1986). That is, feedback which tells students exactly where they have gone wrong and what they can do about it leads to constructive and evolved learning (Black and William, 1998 and 2003). Thus, this kind of feedback provides options for improving work and is not closely associated with students' egos (Gipps and Simpson, 2002). But providing weaker students with feedback in the form of a grade, for example a D, may tell students that they are underachievers or hopeless (Butler, 1987; Yorke, 2003; Carless, 2006). Additionally, if a student receives a similar grade often, they may assume that this is all they are capable of achieving, and this may lead to students surrendering more easily to learning challenges rather than pursuing, engaging and advancing from them (Rowntree, 1987; Dweck and Leggett 1988 and Elliott and Dweck 1988). There is also the possibility of the self fulfilling prophecy (Insel and Jacobson, 1975) to develop as a result of this fertile mark-driven culture. My understanding of the self fulfilling prophecy is best described as an interdependent system of beliefs, wherein one part of the system has the potential to change the behaviour of another part of the system. That is, a belief held by a person/s is so powerful, that it convinces the subject of the scrutiny, to adopt

its belief. Thus, the self fulfilling prophecy is imbued with the ability to erode and alter the behaviour of another (see 4.8.6). In this way, the individual becomes what he is addressed as" (Berger and Luckman, cited in Rowntree, 1987:42).

Lastly, Brown and Knight, (1994:34) have indicated that summative assessments make use of assessment methods like standardised tests and exams which are considered to be "objective and fair" and "... guaranteed to test the individual on his or her own" (Brown and Knight, 1994:69). Part of this belief is founded on the principle that a "mathematical score (believed to be factual, thus true) could be exacted to represent learning" (Cole, et al., 1995:3). However, later in this chapter, when I cite Biggs (1996) to address the issue of dominant assessment practices, I will address problems associated with the perception that marks are always factual or and fair. For example, Biggs indicates that the very basis that underlies the authenticity of test and exam results could be flawed and not a true indication of students' ability.

2.7 Formative assessment

Formative assessment is positioned as assessment for learning (Black et al., 2003; Carless, 2003; Earl, 2003), and refers to assessment that is specifically intended to generate feedback on performance to improve, enhance and accelerate learning (Sadler, 1998; Yorke, 2003). Barrett (2004) uses the following table (Table 2.2) based on work done in Britain to highlight a clear difference between two key assessment purposes and how these may impact on both lecturer and student in the classroom and beyond.

TABLE 2.2 ASSESSMENTS OF AND FOR LEARNING

Assessment of Learning	Assessment for Learning
Checks what has been learned to date	Checks learning to decide what to do next
Is designed for those not directly involved in daily learning and teaching	Is designed to assist teachers and students.
Is presented in a formal report	Is used in conversation about learning
Usually gathers information into easily digestible numbers, scores and grades	Usually detailed, specific and descriptive feedback in words (instead of numbers, scores and grades)
Usually compares the student's learning with either other students or the 'standard' for a grade level	Usually focussed on improvement, compared with the student's 'previous best' and progress toward a standard
Does not need to involve the student	Needs to involve the student - the person most able to improve learning

Source: adapted from <http://electronicportfolios.org/digistory/epstory.html>

Informal discussions with colleagues indicate that academics are becoming more familiar with the concept of a shifting approach towards learning and teaching. However, it also made me

realise that greater emphasis and clarity relating to the finer details, that is, how such changes translate to the revision of actual classroom practices, are needed (Klenowski, 2002). Such clarity would help academics and students to fully appreciate and enjoy the significance and benefits associated with a move away from a traditional learning and teaching paradigm (Earl, 2003). Failing this, lecturers may think that they are implementing formative practices but the reality may indicate otherwise (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Careless, 2003).

The gains of formative assessment have been in evidence for many years (Mckenzie, 1976). However, it was the study undertaken by Black and Wiliam (1998), on the value of feedback in promoting learning, which had a profound and wide-scale effect in reactivating the call for focussing on formative assessment practices. Their research on the impact of formative assessment was compiled from data gathered from more than 250 articles, books and journals spanning a variety of schools and higher education institutions across several countries. Black and Wiliam's review (1998) tempt lecturers with their resounding declaration that formative assessment initiatives implemented by teachers and students can help to raise standards. "We know of no other way of raising standards for which such a strong *prima facie* case can be made on the basis of evidence of such large learning gains" (Black and Wiliam, 2001:13). Black and Wiliam's meta-analysis (1998) asserts that when well-focused formative assessment practices are put into place, there is overwhelming potential to benefit both learning and teaching. Encouragingly, although low achievers were found to benefit more than high achievers (Black and Wiliam, 1998), these studies indicated that formative assessment practices had the potential to raise achievement levels across the board. I believe that their evidence may be a way of encouraging and motivating lecturers to foster a dynamic learning-teaching cycle and assessment practice; provided that they are aware of the literature. Academic development is iterated very emphatically by Klenowski (2004:225), "Learning about learning becomes a professional responsibility for teachers to teach well."

Although my review of the literature reveals a dominance of high-stakes summative assessment practices, the potential gains indicated when assessments are positioned for learning, through low-stakes formative assessment practices, is greater. Moreover, low-stakes formative assessment practices points towards deep learning (Elbow, 1997; Stiggins, 2002) and thus begs a reversal of this dominant reality (Earl, 2003). For example, framing learning within a dialogue cycle which provides feedback via detailed descriptions to all participants, takes cognisance of learner individuality (i.e. pace of learning, learning needs and barriers) and contributions, and has the potential to advise students and lecturers for the future (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002; Geyser, 2004; Popham, 2006), and to lead to an emphasis on "learning rather than...measurement" (Carless, 2003:n.p.). Importantly within this framework, there is space for students to develop and share in their lecturers' and peers' understanding of learning and assessment (Barret, 2004), as well as the potential for the development of life-long learning (McDonald and Boud, 2003) as opposed to the "snap-shot"

type of learning typified by high-stakes summative assessment practices (Brown, 1999:103; also see Lunt, 1993).

However, while the literature indicates that phenomenal learning gains are possible when assessment is positioned for learning (Black and William, 1998; Barrett 2004), this does not mean that formative assessment is unchallenged or without problems.

In the next section, I will look at some of the challenges that pressure, influence and impact upon formative assessment practices.

2.8 Challenges to formative assessment

2.8.1 Dominant practices

Despite the literature on assessment leaning towards the seemingly obvious benefits of formative assessment on the learning and teaching cycle, formative assessment faces a real challenge from the dominance of summative assessment (Crooks, 1988; Gipps, 1994; Boud, 1995; Biggs, 1996; Kasanga, 2001 and 2004; Stiggins, 2002; Earl, 2003; Maryellen, 2003; Yorke, 2003; Rushton, 2005; Carless, 2006 and 2007). Even within today's transformed higher education sector, that is framed by an OBE approach to assessment and a new approach to learning and teaching, which claims to emphasise student learning, there is evidence that summative assessment judgments continue to overshadow the learning gains made possible through the use of formative practices (Klenowski, 2002).

Research indicates that the dual functions of assessment are viewed as problematic (Gipps, 1994; Butler and Winne, 1995; Nicolettou, 2001; Knight, 2002; Stiggins, 2002; Black et al., 2003; Earl, 2003). On the one hand, assessments are expected to satisfy a high stakes, feed-out function for the measurement of students' abilities but at the same time, assessments are also expected to have a feed-back (Butler and Winne, 1995; Knight, 2002) and feed-forward function (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002; Carless, 2006), aimed at engaging, facilitating and advancing student learning. The intentions of these two practices are quite different from each other. By the same token, benefits associated with certain practices may be overlooked when one practice is given preference over the other, as is often the tendency in higher education (Boud, 1995; Biggs, 1996; Klenowski, 2002).

Biggs (1996), supported in the literature by, among others, Crooks (1988), Stiggins (2001 and 2002) and Carless (2006), states that institutions find it easier for accreditation and their management functions to "standardise forms of assessment into a common currency, so that we all think we know what we are talking about" (Biggs, 1996:6) In doing this, Biggs (1996) argues that some forms of assessment, for example formative practices, with their rich qualitative descriptions, are not viewed by institutions as easily transferable into a "common

currency" such as marks or percentages (*ibid*:6). Instead, he indicates how the ease and simple effectiveness of summative practices gain favour with institutions by describing the students' achievement or lack of it in a few words: "50% is a Pass, 49% a Fail", thus "decisions can be made, [and] life can go on" (Biggs, 1996:6).

This may indicate that institutional policies can be seen to determine the teaching and assessment procedures that are adopted in the classroom, as well as the extent to which deviations will be tolerated (Biggs, 1996). This in turn has an impact on the way students approach their learning (Crooks, 1988; Frederiksen and Collins, 1989 cited in Biggs, 1996). The overall picture presents a system of sorts working in equilibrium (von Bertalanffy, 1968 cited in Biggs, 1996), with each part informing and impacting on the other, namely: institutional policy - classroom teaching and assessment procedures - student learning. This means that for one cog in the system to change in any way, implies change for other parts in the whole system too (Biggs, 1996). Thus any shift away from the dominance of summative towards more formative practices suggests large scale changes for all parts of the system and as Biggs (1996:12) asserts, "these systems are not so easy to change", (also see Sotto, 1994; Entwistle, 1996; Black and Wiliam, 1998).

Further to this, Biggs (1996) also argues that even when institutions seek to rationalise their functioning and policy making through, for example, the creation of a simple and common currency, problems can and do still arise. For example, he points out how a Senate committee at a university recently found that different faculties had different cut-offs for coursework master's degrees. This indicates that the perception of a simple and common currency which is entrusted with a powerful pass-fail and gatekeeping responsibility may be unsound and questionable.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that expecting assessment practices to attend primarily to institutional demands and control (Boud, 1995; Popham, 2006) can be counterproductive to the kind of assessment practices that may be more beneficial to our students' learning (Klenowski, 2002; Monty, 2003). Smith and Gorard (2001) lend support to the voices of Boud (1995), Popham (2006) and others by arguing that "on the one hand, we have a system of high-stakes summative...and on the other, a crisis account of low standards and failing students" (Smith and Gorard, 2001:23). Thus, while literature acknowledges that assessment systems are not so easy to change (Biggs, 1996; Entwistle, 1996; Black and Wiliam, 1998), sometimes change is desirable, necessary and inevitable, in response to and upon reflection on the product created. As argued by M^cKenna (2004:277) if this does not occur, "assumptions remain unchallenged or unjustified" and this then reinforces the dominance of summative, high-stakes assessment practices.

In addressing the dominance of summative practices over formative practices, it would be remiss not to make mention of lecturers' contribution towards this phenomenon through their resistance to change in assessment practices (Sotto, 1994; Ivanič et al., 2000; Kasanga, 2004 and Linkon, 2005). Applefield et al. (2001:35) state that people in these systems become so "comfortable", familiar and set in their way of doing things, that new ways of doing the same things are greeted with suspicion, scorn and "resistance", (also see Sotto, 1994). Additionally, lecturers who are already overloaded with after-hours academic functions (Paxton, 1995; Wilhelm, 2003) and the increasingly larger class sizes (Brown, 1999; Pereira, undated; Higgins and Hartley, 2002; Rust, et al., 2003), may now have to dig deeper into their personal time to meet the resulting new and higher time inputs that could be associated with formative practices (Linkon, 2005).

For example, I know from personal experience, that it is easier and less time-consuming to mark a test, than an assignment. In the case of the former, there is usually a set answer whereas in an assignment, the answer is frequently open to a range of interpretations (Torrance and Pryor; 1998; 2001), some of which may require research to verify authenticity. Unfortunately, as argued by Pereira, this framework could be detrimental to the adoption of meaningful learner-focussed assessment practices as it leaves lecturers with "little time to invest in the assimilation and introduction of new learning technologies" or assessment practices (Pereira, undated:2). On the other hand, some lecturers may not be keen to get involved in formative practices as they may feel that it is not part of their job (Wilhelm, 2003) or they may not have the theoretical grounding to inform their practices (M^cKenna, 2004). All of these issues can also contribute towards the dominance of standardised tests and exams (Wilhelm, 2003). The impact of dominant high-stakes assessment practices on feedback content and its subsequent impact on students will be discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

2.8.2 Ambiguous definition of formative assessment

The literature's indication that standardised tests and exams are perceived as being a more clearly defined assessment practice than formative practices does not help the case made by proponents for formative assessment. For example, "a test is a test is a test" (Pellegrino, 2001:n.p.). However, when it comes to formative assessment, while the literature indicates a basic common purpose towards contributing to student learning "through the provision of information about performance" (Yorke, 2003:478), there are differing notions about what the term 'formative assessment' actually means in practice (Harlen et al. 1992, Black and Wiliam, 1998). There is wide difference in lecturer interpretation of this concept as well as how the concept is translated into practice for their individual classrooms.

The problems stemming from the "slippery" (Carless, 2003:6) or 'fuzzy meanings' (Knight, 2002; Black et al., 2003; Yorke, 2003) associated with formative assessment are compounded when lecturers may put them into practice "based on common sense"

(Perrenoud, 1998:87) or are not aware of the literature that could inform their practices (Klenowski, 2004; Black, 2000; Black et al., 2003). For example, sometimes lecturers may think that they are carrying out formative practices, but in reality, these could be formative in name only (Black and William, 1998 and Cowie and Bell, 1999 cited in Yorke, 2003). This issue is highlighted and may be exacerbated within the DUT environment with its Technikon history as it focussed on the employment of vocationally qualified staff (McKenna, 2004; Powell and McKenna, unpublished); and these staff may not always have had an academic grounding.

2.8.3 Quality of feedback in formative assessment

An important determinant of the effectiveness of formative assessment is the quality of feedback received by students (Gipps and Simpson, 2002). In turn, this implies that a lecturer's "beliefs, values and attitudes underpinning their epistemology" (McKenna, 2004:116) form an inseparable part of the way in which, among other aspects, feedback is conceptualised and provided. For example, in their study entitled "*Getting the message across: the problem of communicating assessment feedback*", Higgins et al. (2001) indicate how personal beliefs and preconceptions inform and shape the quality and type of feedback a lecturer may provide to her students. For example, if the lecturer believes that students are simply using a surface approach to meet the purpose of achieving their degree, the lecturer may resort to providing feedback concentrated on justifying a low grade they have awarded (Smith, 1997). That is, 'should work harder' or 'must research more'.

Higgins et al. (2001) also demonstrated that lecturers may fall prey to modelling their feedback on their personal experience of feedback, as a student. Other studies which exposed how providers of feedback model the feedback they give, is evident in research conducted by Ding (1997) which indicates how the quality of feedback provided may be diminished (Ding, 1997) and length of comments decreased (Connors and Lunsford cited in Sprinkle, 2004), if for example, tutors believed that students did not read their feedback.

In another study, Stiggins (2002:760) argued that lecturers, who based their teaching on their own experiences, may incorrectly send the message to students that "the way to succeed when confronted with a tougher challenge is to redouble your efforts...If you do so, you win." However, this stance has been shown to have differing impacts on the way students subsequently approach their tasks. For example, some students increase their effort and performances while other students gravitate towards "hopelessness" (Stiggins, 2002:760). Research by Straub (1996), Higgins et al. (2001) and Orsmond et al. (2005) supports the stance that providers of feedback need to examine and question their perceptions about feedback and what it is, in order for them to look ahead to improving their practices.

The provision of specific versus general feedback was also seen to impact on the quality of feedback. For example, when using a process-orientated approach to writing, Paxton (1995), Stefani (1998), Hyland and Hyland (2001) and Gipps and Simpson (2002) have argued that in order for students to improve, they need feedback on specific aspects. That is, students want advice on their strengths and weaknesses (Black and William, 2001; Soles 2001), including information on why their work was perceived as being good or bad (Lynch and Klemans cited in Bardine et al., 2000; James, 2000) as well as advice on what they would have to do to close the gap between actual and desired performance (Stobart and Gipps, 1997; Stefani, 1998; Higgins et al., 2001; James, 2000; Hunt, 2003; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). These findings posit that students have a definitive idea of what quality feedback looks like to them. This infers that it is important for lecturers to gain insight into what quality feedback looks like to students, which in turn, could inform practice.

It must be noted then that unlike in studies conducted by Stefani (1998) and Gipps and Simpson (2002) which found that students preferred feedback on specific aspects, research undertaken by Knight and Yorke (2003) indicate that the context in which feedback is provided may influence the type of feedback that students may find useful. Knight and Yorke (2003) argue that general feedback had a greater power to stimulate learning through its ability to feed-forward into future tasks rather than back to a completed assignment. It must, however be noted that this finding applied in a context where students were not given another opportunity (a process-orientated approach) to improve their work; and therefore their findings cannot be generalised.

Research also indicates that feedback concentrated at a surface level, which merely highlights grammatical errors, is not regarded as helpful by students (Barnett, 1989; Paxton, 1994; Truscott, 1996; Warden, 2000; Bardine et al., 2000). Several researchers argue in favour of focussing on content to aid students' development rather than on correction of grammar (Kearns, 1991; Paxton, 1994 and 1995; Bardine et al., 2000; Boughey, 2007). I believe that when lecturers focus the shift to mainly grammar corrections, it may give students the impression that all they had to do was correct their grammar and their work would then be coherent and therefore acceptable (Paxton, 1995; Truscott 1996). Robb et al. (1986) argue that this impression is false as grammar corrections only focus on a small portion of the learning, thus leaving "other vital aspects of the literacy problem untouched" (Paxton, 1995:195). That is, if a student does not understand a specific theoretical concept, she will not be able to apply it in a (hypothetical or for that matter, real) practical situation. For example, if the student does not grasp the theoretical aspects associated with kitchen layout and design, then it is likely that she will be unsuccessful in drawing a kitchen plan that prevents cross-contamination.

Further to this, Taylor (1988); Barnett (1989) and Paxton (1995) have argued that by focussing attention on grammatical issues, lecturers may be taking the "easy way out" (Barnett, 1989:31). They argue that lecturers may find it less demanding to correct superficial errors rather than to engage in deep marking which actively engages the lecturer with the student texts. Under the former conditions, the lecturer feedback is focussed on superficial errors, which requires less effort from a lecturer. For example Taylor (1988:64) asserts that

a student's problem can be attacked from either end – by working on what the writer is trying to say and do, or by teaching sentence structure. There is little doubt which of these two approaches is in most instances the quicker

Thus, when a lecturer is aiming to provide more elaborate and detailed feedback that may assist students in developing and untangling their writing, in order to move beyond where they are at present (Vygotsky et al., 1978; Atherton, 2005b), implies greater input and in turn, a higher time demand from the lecturer. Not all academic staff may be willing to engage themselves to such depth (Paxton, 1995). To exacerbate the problem, Brannon and Knoblauch (1982), Barnett (1989) and Yorke (2003) and have justly argued that elaborate surface corrections on student texts are counter-productive to fully engaging students in active learning. They argued that it implied to students that even under open-ended, divergent assessment practices like assignments, an 'ideal answer' existed and all they have to do to improve their work, is to replicate it successfully (see Ivanič et al., 2000 and Gravett, 2004).

Barnett (1989), Hounsell (1987), Glover and Brown (2006) and many other researchers, argue that the quantity and quality of lecturer feedback may be inconsistent. Consistency in quantity and quality of feedback operates at two levels: that of a number of assessors and that of the individual assessor. The former concept has special bearing for the Hospitality Management Diploma. Some subjects in the diploma, for example Food and Beverage Studies and Culinary Studies and Nutrition, combine both theory and practical aspects. The practical venues available are designed to accommodate small groups of students to facilitate one-on-one learning and teaching. This means that the number of students in a class has to be smaller to facilitate optimal learning and teaching as well as to suit the type of facilities and equipment resources available. However, student numbers are rising, so how does an institution fit these constraints into a five day student week? Team teaching has been used as a means of simultaneously addressing the multiple issues raised above. That is, students are split into groups and attend theory and practical classes with a designated lecturer. The lecturer could be one from a team of five lecturers. All students fulfil the same practical requirements and write the same test and exams. Each lecturer in the team is responsible for assessing her student group. However, while team teaching addresses pertinent issues, it simultaneously introduces other issues. For example, Shay (2004:311) asserts that while lecturers involved in team teaching the same subject, "share to some degree ...common

ground", one would often find "multiple interpretations of the same instance of student performance" (ibid:311). This has a direct correlation to lecturer's formative practices, for example, the provision of feedback to students.

Although the literature indicates that attempts are made to counter problems associated with inter-marker reliability (Huot, 1996 and Broad, 2000 cited in Shay, 2004), acknowledgement in the literature as to inconsistency in marker perception of student work (Newstead, 1996) as well as towards a lack of "uniformity in terms of content" M^cKenna (2004:237) indirectly hints at difficulties students may experience when they try to negotiate their way and take on the discourse and norms of the discipline (Ivanič et al., 2000; Higgins et al., 2001; Read et al., 2001; M^cKenna, 2004). Indeed as Rowntree asserts "If the sophisticated cannot agree about what the question demands, it is hard on the candidate" (1987:196).

Apart from inter-rater reliability issues arising from the use of multiple markers, Glover and Brown's (2006) study also found inconsistency within one lecturer's assessment practices, which made a case for lecturer bias and abuse of power. For example "Some work was heavily corrected, others much less so" (Glover and Brown, 2006:n.p.). Glover and Brown's finding (2006) is similar to a past finding by Fleming (1999). This inconsistency in reader response may create tensions for students because it sends mixed messages to the student on the importance and impact of the feedback to their texts. Additionally, Boud (1995:18) states that sometimes lecturers "judge ... too much and too powerfully", thus, it may encourage the student to "lapse into helplessness" and to reciprocate by not responding (Yorke, 2003:488).

2.8.4 Timing of feedback

Early studies on the impact that the timing of feedback had on learning was carried out by Pressey (1926) and then later on, by Skinner (1954 cited in Kulik, and Kulik, 1988). Pressey theorised that delays in feedback on the outcomes of tests impacted negatively on classroom learning. Results from Pressey's testing device: an answer-until-correct board indicated that immediate feedback on tests enhanced the effectiveness of feedback, as it acted as 'reinforcement' for student responses (Skinner, 1954). Pressey and Skinner's findings have been seminal, and to date their findings are built upon, discussed and continue to inform researchers' understanding and practices on the importance of providing timely feedback (James; 2000; Gibbs and Simpson, 2003; Wiggins, 2004; Glover and Brown, 2006). However, problems arise when lecturers are unaware of the literature to inform their practices (Black, 2000; M^cKenna, 2004) and therefore may not take 'timing of feedback' as an underlying reason for why their feedback is not utilised by students. For example, MacKenzie (1976) and Fuller and Manning (cited in Brinko, 1993) believe that delays in feedback to students may influence students to avoid making the effort associated with going back and improving the

now forgotten piece of work, which may seem too distant and remote. Furthermore, MacKenzie (1976) as well as Carless (2002) warns that this attitude may be exacerbated if a pass mark has already been gained. However, if a lecturer is unaware of the insight afforded by the literature, she may feel that she is making an effort to provide feedback to students, and that students do not reciprocate and do not care.

With the literature's reference to such a variety of issues on feedback to inform us on our students' perspectives, it may seem surprising that we still have such a mismatch between the provision of what lecturers regard as useful feedback and what students perceive as useful.

2.8.5 Varying perceptions on feedback

Research indicates that the 'rules and conventions' underlying a discipline may sometimes be used as a gatekeeper as these practices are not automatically made known to students nor are they always made explicit to them (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988; Boud, 1995; Paxton, 1995; Tsoukas 1996; Polanyi, 1998; Higgins 2000; Lea and Stierer, 2000; M^cKenna, 2004; Boughey, 2005). For example, Ballard and Clanchy (1988:8) have argued that while the "rules and conventions" underlying a discipline, are not "codified or written down...they mediate crucially between the student's own knowledge and intentions, and the knowledge and potential meanings that exist within the university." Thus, "becoming literate in the university involves learning to read the culture, learning to come to terms with its distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behaviour..." (ibid:8) but the reality is that lecturers and students rarely discuss the impact that culture has on the way students construct meaning (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988). This problem is compounded when students who have limited access to elevated literacy practices in their everyday lives (M^cKenna, 2004) become trapped in a cycle of using their 'home literacies' to advance their ways of knowing (M^cKenna, 2004:277). Well intentioned feedback in these cases, may fall far short of meeting its mark.

Research indicates that a lecturer's tacit knowledge (see Nonaka, 1991; Higgins, 2000; Lea and Stierer, 2000) and "ways of being" (M^cKenna, 2004:277) are built through experience and socialisation (Rust et al., 2003). This suggests that the key to assisting students to improve their work may lie in providing students with opportunities and sufficient meaningful experiences in a bid to socialise them towards a shared understanding of tacit knowledge and ways of being and thereby, insights into what it means to be literate in one's discipline (Nonaka, 1991; Rust, et al., 2003). These opportunities for fostering meaningful experience may be significant in breaking the cycle inherent in the words of Sadler (1989:126), who wrote that, "it is difficult for teachers to describe exactly what they are looking for, although they may have little difficulty in recognising a fine performance when it occurs."

Thus, I believe that the provision of relevant, useful, detailed and timely feedback to students can be aimed at including and socialising students into the language and practices of the discipline. In this way, students may be empowered to build their academic capital by adopting and merging its rules and conventions with their own literacy practices. Thus, with repeated practice, students may be helped to "produce coherent, meaningful and creative discourse" (Li Wai Shing, 1992:48). This stance may be seen to rest on Bakhtin's theory (1973, cited in M^cKenna, 2004:55) that if "...the word does not forget where it has been and can never wholly separate itself from the dominion of the contexts of which it has been part", there is a distinct possibility of it being adopted and transported to other learning, by the participants. This implies that there is scope for regular practice and experience to work its magical elixir for students. For example, I always start a new section with group discussions. Groups are made up of four members and each member has a role. That is, timer keeper, speaker, scribe, mediator. Students are given time to discuss a topic and then make a presentation. I find that these discussions help to stimulate student (and my) thinking beyond what I have prescribed for the lecture. It also presents valuable opportunity for students to engage with and develop cross-cultural awareness of how others think and interact. These are important aspects to nurture in our students as it helps to shape their understanding and awareness of themselves and society.

However, oversimplifying issues surrounding meaning making, feedback and 'ways of knowing' within a discipline can be undermined (see Higgins, 2000; Rust et al., 2003; M^cKenna, 2004). This perception is highlighted when lecturers acknowledge understanding academic discourses while at the same time admit difficulty in making such knowledge explicit (Rust et al., 2003). This is attributed to the fact that often this knowledge of what is expected in a discipline is partly based on tacit knowledge (Tsoukas 1996 and Polanyi, 1998). Polanyi (1998:136) argues, "We can know more than we can tell". M^cKenna, (2004) stresses that this oversight is not deliberate, but simply that lecturers have "assimilated their discipline's literacy" to such an extent, that they cannot separate it from "their way of being in the world" (Geertz, 1983 cited in M^cKenna, 2004:117).

The above reality has an impact on lecturers' provision of feedback to students. For example, if a lecturer in their professional capacity admits that they may fall short of articulating thoroughly what a good piece of work is, it implies that some of the advice lecturers give to their students may unintentionally be lost or missing from their communication (Polanyi, 1998). Thus, students may sometimes feel that what is expected of them according to the published assessment criterion does not fit with the feedback provided, and is therefore contradictory (Geisler 1994; Barnett, 1989; Rust, et al., 2003). This could perpetuate student failures and subsequent feelings of helplessness (Banduara, 1986; Dweck and Leggett 1988; Elliott and Dweck 1988; Yorke, 2003). Also, in this scenario, there is potential for students to

gravitate towards low self efficacy (Bandura, 1986) as they may lose confidence in their ability to change their 'fail outcome'.

The ability of feedback to engender helplessness in students is critical. Especially when one considers that often when lecturers provide feedback to students, they do so based on an assumption that their intended communication has the same meaning to the student receiving it. However, when an assumption is made that two people can consistently deduce the same meaning when reading a particular texts, it implies that the meaning is "autonomous of the context in which it is produced or interpreted" (McKenna, 2004:2). However, research conducted by Street (1984, 1993, and 1995) and Lea and Stierer (2000) argues that this assumption is false. Street believes that meaning cannot be constructed as a neatly packaged task in isolation from one's experiences informing it.

Research carried out by Glover and Brown (2006) provided detailed examples of how widely the perception between students and lecturers differ. It also indicated how differing perceptions may be informed by an individual's experiences and hints at how problems may be magnified when assumptions are generalised to be the norm. Glover and Brown (2006) highlight how a lecturer in their study assumes that all students do not want feedback because she believes that students usually ignore the quality feedback she provides. On the other hand, responses from the students interviewed by Glover and Brown (2006) revealed that students believed that feedback was necessary and very important to them.

When lecturers make generalised assumptions about their students' ability to make meaning, it may well result in the regression of student learning and frustration for both lecturer and student. This scenario may become more complex if the student becomes aware of the lecturer's opinion.

2.8.6 Lecturer stereotyping

Student awareness of the lecturer's opinion has been shown to directly influence student behaviour (Rowntree, 1987 and Lackey, 1997). For example Lackey (1997) in his PhD entitled '*The relationships among written feedback, motivation, and changes in written performance*,' cites a case study carried out by McCarthy (1987) to indicate how feedback influenced student behaviour and performance. When the teacher provided what he believed was very meaningful and useful feedback, he expected students to show their appreciation for his comments by carrying his 'advice' into their next piece of work. However, when a student reacted differently to what he expected, the teacher reciprocated by reacting in a way that indicated to the student that he believed that the student had no ability, and never would have any. Once the student realised how the teacher felt, he gave up any attempt to use the

teacher comments; instead, he resorted to a strategy of trial and error learning. Thus, the student alters his behaviour to fit the teacher's belief of his ability.

The above scenario is critical. Instead of getting to the root of the problem, the teacher made assumptions about the student's ability to take the meaning he had intended from his message. The teacher did not even realise that the student ignored his feedback for the simple reason that he did not understand it. In this case, Zachary's words (2000) are useful: clarity can help to settle expectation issues. That is, for the student and the lecturer. Insights gained from revelations like this may be crucial for lecturers in creating awareness of the underlying tensions that inform students' perceptions of lecturers' texts, their understanding, meaning making and how this informs the students' future actions. The same scenario may be unfolding unabated in our very own classrooms.

2.8.7 Student diversity

The potential for differing perceptions and mismatch between feedback wanted and feedback provided is compounded when we look at the diversity of students entering our South African higher education system today. The ending of the apartheid era has contributed towards a more diverse student body than was the case in the past (Shay, 2003). This means that the students profile today includes a larger number of students from previously disadvantaged sectors of the population (Quinn, 1999; M^cKenna, 2004; Shay, 2003). The "educational preparedness" (Shay, 2003:101) of students entering tertiary education institutions therefore, has a very varied grounding and culture. In this context, the argument made by Cope and Kalantzis (1993:8) provides an enlightening indication on the 'snow-ball' effect this grounding in student diversity could have at classroom level:

For those outside the discourses and cultures of certain realms of power and access, acquiring these discourses requires explicit explanation ... Students from historically marginalized groups, however, need explicit teaching more than students who seem destined for a comfortable ride into the genres and cultures of power.

This implies that cognisance of our students' background is important and influential as the foundation which will guide lecturer support of students' future learning (Popham, 2006). For example, it could inform our academic practice by indicating that some students may need more guidance, discussion and feedback, than others, as well as varying levels of support on how to make sense of it and use it. Additionally, growing student diversity means that the assumption that students automatically deduce the same meaning as lecturers from a given text is more critical. Simultaneously, it emphasises that there can be little room in formative assessment for clichéd responses to students' texts (Skorczewski, 2000). This is especially

relevant in the South African context, as student diversity includes varied proficiency in English gained from having English as a second or even third language (M^cKenna, 2004).

However, what can compound the problems encountered in learning and teaching interactions is that academics may not consider how the sociocultural influences their students bring with them inform and impact the learning and teaching cycle (Vygotsky et al., 1978; Gee, 1990 cited in Gough, 2000). For example, these influences must be kept in mind when they design assessment tasks and provide students with feedback. As argued by Gee (2005:21), students' social and cultural influence, that is, "thinking, believing, valuing and using" of feedback is rendered as separate and irrelevant to the greater learning context. This limited view of the unfolding learning and teaching often results in academics obtaining little more than a surface understanding of their classroom dynamics and they could then unknowingly perpetuate and maintain an unequal student access to different types of discourse. *Importantly, academics may fail to realise how powerful students' socio-cultural influences can be in shaping the way students "engage", "behave" and "act" within a particular context (Gee, 2005:21).*

Gough (2000:43) for example, speaks of "primary and secondary" discourses. He refers to the former as similar to "one's home discourse" which requires no specialised skills to participate in (ibid:43). This type of discourse is therefore accessible to all students (ibid, 2000). However, Gough asserts that secondary discourses are specialised discourses that require skills and knowledge to "comprehend" and participate in (2000:44). Gough further states that secondary discourses are learned through social institutions like schools and tertiary institutions and are not as easily accessible to all students. This implies that secondary discourses can act as a gatekeeper. This fosters a notion of secondary discourse users as being "in the position of power" (Gough, 2000:45). Gramsci (1971 cited in M^cKenna, 2004) indicates that those in the position of power use their elevated discourses to act in deliberate ways to enforce their ways of being, as "both appropriate and unquestionable" thereby excluding others who are outside the circle of power (ibid:17).

I believe that Gough's distinction between users of primary and secondary discourse is relevant within the context of the South African higher education environment, with its diverse student intake. If undetected and unattended to, it may result in students who are excluded from elevated discourse practices, being unable to traverse beyond these now seemingly impenetrable discourse barriers, thus relegating these marginalised students as the underdog.

2.8.8 Cue seeking students

If students become privy to an academic's tacit knowledge and ways of being, they may manoeuvre this insight to suit their own needs (Rowntree, 1987; Biggs, 1996; Glover and

Brown, 2006). This has implications for how students construct knowledge within the discipline as well as on the learning strategies students adopt. For example, an assessment may be viewed by cue seeking students as intertwined with the 'character of the marker too'. Therefore, the student may strategically tailor their work to suit the way the lecturer marks (Glover and Brown, 2006).

This type of cue seeking behaviour gives support for what has been identified in the literature as playing by the "rules of the game" (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002:12) or determining the "hidden curriculum" (Snyder, 1971 cited in Gibbs and Simpson, 2002:1; also see Rowntree, 1987; Brown, et al. 1995; Biggs, 1996; Entwistle, 1996; Webster et al., 2000 and Yorke, 2003). This means that instead of focussing on intrinsic needs through a deep engagement with their learning and ways of knowing, students may approach learning on a surface level to satisfy extrinsic needs, by hunting out cues to inform their actions and as a result, doing as little academic work as possible, to get a better grade (Yorke, 2003). Cue seeking plays a significant role in the whole learning process, influencing student responses, their attitudes to learning, the way they approach their tasks and their understanding of learning (Ramsden, 1987).

As indicated earlier in Chapter One, students may move from a deep to surface approach or vice versa, in order to satisfy imposed assessment requirements (Volet and Chalmers, 1992). In this context, Race (2001:30) has argued that:

Students are highly intelligent people; if we confront them with a "game" where learning is linked to a rigid and monotonous diet of assessment, they will learn according to the rules of that game.

Thus, it means that lecturers need to use these findings as well as insights from other researchers like Yorke (2003:489) "little more than a lay understanding of psychology", to advance their awareness of the roll over effect the different approaches contribute to learning.

Weigel's comparison table on deep versus surface learning (2001 cited in Barrett, 2004 and reproduced below as Table 2.3), is an important point of reference within the framework of formative assessment practices as it can enhance academics' awareness of, may inform their practices and importantly, help them to distinguish between the characteristics symbolic of learners engaged in the different approaches towards learning. Essentially, as indicated by Gibbs, (1992) a deep approach to learning is characterised by encouraging active student engagement with content and feedback, fostering critical thinking, interaction with other students as well as with the teacher, "access to a well-structured knowledge base ... and opportunities for individual reflection on these experiences" (Hewson and Hughes, undated:2). Importantly, characteristics that encourage a deep approach to learning results in

a transformed approach towards learning (Smith and Waller, 1997). I believe that the attributes associated with a deep approach to learning are very compatible with the drafting-responding intervention framed in this study and thus central to encouraging active student engagement with subject content. The deep approach to learning is valued in the new approach to learning and teaching today, and can be seen as linked to the purpose of assessment, mentioned earlier in this chapter, as follows: surface learning being congruent with learning for assessment while deep learning is congruent with learning from assessment.

TABLE 2.3 DEEP LEARNING VERSUS SURFACE LEARNING*

Attributes of Deep Learning	Attributes of Surface Learning
Learners relate ideas to previous knowledge and experience.	Learners treat the course as unrelated bits of knowledge.
Learners look for patterns and unrelated principles.	Learners memorize facts and carry out procedures routinely.
Learners check evidence and relate it to conclusions.	Learners find difficulty in making sense of new ideas presented.
Learners examine logic and argument cautiously and critically.	Learners see little value or meaning in either courses or tasks.
Learners are aware of the understanding that develops while learning.	Learners study without reflecting on either purpose or strategy.
Learners become interested in the course content.	Learners feel undue pressure and worry about work.

Source: Weigel (2001) cited in Barrett (2004)

Our awareness of these dynamics can prevent us from falling prey to what Miller and Parlett 1974 (cited in Yorke, 2003:489) referred to as "cue-seekers" who are intent on getting by via skimming the surface, and adopting a passive and dependant approach where they are not required to be an active contributor (Ramsden, 1992). This insight is invaluable to the lecturer as it is not the intention of formative assessment or summative assessment for that matter, to create in our students a 'learned dependence' (Boud 1995) that stifles the student's spirit. Ideally, lecturers can use their awareness of the above learning approaches to inform existing and underpin future practices. This stance is congruent with Race's (2001:30) argument that, "to improve their [students] learning, we need to improve our game." Thus when lecturers assess students, we can aim to position our assessments to foster a deep approach to learning (Ramsden, 1988; Biggs, 1990; Boud, 1995) and thereby, maximise student learning.

It has to be noted that this approaches to learning model is not without critique: Mitchell (1994b); Webb (1997); Richardson (2000) and more recently, by Haggis (2003). Using strategic quotes, from proponents of the approaches to learning theory as well as findings

from fellow sceptics as support, Haggis (2003) claims that although this research in higher education is regarded as seminal, there has been little change to the initial conceptualisation on the approaches to learning model, to indicate this. She argues that the approaches to learning model is evolved on "elite values, attitudes and epistemologies" which make little sense to students (ibid:102). This means that the learning model is restrictive for students in the higher education system today. Of particular importance to me, is her reference to recent findings which indicate that context and cultural dynamics inform the way students construct meaning and thus inform their learning. Haggis argues that the 'approaches to learning model' do not reflect any cognisance of this critical information.

The argument made by Haggis (2003) may warrant further investigation as it contributes to the base on which our learning and teaching practices are evolved. While I do not believe that we should abandon the approaches to learning model on the basis of difficulty experienced in "changing approaches" or on the isolated successes of "a surface approach" to learning (Haggis, 2003:92), I believe that emerging research in academic literacies have some valuable insights to contribute towards the existing approaches to learning model. That is, to reshape and inform "an alternative way of looking at higher education learning" (Haggis, 2003:90).

2.8.9 Massification, formative assessment and context

Student numbers in higher education institutions are increasing (Higgins and Hartley, 2002; Weaver, 2006). Unfortunately, in this era of massification of higher education, while lecturers may acknowledge the diverse culture and learning needs that students bring with them, and the way this could impact on the level of teaching and learning support required, lecturers cannot possibly attend to it all when providing feedback. Larsen (1998) makes an important observation in stating that providers of feedback cannot control the way different people interpret what has been said. Thus, even when quality feedback is provided with good intentions, it may not be well received. Additionally, increasing student numbers means that while it is desirable to build deep relationships with our students, led by individual student needs, it is increasingly becoming a luxury to address this in reality through one-on-one sessions (Rust, et al., 2003; Gardner 2004; Carless, 2006 and Weaver, 2006) as teaching costs go up in direct proportion to the number of students (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002; Knight, 2002).

If one reviews for example, the student intake for the Food and Beverage Management Diploma in 2004 was 47. However, with the changing landscape of higher education and the post merger formation of DUT, that figure has leapt to 100. This figure may seem small when compared to other disciplines but this course of study is very labour intensive due to the integration of theoretical and practical subjects, which at times require hands-on application

and one-on-one interaction. However in the wake of increasing student numbers, the lecturer-student ratio is on the decrease (Pereira, undated). For example, in 2005, the lecturer-student ratio for the practical component of the subject Food and Beverage Studies was 1:20 while post merger, it was approximately 1:38. There is, as Yorke (2003) argues, a decrease in the attention being given to individual students which is at odds with formative practices. If these factors are not the straw to break the proverbial camel's back and deter lecturers at the DUT from engaging in formative practices, then increasing administrative duties and the drive to engage lecturers in research type activities (Yorke, 2003), without due consideration for their workload, just may.

Massification means that not all institutions can profess to provide the depth of interaction and feedback provided by Oxford or Cambridge University with their one-on-one student-lecturer sessions (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002). In the South African context, if left unattended, the problems which students bring with them from their secondary level schooling may be left for students to untangle by themselves (Kasanga, 2004) and could be compounded by the more independent type of learning which is required by tertiary level studies (as compared to school). However, the inclusion of other types of formative practices, which do not have such time related implications for lecturers; for example group work and peer assessment strategies as well as adoption of generic and transferable self-assessment skills, etc. (Biggs, 1998; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006), can go some of the way towards identifying and addressing shortfalls brought on by increasing students numbers. In turn, these strategies may assist students in supporting their learning and towards empowering students to self-regulate (Sadler, 1989).

2.8.10 Active student participation

Formative assessment practices provide a platform for advising students of their current learning status, to identify gaps, as well as to provide opportunities and constructive guidance on how to bridge such gaps, in order to enhance future learning (Ramaprasad, 1983; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) indicate that students are presented with the key to unlock their future potential. However the warning issued by Biggs (1998:104) still holds true – that it is idealistic to presume that “students are intrinsically and necessarily involved in receiving and acting upon feedback.” He argues that the successes of formative assessment rest on a student’s ability to self-assess and their willingness to close gaps identified “yet in most classrooms, even in tertiary classrooms, self-assessment is rare” (1998:104). Furthermore, research on students’ use of feedback to forge ahead in their learning is discouraging (Hillocks 1986 cited in Wilhelm, 2003; Elbow, 1997; Carless, 2006), but indicates that context plays a role in influencing students’ use of feedback.

Student interaction with and use of feedback has a two-fold implication for learning. Firstly, as already indicated in Chapter One, lecturers' need to be aware of the different approaches students adopt towards their learning. This can assist lecturers in ensuring that they select more practices aimed at fostering meaningful learning in students. Secondly, Biggs (1998) indicates the importance of using assessment methods that afford students the opportunities to develop and to be active participants in their learning process. However, using different methods of assessment alone may not be sufficient.

For example, Sadler (1989) has argued that for students to self-assess and close gaps implies that students know how to do this. But the argument posed by Webster et al. (2000) and Orsmond et al. (2000 cited in Bloxham and West, 2004) shows that this is not always the case in reality as: "in some areas, students do not have the information to apply criteria... including those who understand the criteria but cannot apply it because they do not have the subject knowledge" (ibid:723). This means that lecturers must be aware of the fact the students can only benefit from feedback if they know for themselves what good performance is (Butler and Winne, 1995). This implies that a type of socialisation process into the ways of our discipline would be key to informing, motivating and empowering our students (Nonaka, 1991). Thus it also becomes imperative that lecturers look at the reverse side of the feedback coin to investigate the students' interaction with and perception of assessment feedback so that they avoid making generalised assumptions or waste time and effort by providing feedback which may be unhelpful. If formative assessment issues and practices are better understood both from the lecturer and student perspective and are unravelled thoroughly, with care taken to meet the challenges it could face, there are rewarding gains for all stakeholders (Black and William, 1998).

2.8.11 Time and workload within DUT environment

Incorporating a process-orientated approach to assessment practices has an impact on practice, especially (but not solely) in terms of workload for academic staff. Lecturer workload is of special significance for DUT, especially when one considers that in terms of our pre-merger history, technikons were not expected to be what Yorke (2003:483) describes as "research active". Effectively, research was regarded as the domain of universities as technikons were "never meant to be research institutions" (Ogude, et al., 2001:n.p.). Moreover, the "training approach" which was adopted by technikons was "very labour intensive" (Powell and M^cKenna, unpublished). These realities resulted in lecturing staff within technikons carrying a high lecturing load (Powell and M^cKenna, unpublished). However, post 2005 the official nomenclature change from Technikon to UoT and the greater emphasis on the offering of post-graduate degrees, has altered this scenario somewhat. This in turn has resulted in a recent drive by UoTs to acquire "more highly-qualified staff with less industry experience" and greater focus on research outputs (ibid). This drive has also been extended

to include getting existing academics to upgrade their qualifications (Powell and M^cKenna, unpublished). At odds with this stance though is the fact that academic workloads within the DUT remain largely unchanged (ibid).

Reassessing academic workloads becomes important and urgent when one considers the changing landscape of higher education and its resulting impact on learning, teaching and assessment methodologies. For example, in their study, Gibbs and Simpson (2002), found a direct relationship among written comments on students' assignments, increasing class sizes and the impact this had on time. They argued that "most assessment costs go up in direct proportion to the number of students; as a result assessment costs can overtake teaching costs" (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002:5).

Gibbs and Simpson's perception is also supported in the literature by Sprinkle (2004) who cites written commentary from researchers like Connors and Lunsford to argue that when lecturers are overworked, they may resort to "dash[ing] down a few words" which are passed off as comments (2004:273). Perhaps unsurprisingly as indicated by Connors and Lunsford (cited in Sprinkle, 2004) longer, detailed written comments are increasing becoming a "rarity" (2004:273). Issues surrounding the quantity of written versus verbal feedback will be discussed in Chapter Four section 4.3.1.

Thus, when one couples the time required in the dialoguing process outlined in this study alongside the DUT context of rising student numbers and high lecture loads it provides a sharp contrast to the position implicit in this study, and proponents like Bardine et al. (2000) or Carless (2006) who advocate the importance and necessity of dialoguing in the feedback cycle to inform future learning.

Other mitigating factors may be how well practitioners who come from a more vocational background fit in with the educational demands of their jobs and what support they need in this regard. Consideration must also be given to: academic's personal stress situations or change in circumstances which directly impact upon the amount of after-hour time they are able to put into their work, curriculum changes e.g. a new textbook for subject, lecturer undertaking new subject etc. Underlying all these questions is also the presence of an urgent drive for staff within DUT to upgrade their own qualifications while simultaneously carrying high workloads (Powell and M^cKenna, unpublished).

Good assessment practices, like fine wine, take time and nurturing and this must be acknowledged in terms of workload implications as well as developmental initiatives in order to benefit learning and teaching as a whole (Stiggins, 2002; Mutch, 2003). Too often, we are more concerned with the benefits and may get sidetracked about the investment required in order to obtain the rewards (Stiggins, 2002). Such an oversight in balancing the investment

could well serve to perpetuate the dominance of traditional methods of assessment and continue to encourage resistance and resentment to change existing academic practices (Wilhelm; 2003). As pointed out by Black and William's review, *Inside the black box* (2001:10), "There is no quick fix that can be added to existing practice with promise of rapid reward." I believe that the sooner we acknowledge time its place in the assessment equation, the sooner we will get willing academic participants to get meaningful assessment methods off the ground.

I believe that in exploring any learning and teaching scenario, one cannot do so without revisiting the DUT's evolution from Technikon to University status. In particular, the implication of its inherited staffing and the roll over on assessment practices.

As indicated in Chapter One, the practical and industry relevant nature of the qualification offered (NRF, 2003), emphasised the recruitment of academic staff with vocationally based knowledge and experience (M^cKenna, 2004; Powell and M^cKenna, unpublished). This background could in turn have an impact on learning and teaching practices.

I will use two other researchers' beliefs to highlight aspects of the far reaching implication that vocationally based academic appointments could introduce to the dynamics of learning and teaching. On the one hand, M^cKenna (2004:116) believes that some academic staff "may never have reflected on the philosophical and ideological basis of [their] content". Thus these staff members would have been recruited on an assumption that they had an "implicit knowledge of academic literacy" (M^cKenna, 2004:116). On the other hand, Rushton (2005:510) believes that "an experienced teacher will possess skills, knowledge, attitudes, awareness of standards and expertise in evaluative skills that [would] have contributed to their tacit professional knowledge" (also see Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992 cited in Shay, 2004).

In this context vocationally-based academic appointments would have placed the recruit in day-day academic functions for example assessment activities, but this could have taken place in a grey area via the assumption of a shared academic knowledge, expertise and ways of being (M^cKenna, 2004). This means that in reality, although vocationally qualified staff had subject knowledge, their knowledge of how to translate this to academic practices for their daily lessons and assessments may have been absent, underdeveloped or evolving – or what Goodwin (1994 cited in Shay, 2004:317), referred to as performing "without having had time to develop the requisite professional vision." Thus, these academics may not have had the necessary knowledge about how to develop these practices in their students. Moreover, this reality may have far reaching implications on day-day learning and teaching. Sotto (1994:15) captures this point in a few words by stating that there is a misguided assumption that "One

does not have to study teaching in order to become a teacher." However, the reality is that "one can be a chemist and not be a teacher" (ibid:15).

Although the above started out as 'implications', I am loathe to leave them as mere conjecture. There is other evidence in the literature that is congruent with and supports my concern, albeit under different circumstances. For example, similar to my own experience when I first started lecturing, new academics who are conducting academic assessments for the first time may find that they are forced to "learn to mark by marking" (Shay, 2004:317).

When put into DUT's post-merger staffing context, it implies that problems arising from vocationally based academic appointments, in the absence of academic experience and grounding, could have potentially left new academics "floundering" (Shay, 2004:317) with some lecturers possibly resorting to getting things 'right' via a process of trial and error while they socialised themselves into the requirements of their new job.

The attitude of other, more experienced academics could exacerbate problems experienced by the new academic. For example, I recall that my trepidation towards marking open-ended assignments was in stark contrast to a senior lecturer's casual remark that I would 'soon get the hang of it' (also see Shay, 2004). This perception of learning on the job and its intricacies, is discussed and belied by Sotto (1994), in his book titled, "*When teaching becomes learning*", which documents his experiences as a fledging teacher who goes through a myriad of conflicting emotions when he is instated as a teacher on the assumption by policymakers that teaching is an inherent, easy and obvious talent.

It is important to acknowledge the possibility that a general lack of educational qualification or experience could have implications for assessment practices in general, as well as for the adoption of future assessment practices which are aimed at enhancing learning and teaching. In fact, research conducted by Rowe and Wood (undated) expressly reported that the "language skills and teaching ability of tutors, curriculum design, and the perceived commitment of tutors" (ibid:8) were essential informers to the overall quality of feedback. The implications of the general lack of educational qualification or experience on the quality of learning and teaching will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Simultaneously, I wish to acknowledge the impact that time and exposure to the learning and teaching environment, as well as the teaching portfolio intervention³ for academic staff at the DUT, could have had in socialising the 'novice vocational lecturer' to among other things,

³ The teaching portfolio which was linked to academic probation, was designed to provide an induction to new academic staff, is no longer offered by the DUT.

assessment matters and experiences. Or what Lave and Wenger (1991: n.p.) referred to as the process of "legitimate peripheral participation." Implying that in a process similar to the way that students are socialised into the "community of practice", with their learning, so too does the 'novice academic', with practice, become socialised towards an expert academic way of being, thus moving from the "periphery of this community to its center" (Lave and Wenger, 1991:n.p.). I believe that it is important to acknowledge that this grounding could have had an implication on assessment practices in general, as well as on the adoption of assessment practices which are aimed at enhancing learning and teaching at the DUT. To this effect, an analysis of the data in Chapter Four which solicits student perceptions of assessment practices in general as well as on moves towards formative assessment practices for assignments, may have bearing. Furthermore, there is the implication that the degree to which, and the mastery with which, formative assessment is translated into practice (Goodwin, 1994 cited in Shay, 2004; Rushton, 2005) by academics at the DUT, may contribute some part towards what the literature terms a slower move towards adopting more student-directed type of assessment practices (Biggs, 1998; Black and Wiliam, 1998).

Another problem which could have challenged vocationally based academic appointees and in turn exacerbate a slower adoption of more innovative assessment practices, is that the current learning and teaching environment has shifted significantly since their own learning and teaching experiences (Higgins et al., 2001; de Waal, 2004; Klenowski, 2004). There is therefore the potential for a strong resistance towards adoption of a more formative approach towards assessment.

While this research is not about merger issues per se, it is at times difficult and impossible to separate the challenges brought on by the merger as well as by the establishment of UoTs as these have a roll over effect on several other areas, including learning and teaching (Powell and M^cKenna, unpublished). For example, when the merger of M.L. Sultan and Technikon Natal with its subsequent transition to UoT status is coupled with the attitude and expectations of policymakers, it paints a fuller picture of the context in which a novice academic is working.

De Waal (2004:4) for example argues that an important misconception of the transition from the traditional paradigm to a new constructivist paradigm which embodies OBE assessment principles, comes from policymakers who imply that all the existing lecturer had to do was "undergo a paradigm shift in order to equip themselves mentally for the challenges that awaited them." However, when misconceptions like this are transferred to higher education institutions, alongside the challenge brought on by mergers, it paints a narrow and simplistic view of policymakers when dealing with the human factor as it essentially fails to acknowledge the impact of accompanying factors like "fear, demotivation, stress, resistance and disempowerment" (de Waal, 2004:4) in this equation. Moreover, I propose that a

changing learning and teaching approaches alongside issues brought on by the introduction of OBE and institutional mergers may have left the vocationally-based academic ingénue grappling to cope with the mere day-to-day academics like lecturing, setting tests, marking, etc (Shay, 2004) let alone having to now invest in designing innovative learning, teaching and assessment practices. Essentially, policy makers may fail to realise that in light of changing approaches to learning and teaching alongside issues brought on by OBE and the establishment of Technikons as UoT's, academics may need much more support and training in order to deal with challenges they may face.

2.9. Implications

The above framework implies that more than just a focus on assessment matters and reflection is needed to improve practice. Staff inherited from the former technikon staffing system, who now function as staff within the UoT, may require training, "personal and professional development and support" (Black and William, 2001:10, also see Ivanič et al., 2000; Monty, 2003) to help align themselves with the vision and mission of a UoT in an era of evolving higher education. These aspects will be discussed in full under recommendations in Chapter Five.

2.10. Benefits associated with formative assessment

With the range of challenges that impact upon and influence formative practices, it is critical that students and lecturers keep sight of the fruits to be reaped in persevering with the development and adoption of formative assessment practices. In the next section, I will discuss how formative assessment practices may benefit participants in the learning and teaching cycle.

2.10.1 Impact of OBE

The implementation of Outcomes-based education heralded the dawn of a new era for education in South Africa (Jansen, 1999 cited in de Waal, 2004). OBE which focusses on the outcomes of the educational process was introduced in South Africa post apartheid, in a bid to overturn the legacy of apartheid education (Botha, 2002). Within the South African educational context, OBE is aimed at improving education access and quality and removing previous inequalities by moving away from the previous regime of a racially segregated education system, towards among other aspects, developing and promoting life long learning, transferable learning and skills, portability, building learner self efficacy, learner centeredness, embracing the concept of individuality in learning and developing a deep approach to learning (Spady, 1994; Boud, 1995; Killen, 2000; Botha, 2002).

I would like to note that in this research, reference is made to OBE and a new constructivist paradigm for learning and teaching. However, although the new approach to learning and teaching has coincided with introduction of OBE in South Africa, it is not necessarily the same. In Spady's (1994:1) words: "Outcome-Based Education means clearly focussing and organising everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. This means starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organising the curriculum, instruction, and assessment to make sure this learning ultimately happens." Thus, OBE importantly signifies a shift from a traditional approach to assessment towards new ways of engaging and assessing our learners in order to encourage active learning for all students (Spady, 1994; Smith and Waller, 1997; Killen, 2000), with the emphasis is on what students learn and how well they learn it rather than focussing on "when they learn it" (Botha, 2002:364).

However, these intentions would not be realised if the role of the lecturer in this equation did not evolve too (Smith and Waller, 1997; Killen, 2000 and de Waal, 2004). Although de Waal's research (2004) was based on schools, I believe that his anticipation that "teacher identity would be radically different from the apartheid curriculum and pedagogical approach" (2004:43), has reference for my tertiary-based study. For example, de Waal cites a host of problem areas like differing perceptions of OBE, "[in]sufficient funding, inadequate training of curriculum advisors" and demotivation evident from teacher responses, to warn that this evolved teacher identity is not going to occur overnight (2004:4). Based on de Waal's findings and the realities which unfolded post-merger and during the formation of the DUT, I believe that it is going to be a very gradual process before the benefits anticipated and associated with an OBE lead approach to learning and teaching, and its resulting reinvented learner and lecturer identity, actually filter from the policymakers, to learning institutions, to academic staff and students.

Additionally, given that students spend a minimum of 12 years at school, alongside the reality that the post-apartheid adoption of an OBE approach to assessment has leaned more in favour of tribulations than triumphs (de Waal, 2004), creates a reality that students entering tertiary education system will have varying levels of exposure to the anticipated benefits from the OBE approach. It would be interesting to measure what impact an OBE influenced way of assessing of our students engenders and inter alia, the type of assessment and feedback practices students were exposed to while at school. Assessment and feedback practices at school and their impact on the way in which students experienced assessment and feedback practices at a tertiary level, will be addressed in Chapter Four, Section 4.2.1.

2.10.2 New approach to learning and teaching

The South African Qualification Authority's "*Criteria and Guidelines for the Registration of Assessors*" (2001:7) describe the lecturer's evolved role in the constructivist paradigm as follows:

Learning is no longer something that is done to the learner, but something that the learner is actively involved in. As such, the role of the assessor has changed: from being a 'gate-keeper', who uses assessment to prevent learners from developing further, to a supportive guide who has the success of the learner at heart so that the learner can gain access to further learning

This rethinking of education from the students' perspective means that learning is no longer centred on the teacher and teacher inputs and the transmission of knowledge (Smith and Waller, 1997) but rather, on encouraging students towards reflection and deep learning with the teacher seated in a facilitative role (Rushton, 2005).

Cognisance and embracing of such changes is set to transform the ways teachers teach, and learners learn. Teaching is becoming more than merely the transmission of information and learning becomes more than just rote, motivated by the need to exit a course with a degree on hand. As pointed out by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006:200), "Students interact with subject content, transforming and discussing it with others, in order to internalize meaning and make connections with what is already known." Within this context, active participation between facilitator and learner, and learner-learner, is not only desirable but essential (Hunt, 2003; Lea et al., 2003). However, this means that concrete efforts must be made by all stakeholders to ensure that the anticipated benefits of the new approach to learning and teaching become a reality rather than mere 'lip service'.

One way to address this could be by aiming to move away from the previous dominance of norm referenced assessments, that is, assessments led by marks or grades, without any detailed qualitative feedback, "designed...for the purpose of comparing them [students] with each other or with the general population norms" (Biggs, 1999:69). Instead, there should be a drive towards the design and utilisation of a higher number of criterion referenced assessments, that is student-centred and developmental type assessments which focus on "changes in performance as a result of learning, for the purpose of seeing what, and how well, something has been learnt" (Biggs, 1999:69), rather than comparing one student's effort against that of another (Butler, 1987). The OBE-led approach to assessment alongside the new (constructivist) approach to learning and teaching is well positioned to facilitate the above changes. Thus, these approaches to learning and teaching may seek to redress these and other changes. For example, focussing on clearly defined assessment criteria to inform future assessment practices and ensuring that students and lecturers have had sufficient

opportunities to incorporate various techniques to work towards a shared understanding of these criteria, to enable maximum usefulness and development. The argument by Loacker and Jensen (1988:130) refers:

By making these criteria explicit and public they enable students to develop an understanding of an ability and an increasingly refined performance of it...As students develop their understanding of the role criteria play in their education, they are increasingly able to take more responsibility for their own learning. They move from passively receiving their instructor's evaluation of their performances to actively identifying and applying criteria to assess their own performances.

In other words, by becoming acculturated in the reading and writing required by their learning context (Ballard and Clanchy, 1988), students may become empowered to function as regulators and assessors of their own learning.

It follows then that if the learning gains attributed to formative assessment are to be reaped and for students to become an active part of the assessment process, it is essential for practitioners to ensure that their practices shift to embrace more formative exercises which can assist in socialising students into different types of assessment practices and greater involvement of students in assessment activities (Boud, 2000). One way to fast track this and assist in making the intended, a reality, is through the provision of detailed feedback in response to set criteria, within a process rather than product-based approach towards writing (Paxton, 1995; Barnett, 1989; Zeiser, 1999 and Kasanga, 2004).

According to a booklet entitled "*A brief guide to responding to students' writing*" produced by Rhodes University Academic Development Centre (2001:3), "the drafting-responding process is compatible with an outcomes-based approach to assessment in that:

- It encourages continuous assessment,
- Assessment criteria are made explicit,
- Students are given feedback on their writing, and
- Assessment is used for learning"

This process is therefore well positioned in the new approach to learning and teaching to engage the student with the feedback implied in this context, and to make dynamic changes to their work, while it is in progress.

2.10.3 Drafting-responding

Bartolomae (1985:134) posits that for students "to speak our language...as we do, to try on the particular ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding and arguing that define the discourse of our community", implies a need for students and lecturers to work

towards a shared understanding of what academic discourse is within a given context. Furthermore, inculcating a culture of shared understanding of academic literacies may empower our students to internalise discipline specific literacy practices and thereby encourage our students to self-regulate and develop as active monitors of their texts without relying solely on the input from an outsider. Engaging our students in low-stakes formative assessment practices can be a useful tool to develop their academic capital (Bourdieu, 1992 cited in Shay, 2003), as it may afford students opportunities to realise the benefits that consultative processes, reflection (Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1987), imitating (Rust et al., 2003) and recursive processes and revising may have on their work (Paxton, 1995; Zeiser, 1999; Kasanga, 2004; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

One of the ways to engage our students in low-stakes assessment could be through providing feedback to students in a process-orientated approach. Using this method, students will be given feedback at the draft stage with follow-up mechanisms in place to enable the feedback provided, to feed forward in the next draft (Paxton, 1995; Bardine et al., 2000; Carless, 2006; Glover and Brown, 2006). In this way, students are encouraged to use the feedback provided to revise and enhance their previous understanding. A study conducted by Merry (et al., 1999 cited in Gibbs and Simpson, 2002) which used Corder (1981) and Brumfit (1980), hypothesises that students retain feedback if they are forced to approach correction as a problem solving activity. They reported that when assignments were process-orientated, up to 40% of students "reported changing not just their assignment but the way they, in future, went about tackling assignments" (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002:16). This indicated that comments provided by lecturing staff on student assignments "is one of the ways in which students may be given advice about the rules and conventions of the discipline" (Paxton, 1995:189).

In this context, Gibbs and Simpson (2003) stressed that follow-up on the feedback provided is a critically important stage in the drafting-responding process, in order to check if students have acted on feedback. These mechanisms could take the form of for example post drafting dialogues, written feedback, redrafting opportunities, action plans based on comments received on draft, etc. (Mitchler, 2006). While the method of initiating follow-up on feedback given may be varied, its purpose remains unitary (Mitchler, 2006). However, if this follow-up stage is omitted, students may not feel obliged to use feedback and may thus feel that they can "ignore feedback with impunity" (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002:15).

When well structured planned and implemented, a process-orientated approach towards assignments provides an opportunity for students and the lecturer to communicate, obtain clarity on a variety of issues, forge relationships as well as the possibility for students to develop meta-cognitive and self regulation skills. These prospects embrace Dewey's culture of learning as a social activity and thus, include opportunity for students to share as well as justify their texts to others, develop their ideas, get different perspectives on the same issue.

In this context, students are able to use feedback to go back to the drawing board or "chaos" (Sommers, 1982:154) in their draft, to restructure and shape their meaning and thus devise new ways of knowing about the same phenomenon (Sommers, 1982).

The drafting-responding process, as a whole, presents a powerful vehicle for knowledge transformation and potential for learning. Importantly, as indicated by Flower (1979); Paxton (1995); Kasanga (2004) and Scudder (2003), if the feedback cues given in response to students' needs are acted on while the student is engaged in the learning process, it could lead to meaningful and significant learning gains for both students and lecturers (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

2.10.4 Process versus product impact

In the classroom, feedback generated from assessments can provide students and lecturers with information cues that can feed directly into their learning and teaching, and inform future practices (Black and Wiliam, 1998; SAQA, 2001; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). However, as indicated by Paxton (1995); Barnett (1989); Bardine (1999); Zeiser (1999); Kasanga (2004) and other researchers, feedback provided at the end of a piece of work often fails in what it sets out to achieve because a large part of the problem lies in the fact that feedback is viewed as product rather than process-orientated. In her article titled '*Teaching process and product: Crafting and responding to student writing assignments*', Zeiser (1999) indicates the importance of situating writing as a recursive process. She describes how writing a paper for a conference is not a once off chance, even for lecturers. Instead, a process of "thinking, writing and revising" is undertaken, followed by more reflection and more writing, until a satisfactory piece of work is produced. In the process, critical thinking and writing abilities are developed and improved. Given our personal experiences, one may therefore assume that a natural progression would be to afford our students the same opportunity: to refine, hone and shape their work via multiple drafts. However, this is often not the case in practice and students' writings are instead treated as a product, that is, "first-and-final drafts" ready for judgment and correction needing no more attention from the student (Barnett, 1989:32).

Elbow (1997) has argued that providing opportunities for drafts can help by moving assessment practices from high-stakes to low-stakes and potentially have the power to shift perceptions of both the student and academic, for a given piece of work. For example, he posits that by "forcing students to carry their thinking through two steps", that is, drafting and revising, both the lecturer and the students' approach to a piece of work alter (Elbow, 1997:11). That is, for the lecturer, "response becomes almost automatically low stakes" (1997:11) because the intention shifts from correcting writing to revising writing. For students, their writing shifts from high stakes to low stakes as they may now use the feedback provided to revise their work. Students would thus have done sufficient writing in this recursive

process, to untangle their thoughts and present a clearer and "more fluent" piece of work than would be possible, if they had not had this drafting opportunity (Elbow, 1997:7).

Elbow (1997:7) puts it very eloquently when he states that low-stakes writing can help students "to stumble into their own analogies and metaphors for academic concepts" through the use of their "informal *home or personal* language" thereby really making it their own (1997:7, italics in original). The importance in the difference between students' 'home literacies' and language and academic discourse with its associated 'elevated literacies' has been well argued by M^cKenna (1995, 2004), and is relevant in DUT's higher education context which consists of a post-apartheid context and a newly unified higher education system. Engaging students in processes that are recursive and contributing towards socialising students in a shared understanding of 'elevated literacies' in a given context, may assist students in moving towards active participation in learning and meaning making rather than simply "replicating and admiring the knowledge of others" (M^cKenna, 2004:122). This stance may therefore be effective in enabling students to move from "knowledge telling discourse" by empowering students to become "knowledge producer[s]" who are engaged in "knowledge generating discourse" (M^cKenna, 2004:24).

2.10.5 Students as 'insiders'

Very often students may expend valuable time trying to become socialised into the language of a particular discipline at great personal cost as some may fail their assessments due to certain impenetrable discourse barriers (Quinn, 1999; M^cKenna, 2004). The literature reveals a reality that some students never become privy to the language of the discipline nor do they become insiders (Skorczewski cited in Mitchler, 2006). However the use of meaningful and helpful measures can go part of the way in helping students to become insiders. This makes it important to utilise all available resources in trying to provide the currency our students need to negotiate their way in academic life. For example, as discussed earlier, this can be done through the use of; explicit and detailed assessment criteria, discussions of assessment criteria, especially use of terminology and depth of interaction expected, dialogues before and after issuing of topics, peer marking, drafting-responding process to check current progress and inform future actions, provision of specific feedback (Paxton, 1995; Rust, et al., 2003), etc. Of great importance too, is Skorczewski's appeal to lecturers (cited in Mitchler, 2006) to look beyond their frustrations when marking students' texts and instead focus on the fact that each student's text is informed by their uniqueness, and as such, would require different responses.

When assignments with a drafting-responding mechanism are issued to students within the Hospitality field, the feedback provided may be used as a way of getting students to understand what a 'good performance' in their discipline looks like. For example, by acting as

a sounding board, the lecturer may assist in making criteria and standards explicit (Loacker and Jensen, 1988; M^cKenna, 2004; Boughey, 2005). It can also facilitate students' acquaintance with the discourse of a discipline through opportunities provided for the practice of writing within a discipline (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002) as well as for integrating and synthesising theoretical information to suit practical applications. These opportunities may assist in making students more conscious of the reader as an active audience (Quinn, 2002) and may alert students to the relevance and inter-play between context, theory and practice as well as how to modify ideological concepts into practical concepts that reflect cognisance of social, cultural and economic influences.

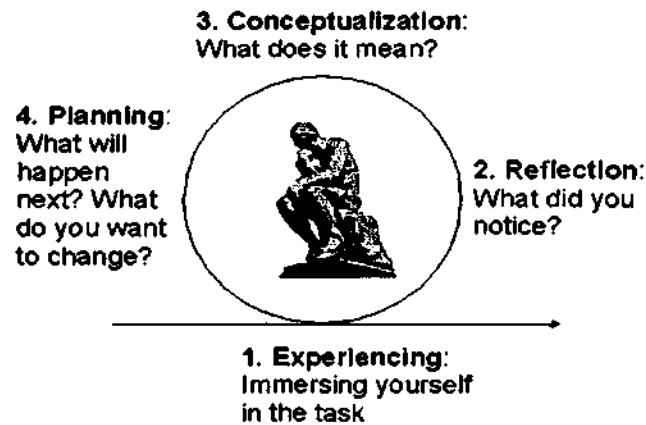
Students can then use this grounding to reflect on how close they are to taking on the practices and expectations of the discipline for themselves, as well as the possibility of transferring these skills to other areas of learning. This concept is congruent with Bruner's belief (1963), from his study on how children develop skills related to inquiry and problem solving. He found that "the more one has practice, the more likely one is to generalize what one has learned into a style of problem solving or inquiry that serves for any kind of task encountered-or almost any kind of task" (1963:83).

2.10.6 The importance of reflection

The importance and need for continuous reflection by both students and lecturers, in higher education, is widely accepted from both a theoretical base (Vygotsky et al., 1978; Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983 and 1987; Dewey, 1913 and 1938) as well as from researchers' findings (for example Barnett 1997; Smith and Waller, 1997; Boud, 2000; Zachary, 2000; M^cKenna, 2004; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). The provision of feedback to students in the drafting-responding process allows for structured opportunities for student and lecturer 'reflection-on-action' as well as for 'reflection-in-action' (Schön, 1983 and 1987; Cole et al., 1995). This stance has proved to be liberating as it allows students to move away from the traditional teaching-learning approach towards a new approach to learning and teaching, where they are empowered to become active, dynamic and critical thinkers (see Ewell, 1997). Gibbs and Simpson (2002) further assert that students and lecturers may gravitate towards developing critical "reflection and awareness of learning processes" and then towards "critical action" (Moon, 1999 cited in Oldham, 2002:n.p.; also see Kolb, 1984).

I believe that Kolb's model of the learning cycle (refer to Figure 2.1 below) is useful for enhancing learning and teaching on the basis of four critical stages – that is 'experience, planning, conceptualisation' and 'reflection'.

FIGURE 2.1 KOLB'S MODEL OF THE LEARNING CYCLE



Source: www.css.edu/users/dswenson/web/PAGEMILL/Kolb.htm

Kolb's model which features four critical stages of development, argues that students and lecturers need to go through all four stages, in order to facilitate meaningful learning and teaching. Critically, this model indicates that experience alone is not sufficient to engender the kind of meaningful learning which is desired by higher education, rather, it indicates scope for the inclusion of a process referred to by Bayer (1990 cited in Parkerson, 2000:121) as "expressive talk", which has been identified as a critical tool for thinking. That is, "a beginning point for coming to terms with new ideas" (ibid:121). For example, Killen (2000:14) has argued that "Students cannot learn if they do not THINK." This grounding indicates that careful planning of learning activities needs to occur in order to ensure that students are afforded sufficient opportunities to "question, plan, feel free to be tentative and incomplete" (Bayer 1990 cited in Parkerson, 2000:121) analyse, engage deeply with and reflect on their experiences in order to develop meta-cognitive awareness (Schön, 1987; Etkina and Harper, 2002). That is, 'thinking about their thinking' (Cole et al., 1995:16). It is partly due to the engagement with these reflective practices, that students are enabled to progress from a surface approach towards a deep approach to learning (Barnett, 1997).

As indicated earlier, lecturers are not exempt from the reflective processes (Schön, 1983; Schön 1987). This in turn means that within an interpretive assessment framework, it becomes imperative that the assessor, who is identified as one of the essential "contextual features" (Shay, 2003:22) examines their "assumptions about knowledge, concepts, rules and conventions" (Higgins et al., 2001:273). In fact, Straub (1996) has urged all providers of comments to regularly scrutinise and get feedback on the comments they make. In this way, lecturers may continuously assess if their comments are achieving what they intended. And ongoing adjustments may be factored to enhance their usefulness. Failing this, providers of comments may be guilty of not "knowing which aspects of a subject causes students

particular difficulties and [not] knowing the metaphors, contexts and analogies that students find helpful" (Black et al., 2003:59).

2.10.7 Dialoguing

The opportunity for dialogue in the reflective process detailed above is of critical importance (Schön, 1983 and 1987; Brown and Knight, 1994; Bardine et al., 2000; Boud, 2000; Klenowski, 2004; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). In keeping with the new approach to learning, it represents the ability to shift the emphasis from the lecturer to the students (Smith and Waller, 1997; Klenowski, 2004), and work towards what Boughey (2005:240) described as "bridging the gaps between the respective worlds students and lecturers draw on." Thus, dialogues may present opportunity for participating individuals to work towards a common goal, where students' thinking (Klenowski, 2004) as well as that of lecturers, is made more explicit (Higgins et al., 2001; Black and William, 2003). I believe that it also provides an opportunity for learning via dialogues to be led by students rather than by lecturers. In this way the student is presented with an opportunity to move away from the traditional paradigm where she was typically viewed as being the "empty vessel[s] into which teachers pour[ed] their wisdom" (Smith and Waller, 1997:269) or the "silent recipient of that judgment" (Paxton, 1995:189), to a more humane platform where the student is viewed as a valid contributor to the dialogue.

Dialoguing also provides students and lecturers with the opportunity to untangle their thinking and seek clarity (Rowe and Wood, unpublished). This concept is further emphasised by Perrenoud (1998:86) who stated that

communication theory teaches us that the effectiveness of a message is measured at the level of the recipient: an intervention or a piece of information only helps a pupil learn better if their thought processes are modified.

The multiple advantages associated with dialoguing are magnified when placed into an educational framework which, as indicated earlier in this chapter, is influenced by student-lecturer varying perceptions and the difficulty experienced by lecturers in making their tacit knowledge explicit.

Funch (1995) provides an insightful attempt to understand the grey area surrounding the giving and receiving of feedback, including the importance of dialogue. He very eloquently states that "communication is not an absolute finite thing. Particularly, communication with language is always vague and misleading to some extent" (ibid:n.p.). Funch (1995) elaborates this point by stating that most people have a similar understanding on what "common physical objects are" when one refers to for example a 'car' or 'refrigerator'. However this shared

understanding is compromised when "words for abstract qualities like...right...wrong and so forth" are utilised as these are subject to individual interpretations which could alter the intended meaning (Funch, 1995:n.p.). This shared understanding may be further compromised when tacit knowledge is involved, as it invariably is, when assessment judgments are made (Nonaka, 1991; Tsoukas, 1996; Polanyi, 1998).

Dialogues may also be used as a tool to address issues relating to differing student and lecturer perceptions as well as unequal access to the meaning in a given text (Careless, 2006). In this way, opportunity for misinterpretation and misunderstanding or trial and error learning may be circumvented. The drafting-responding process outlined in this study, with the dialogue element, has the potential to "enable the best performance by the student" (Rushton, 2005:511) via collaborative student-teacher feedback efforts (also see Hunt, 2003 and Klenowski, 2004). Thus dialogue can be used as a real tool to work towards a shared understanding (Higgins et al., 2001; Carless, 2006) as opposed to it just being a metaphor. Additionally, this developmental type of feedback offered via a student-lecturer collaborative effort presents the writer with access to a more experienced audience with the aim of "tapping the unexplored resources from the writer" in order to inform the next writing process (Li Wai Shing, 1992:53). This situates the learning in what Vygotsky et al. (1978:68) termed the: "zone of proximal development". That is:

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (ibid:86)

According to Lunt (1993:159) "It is through the exploration of the adult 'leading' the learner into cognitive activity apparently beyond the level that the learner attains unaided that we are able to begin to understand how a learner is developing and what strategies might be useful in order to facilitate further development." If the student is not assisted by a more experienced third party to move beyond their 'level of actual development' (Vygotsky et al., 1978), the student may remain unable to progress beyond the point they have currently attained.

Simultaneously, I am mindful of the arguments referring to lecturer appropriation of students' texts made by, for example, Struab (1996); Torrance and Pryor (1998) and Patterson (2005). Thus, I do not intend for this 'assistance' to loosely translate to lecturer appropriation of student's work but rather that there is potential for the drafting-responding process in this study to assist students in advancing their current performance and 'ways of knowing' (Bartholomae 1985; Gee, 1996; M^cKenna, 2004). I also wish to clarify that the kind of feedback implied here does not translate to a sea of red marks all over the student's work in order to correct superficial errors (see Sommers, 1982; Bardine et al., 2000; Patterson, 2005;

Boughey, 2007), nor is it about correcting work to make sure that it is 'right' (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). In fact, research has indicated that this can be counter-productive to formative practices as this has been linked to low student efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Elliott and Dweck, 1988). More importantly, there are indications in certain of the literature, that too much feedback can overwhelm students (Semke, 1984; Barnett, 1989; McCarthy, 1987 cited in Lackey, 1997; Trace Tip Sheets, 2003) resulting in the student giving up rather than focussing on their learning. In this context, for feedback to be useful, I conceive of feedback being "comment[s] on student writing to dramatize the presence of the reader" (Sommers, 1982:148) thus helping students to take on the 'ways of knowing' that are expected in a particular discipline (Gee, 1996). This context implies the possibility for lifelong and integrated learning in the sense that the learner can continually adapt, build, enhance and inform their existing way of knowing (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky et al., 1978; Sadler, 1989 and 2002; Boud, 2000; Carless 2006).

The Vygotskian stance of the more experienced and knowledgeable adult leading the child is not without challenge in the literature on feedback. For example, Hammond (1998 cited in Patterson, 2005) has argued that sometimes, feedback is just another word for 'ventriloquism'. The charge made by Hammond (1998 cited in Patterson, 2005) is highlighted by Applefield et al. (2001:48), who posit that "no rules tell us when to intervene or how extensive the intervention should be." However, feedback need not be another word for spoon-feeding or lip reading, in order for it to be useful. Instead, the warnings made by critics like Hammond (1998) and Yorke (2003) can be used to highlight the need for lecturers to strike a balance in their giving of feedback.

In alluding to the positive scope offered by the zone of proximal development to lead and develop the student (see Vygotsky et al., 1978; Atherton 2005b), I take cognisance of the argument made by researchers like Wineburg (1997), Baume and Yorke (2002) and Yorke (2003), that some of the students' success in the drafting-responding process is only due to the work and feedback provided by the lecturer and thus may provide a distorted reflection of an individual's true capabilities. Yorke (2003) has argued that this grounding could then provide misleading evidence of a student's ability when they attain a higher level of study where they may be expected to continue without the similar support of the lecturer. His view may hold true especially if lecturers impose on the students' work to such an extent that the student loses connection with the text as their work, if students are intent on cue seeking, or if self efficacy is affected.

However, awareness created on these aspects in the literature on feedback, means that weaknesses identified can be monitored to minimise or eliminate the effects thereof. For example, Yorke (2003) indicates that once the student has been facilitated to understand or know what they did not understand or know previously that is, "the student has moved to the upper end of the pre-existing zone of proximal development" (ibid:496), that an assessment

task could be administered to probe the student's assimilation of such facilitative learning. Vygotsky et al. (1978) indicated that there is scope to check whether understanding has moved from being "between people", that is, "interpsychological" to "inside the child", that is, "intrapyschological" (ibid:128). Thus, there would be a process of internalisation. Vygotsky's intention may then be seen to mirror that of Bandura (1977:22) who theorised that

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action.

In practicing and facilitating assessments, I believe that academics need to be mindful that the zone of proximal development is viewed by Bandura and Vygotsky as a foundation rather than the "ventriloquism" inducing perception described by Hammond (1998 cited in Patterson, 2005:2). Additionally, by being mindful of the theory underlying the art of facilitation and the practices of assessment, the lecturer and, in turn the student, can be reminded that the intention here is for student development and not lecturer opportunity to revel in their superior knowledge.

I also believe that the assistance provided to our students through feedback should not only be conceived of as extremes on a continuum, that is, ranging from learned dependence to lecturer dominance or unassisted independence (Lunt, 1993). Rather, there should be some kind of meeting point that facilitates and focuses on the students' progress and development and how best to enhance this instead of expending all energy on ascertaining "what the child can and cannot do, *on her own*" (Lunt, 1993: 151, italics in original). Further to this, while being aware of the 'power play' involved in feedback provision (Ivanič, 2000), our attention and efforts should not be held ransom to it to the detriment of our students' development, by withholding guidance to students or by discrediting the learning to be gained via profound social interaction (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky et al., 1978; Wineburg, 1997). Rather, it infers that lecturers have to aim for a delicate balance in order to provide feedback that is helpful yet at the same time focussed towards facilitating independent student learning.

The drafting-responding process with its scope for dialogue offers more than improvement and encouragement of critical and independent thinking; especially when placed within the context of today's massification of higher education. It is easy for lecturers to be consumed in the numbers game and recall as an afterthought that the players are people with social and relationship needs (Applefield et al., 2001) that beg acknowledgement as more than just a number. (The need for relationship and dialogues are alluded to in several students' transcripts. This is discussed in terms of the data titled, 'Dialoguing as common ground, in

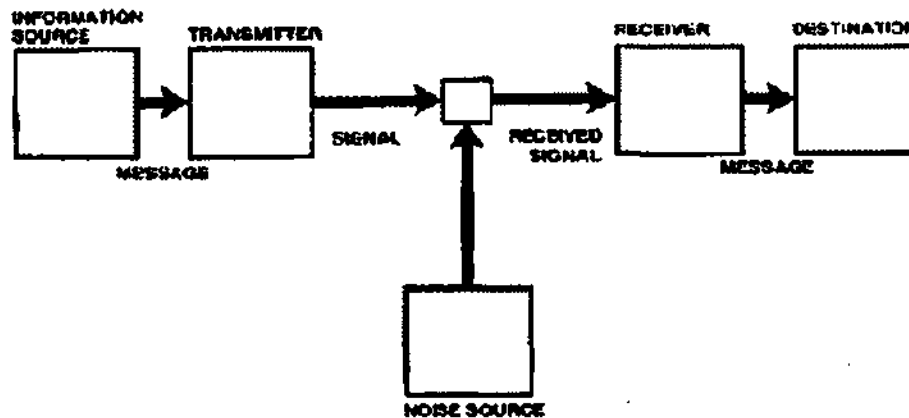
Chapter Four.) The drafting-responding process may therefore provide meaningful capital for fostering a sustainable and shared understanding by encouraging relationship building through the scope for dialogue between the lecturer and the student (Bardine, et al., 2000).

The drafting-responding process outlined in this study also encourages the exposure of the participants to an active dialogue. That is, the student is exposed to an active audience and the lecturer to an active recipient, while the work is in progress, thus creating a potential for a cycle of writing, responding, reflection and more writing (Li Wai Shing, 1992; Ivanič, 1998), Todd; Mills, Palard and Khamcharoen, 2001). The advice and feedback offered has the potential to be immediately effective and relevant. I found this concept similar to Todd; Mills, Palard and Khamcharoen's (2001) findings on journal writing. They found that exposing journal writers to an active audience raised the writer's awareness of the reader's expectations. In this situation the writers used the comments and feedback from the audience as input for their next journal, creating a cycle for learning. It is the highly prized gems like these for which lecturers, and students are tilling the soil. Importantly, these rewards are there for the taking, once the procedures and follow-ups are put into place.

I want to point out that the dialoguing framework indicated in this study, which is essential for communication and in turn feedback, is very different to the traditional communication model, which was set against the background of information theory, and conceptualised by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver in 1947 for the Bell Telephone Laboratories to help examine the accuracy (fidelity) of message transmission (see McCloskey, 1985). The Shannon-Weaver model (refer to Figure 2.2) defined communication as the transmission of a message from the information source (sender/encoder) to a receiver (decoder). The linear model utilised, depicts information as a one-way process where the receiver views the message being transmitted as problem-free and desirable. It also suggested no need for feedback once the receiver intercepted a message.

Although having some elements of value as a basic communication model, when placed within the drafting-responding scope, I believe that the Shannon Weaver model has strong ties reminiscent of the traditional mode of teaching and learning where information flowed from the "sage on the stage" (Zachary, 2000:3) who had all the answers, to the novice student waiting to be filled with the knowledge (Smith and Waller, 1997). There is also the implication that the encoder's information is supreme and unquestionable, the 'truth' that must be simply internalised by the decoder (Quinn, 1999; M^cKenna, 2004). To ignore these misleading implications, is to simplify and understate 'communication' and the dialoguing context, thus rendering it to the level of window dressing.

FIGURE 2.2 THE SHANNON-WEAVER GENERAL MODEL OF COMMUNICATION



Source: http://www.greatcom.org/resources/tell_it_often_tell_it_well/chap17/default.htm

Research indicates that the reality in higher education, with its shifting learning-teaching approach, is that feedback needs to be more embracing than that which was initially conceptualised in the Shannon-Weaver Model above. Thus, unlike the above rudimentary model, when conceptualising feedback as a dialogue, there is far more at stake than simply transmitting a 'message' which is decoded by the recipient. In Figure 2.2 above, there is an assumption that the message itself is neutral or has an intrinsic 'right' interpretation which could be interpreted identically by all participants through a negotiated interpretation (M^cKenna, 2004). This then also implies that the message is on some level autonomous of the speaker and listener (M^cKenna, 2004). However, the New Literacy Studies research suggest that the 'message' does not exist as an autonomous self but is constructed and deconstructed in an ideologically based way, by all participants. This means that lecturers and students have different experiences which inform and shape their reality (also Vygotsky et al., 1978; Street 1984, 1993, 1995; Elbow, 1997; Perrenoud, 1998; M^cKenna, 1995 and 2004) thus one has to allow for an individual's unique interpretation of texts.

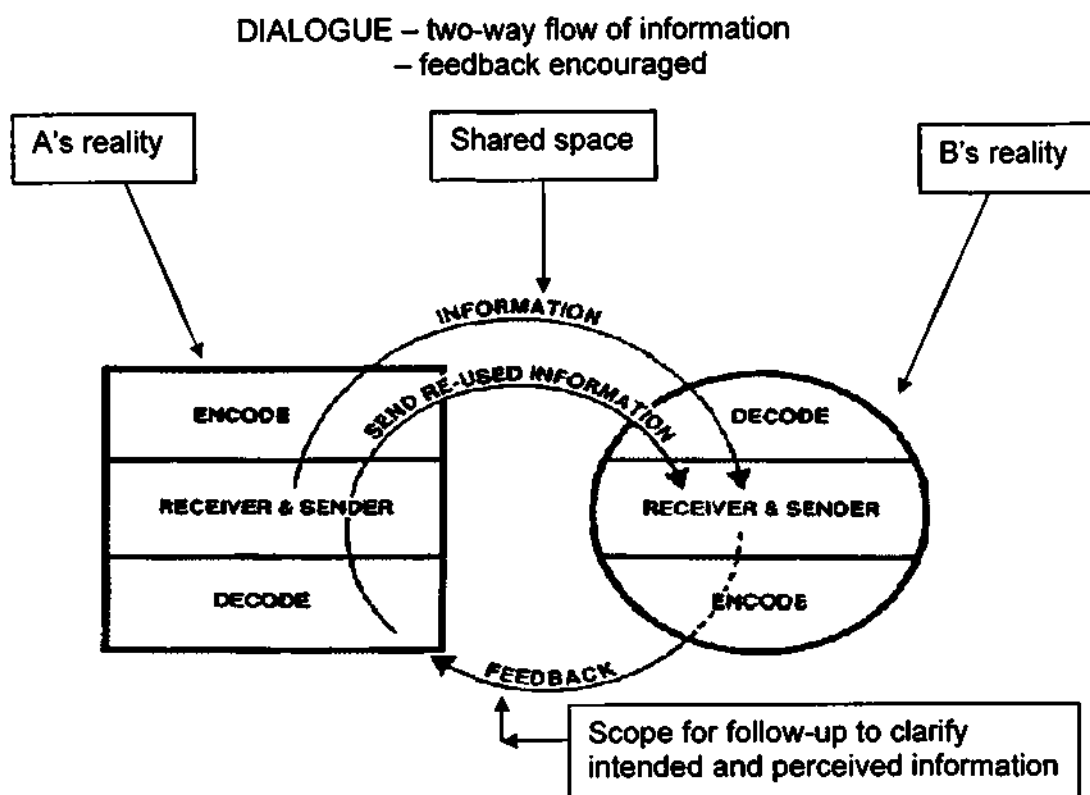
This gives rise to what Fulwiler (1989 cited in Newton, 1991:476) labelled as a "personal form of discourse" and has implications for example, for students' construction and deconstruction of meaning within the dialogue context contained in the drafting-responding process. As indicated by Quinn, "qualitative interpretations are constructed...In other words, there is no single interpretive "truth"; there is no natural, authentic or absolutely correct interpretation" (1999:50). This indicates to lecturers, that the way in which a student constructs meaning from texts and for the purpose of this study, lecturer feedback in the drafting-responding process, is a complex and very individual process riddled with personal experiences that hang over and influence cognition. When engaging in academic activities like reflecting on assigned

readings or problem-solving students are encouraged to realise that 'the same text can produce multiple meanings', conversely, lecturers seem to stop short of extending this logical principle to the process of student perception of lecturer feedback.

2.10.8 Communication - A more hopeful model?

Unlike the communication model conceptualised by Shannon-Weaver (1947), the communication model depicted in Figure 2.3, shows a greater cognisance of meaningful communication and feedback to and from the participants. I believe that Figure 2.3 presents a situation that is more desirable for the drafting-responding process. In this context, the statement by Brown and Knight (1994:112) has reference: "Feedback, ideally, ought to involve the interplay of the tutor's understanding and the learner's ... Dialogue is therefore not simply desirable but arguably essential."

FIGURE 2.3 COMMUNICATION MODEL B



Source: Adapted from McCloskey, 1985.

The communication model depicted in Figure 2.3 may facilitate the development of a shared understanding as it affords the sender an opportunity to establish how her message was

received and perceived. At the same time, it affords the receiver opportunity to check her understanding on the intended message which, as indicated in the literature, may be ambiguous, convoluted or seen to assume shared understanding, etc. This process of dialoguing may also be useful for rapport building between the participants, and may hold the key to the advancement of the learning and teaching environment. Additionally, it has the potential to clarify the meaning making between the communicating participants and thus has implications for student socialisation into 'ways of knowing' (Bartholomae 1985) and for lecturers in tailoring their feedback to fit student needs; and could help lay the foundation for meaningful feedback provision to students.

It becomes obvious that, even with the multiple issues I have identified and highlighted on formative practices, it is our awareness of these shortcomings, challenges and dynamics that can advance and develop our practices towards the gains to be had. The drafting-responding process used as the backdrop in this study could go some of the way in helping students to develop self regulation skills whilst simultaneously socialising students on assessment practices and the language of assessment and help both lecturers and students move towards a shared understanding. Kegan (1994 cited in Taylor and Marienau, 1997:236) refers, "A person does not develop simply because he or she knows more, but because he or she knows differently." In other words, a person can only move from their existing stage of development to another when changes to the way they "construct meaning" leads the person to re-evaluate their past way of being and knowing (Kegan, 1982 cited in Chickering and Reisser, 1993:25). Initiating and providing tasks that foster and encourage reflective practices, are then essential to such development (Barnett, 2004) and to moving our students from merely doing what the lecturer wants, towards using the lecturer to help them reach their learning goals (Patterson, 2005).

2. 10.9 Assessment practices and dynamic teaching

An inescapable and significant part of a lecturing job involves the assessment of students' work. This has implications for other aspects of lecturers' jobs. Ramsden's (1992:182) statement refers "Assessment is about several things at once. It is not about simple dualities such as grading versus diagnosis...It concerns the quality of teaching as well as the quality of learning..." It is not sufficient for lecturing staff to merely immerse themselves in the routine of conducting assessments. In the pursuit of developing their professional practice, staff can use their experiences, research, introspection, reflection and follow-up adjustments as key skills to feed forward into their development (Schön 1987). Additionally, staff must embrace the reality that their teaching may actually benefit from and be guided by their students' learning (Bardine et al., 2000; Leibowitz and Mohamed, 2000). For example, after the researchers Bardine et al., (2000) discuss the results of their findings on the usefulness of feedback to students, with the teacher participant in their study and the teacher indicates her intention and willingness to adjust practice to fit need. For example, she states "I learned that they

[students] need to be shown not only what needs to be improved in an essay, but also how to do it" (Bardine et al., 2000:99). This realisation is similar to the reflection in action indicated by Kearn's journey, as discussed in Chapter One. However from my experience, this may not always be the outcome in practice, and some staff may react very negatively and personally to what they may view as a critique of their ability. For benefits to be reaped there must be an acknowledgment of the potential cycle of learning to be experienced by all participants, that is, by students and lecturing staff as well as a willingness for active, meaningful improvement by all participants (Yorke, 2003).

I end this chapter with a review of some of my own assessment practices.

2.11 My assessment practices

Angelo (1995) believes that assessment is a dynamic process which involves understanding and improving student learning. I wish to point out that I have not limited my translation of his concept solely into the assessment practice outlined in this research. Some of the other practices I have devised and adopted for the improvement of learning and teaching include my introduction of: peer assessment (designed by the students for the students), authentic performance-based assessments designed to promote competency-based evaluations for continuous learning, designing and discussing explicit assessment criteria for a variety of subjects and areas within it in order to make these standards and criteria explicit to students (Paxton, 1995), the designing of assessment tasks which entail team work in order to promote collaborative learning, role-playing, semi-structured and informal discussions - which prompt students to ask questions and which provide opportunities for practice prior to assessment (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

As discussed earlier, this plethora of activities assists by helping to use multiple means to socialise our students in the tacit knowledge and 'rules and conventions' of our discipline.

During my venture into the learning and teaching arena, I found that a helpful insight to the students' view of the learning could be gained from the formal student evaluation surveys offered by the DUT's academic quality unit. These surveys are normally administered towards the end of the academic year as they are regarded as a way of obtaining a better measure of the course once the student has been through a period of study (Chang, et al., 2003). While some of the data collected from this survey was helpful in measuring the students' perspective on the subject, for me personally, the student feedback sometimes came too late for me to turn it into something useful for that group of students who had provided the evaluation feedback. It was for this reason that I decided to supplement the formal student evaluation survey with short informal evaluation questions on learning and teaching during the academic year (Bardine, 1999; Chang, et al., 2003). I believe that this branch in the way I

grow my teaching outlook and practices embodies a concept advocated by Funch (1995:n.p.), who believes that "a good facilitator would be perceiving and analyzing all the time" and not just at the end of the learning period (Funch, 1995). I also believe that adopting a dynamic outlook to my teaching enables me to connect on a deeper level with my students. It also affords me opportunity to indicate to my students that my commitment to them is more than just a pay cheque and that active teaching and listening can drive and motivate both their and my teaching and learning experiences.

Similar to Sprinkle's dictum (2004), by using a type of reflective model to examine and modify my feedback practices, (albeit at that stage based on intuition rather than a theoretical feedback model), I was able to include positives, negatives and interesting aspects about the learning and teaching taking place from the student perspective too. More importantly, I was able to make changes, even if small, while those students were continuing their learning cycle (Funch, 1995; Bardine, 1999; Sprinkle, 2004). For example, Fuller and Manning (cited by Brinko) state that video feedback should be reviewed soon after taping to reduce feelings of detachment from the videotaped image and to avoid perceptions of the videotaped image as an "older, no-longer-me" self (1993:581). Their advice echoes my classroom finding, although in a different context: that students need timely acknowledgement that their suggestions are valued and relevant and not merely an afterthought or as my student Zulu (2003) once argued, "Only to benefit someone else."

Additionally, my experience indicates that when student responses are sought, for example via student evaluation surveys administered at the end of the year, and no meaningful and immediate change is received in response, they become disillusioned and bitter. "Don't bother writing long stories" whispered one student to another, "no one reads it, anyway, the course is over...so who cares?" To avoid perpetuating this perception, I make a point of acknowledging and trying to include some of the suggestions from my students' responses to the informal questions posed. I also group their responses to pick up recurring themes on positives, negatives and interesting as well as to get a feel of how students overall perceived the lessons we engaged in. These findings are then shared with the group as a whole to indicate to students where the merged view on our classroom interactions is seated. I also remind my students when I initiate changes led by their responses (whenever possible), that I value and have not forgotten about their important contributions towards enhancing our classroom experiences. These 'changes' may not be radical and curriculum changing, but rather changes that aim to show students that learning in our classroom can be guided by a dialogue of sorts, for example (some) photocopied notes versus students writing all their own notes (this initiative also frees up more time for classroom discussions and checking that students have grasped key points effectively), a tour of a brewery rather than only notes and pictures on beer making, etc. I believe that these initiatives go some of the way towards indicating my sincerity and credibility to my students that a two-way dialogue can successfully enhance learning and teaching interactions in our classroom (Sprinkle, 2004).

I find kinship with the suggestion made by Ivanič et al. (2000) that an academic's learning and teaching practices and cycle is inextricably bound and shaped by their personal values, beliefs and perception of their role and that of their students in it. Simply put, as a vocationally-based academic appointment, I believe that my need to constantly ensure that my students are afforded efficient and enhanced learning opportunities is due to my perception that my "academic capital" is still developing (Bourdieu, 1992 cited in Shay, 2003:21). This in turn drives my practices, reflection and subsequent adjustment of practices. Within this context, I was deeply concerned about the feedback I provided and the extent to which it was useful to students. It was this concern that drove this study.

This chapter provided an overview of all aspects of feedback as discussed in the literature. It also provides the theoretical framework of feedback in the teaching-learning process. It is from within this framework that the data is analysed in Chapter Four. The next chapter details the research methodology.

Chapter Three Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore the interpretivist orientation for the research with overlaps from constructivism. The research process, including data collection and analysis and how the research was written up, is then discussed.

Kuhn's conception of a 'paradigm' (1970 cited in Neuman, 2000:65) as "a basic orientation to theory and research" has been seminal for researchers. Kuhn describes paradigms as providing us with multiple ways of "looking at life and are grounded in sets of assumptions about the nature of reality" (Babbie, 1998). By the same token, a paradigm shift heralds what Applefield et al. (2001:35) refer to as "new perspectives, new conceptualizations and thinking about a topic, large or small." On this basis therefore, it is generally accepted that a paradigm can frame, guide, shape and inform a research undertaking.

However, while this basic conceptualisation is important, for a researcher to successfully determine the paradigm that frames his or her study, she should firstly have an understanding of the "basic ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions" associated with a variety of research paradigms (Guba, 1990 cited in Quinn, 1999:39). Henning et al., (2004:15), describe three aspects that can inform the researcher's understanding: the nature of knowledge and reality (ontology), "how we come to know" (epistemology) and the "specific ways ... we can use to try and understand our world better" (methodology).

The success of scientific enquiry in the natural sciences paved the way for adopting the methods of science to approach research undertaken in other fields. And although this stance has not been without debate in the 21st century (Collins, 1989; Couch, 1987, cited in Neuman, 2000), it has become acceptable to be 'scientific' (in a positivist sense) when acquiring knowledge on issues in the social sciences too (Neuman, 2000). However, it must be noted that the methods used to approach research in the natural sciences and consequently, the resulting type and scope of the data are not necessarily always useful or relevant, for the social sciences context. For example, Robson (2002:17) argued that natural sciences make use of methods that focus on the collection of "hard data, usually in the form of numbers," which are then analysed through the application of statistical methods, otherwise known as quantitative research. This is unlike the social sciences, where Robson has indicated a penchant for "softer styles of enquiry" through the use of methods like unstructured interviews and observations, to elicit textual data, which does not lend itself to analysed through the use of statistical analysis (2002:18). This is otherwise referred to as qualitative research. Thus, it

follows that the type of research undertaken at any time, is led by "the nature of the research problem" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:11).

Using Habermas' knowledge and human interest's theory, Romm (1993) indicates a key conceptual difference in the data gathered, when comparing the natural and social sciences. For example, researchers in the social sciences believe that "knowledge is never a 'pure' reflection of reality... as long as science clings to the illusion that pure knowledge is attainable, the aims and objectives that in reality are responsible for generating knowledge, will remain hidden and unknown" (Habermas, 1972 cited in Romm 1993:181). This means that unlike research in the natural sciences, which aims to use methods which separate that being studied from "lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings..." (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:11), researchers in the social sciences aim to use "inductive" qualitative methods which "seek to discover" (Padgett, 1998:2), identify, explore, interact with, rationalise and interpret the "hidden and unknown" (Romm, 1993:181) in order to generate new ways of knowing about and understanding phenomena or as Stern (1980, cited in Strauss and Corbin, 1998:11) has indicated, "to gain novel understanding" about previously publicised knowledge. The data gleaned by the social researchers and their methods permits the extraction of "intricate details...thought processes" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:11), which may be overlooked in the data obtained through natural sciences; and have embedded implications in the data (Duncan, 1984 cited in Babbie, 1998). Thus, it may be said that humans, the object of study in social sciences and the resulting data, are irrevocably different to the object of study and data generated, in natural sciences that is, "stars, rocks, plants" etc. (Neuman, 2000:64) and therefore necessitate an alternate means of study to a purely science based one.

Importantly, the nature of research, when involving the study of people and their behaviour, as well as the possibility of the worldview of the researcher (McKenna, 2004; Henning et al., 2004) shaping the data generated by the social researcher, is acknowledged (Babbie, 1998; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Esterberg, 2002). Esterberg (2002) maintains that rather than insisting on the possibility of objectivity in a social science research undertaking, a researcher needs to be reflexive, that is to understand how their experiences can shape each stage of their unfolding research. Cognisance of this characteristic is important as it can assist the researcher in striving to maintain what Strauss and Corbin (1998:42) refers to as "a balance between objectivity and sensitivity" to their data. But it does imply that there may be more than one interpretation of the same phenomena (Neuman, 2000). For example Ellingson (1998 cited in Esterberg, 2002), a researcher conducting research on cancer survivors, describes how her past experience as a survivor of bone cancer shaped and informed her research and write-up. Further, she indicates how her findings and empathy with her research participants may be very different to those of another researcher who did not have her background. However, this does not mean that social research is without value or is of less

value (Robson, 2000) or that "anything goes," (Neuman, 2000:63). With regards to the former, Robson (2000:18) indicates how the use of "a scientific attitude" can assist social researchers by providing quality research data that is both valuable and useful. He suggests that this may be done by adopting aspects of three overarching philosophies when conducting social research. These are: being systematic, that is, "being explicit about all aspects of your study" (ibid:18), being sceptical, that is, "subjecting your ideas to possible disconfirmation" (ibid:18) and "scrutiny by others" (ibid:19), and lastly, being ethical, that is, using a "code of conduct" that safeguards the participants in the research (Robson, 2000:18).

Having said that, it does not mean that the adoption of this rigour in one's thesis means it must be devoid of creativity (Patton, 1990 cited in Strauss and Corbin, 1998, Padgett, 1998, on the contrary, the creativity of researchers is valued as an essential ingredient (Sandelowski, 1995 cited in Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Thus, when social researchers set out to do research, they need to make use of a more "flexible" approach to research (Neuman, 2000:64) by choosing "from alternative approaches to science" (Neuman, 2000:63).

3.2 Research approach

Social researchers may choose from three broad approaches as a foundation for their research. Each approach is based on and informed by "different ways of looking at the world – ways to observe, measure and understand social reality" (Neuman, 2000:65). However, this simplified conceptualisation may be misleading as the literature indicates that for social researchers, the boundaries between these social research approaches are conceived as being very permeable (Babbie, 1998; Padgett, 1998; Quinn, 1999; Neuman, 2000; M^cKenna, 2004). Avison (1997 cited in M^cKenna, 2004:32) captures this eloquently by stating that "neat categories are the realms of texts and courses in research methods". One may therefore often find that social researchers borrow elements from different approaches, to best frame and guide their study.

I will provide an overview of the three major social research approaches before elaborating on my own approach for this study. I will briefly outline the three approaches as categorised by Neuman (2000): positivist social science, interpretive social science and critical social science. However, I follow M^cKenna (2004), in acknowledging that the categories I have opted to delineate are not necessarily replicated in all the literature on research orientations as "the names of research paradigms...vary from textbook to textbook" (M^cKenna, 2004:33).

3.2.1 Positivist social science

Strains of positivism go under the following names: "logical empiricism, the accepted or conventional view, post-positivism, naturalism, the covering law model and behaviourism"

(Neuman, 2000:65). The positivist orientation, depicted in the literature as the dominant research approach (Esterberg, 2002; Henning et al., 2004), situates the researcher's quest to seek out the "truth" (Neuman, 2000:68), which is "out there, waiting to be discovered" (ibid:67), through a process of theory or hypothesis testing. The aim is to use methodologies like empirical and scientific methods to conduct research in order to "discover causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human behaviour" (Esterberg, 2002:10). That is, methods which focus on what can be measured or observed through our sense of for example sight, hearing etc. or through "special instruments that extend the senses (e.g. telescopes, microscopes...)" (Neuman, 2000:69). Henning et al., (2004) assert that the goals in this orientation are focussed on describing, explaining or predicting phenomena that are experienced.

Neuman (2000) and Esterberg (2002) indicate that these methodologies are specifically designed to make use of techniques that focus on the elimination of bias and data which may be construed as being logically unsound. In fact, Esterberg (2002) indicates that in this approach, the researcher's distance from that which is being observed is not only valued but requisite in maintaining their neutrality toward their object of study. Hegtvedt (1992 cited in Neuman, 2000), indicates that for the positivist orientation, this foundation is important as it rests on a premise that ensuing research findings can be regularly reproduced by other researchers at any given time. However, this approach has been criticised as being "unreflexive because it focuses exclusively on methods and outcomes and fails to ask any questions about the research process itself" (Usher, 1996:13) and could thus miss critical information contained within the data.

3.2.2 Interpretive social science (hermeneutics, constructivism)

Although Esterberg indicates that a constructivist and interpretivist approach are different in their own ways, essentially, they share a common grounding in that "all social reality is constructed or created, by social actors" (2002:15). Adopting a "practical orientation" (Neuman, 2000:71), is focussed on understanding, interpretation and meaning making by individuals (Usher, 1996), in their "natural settings" (Neuman, 2000:71), to "inform and guide practical judgment" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986 cited in McKenna, 2004:35) as opposed to using prediction, generalisation and control, which are characteristic of the positivist paradigm. Thus, unlike the positivists who believe that science can be used to uncover the "truth" (Henning et al., 2004:17), interpretivists believe in the existence of multiple realities informed by "an approximation of the truth" (ibid:20) as it is grounded in the belief that all "observation is fallible and has error" (ibid:19). Interpretivists take cognisance of the ability that researcher bias or personal influence may have, to steer and influence their study, as it works on the premise that the researcher cannot fully step outside of their 'ways of being' in the world when they provide what is essentially a 'secondary account' of someone else's meaning system

(Neuman, 2000, also Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000 cited in Henning et al., 2004). Henning et al. (2004:37) further indicate that it becomes essential for the researcher to "explicitly indicate her position." That is, clearly stating the "researchers' own values and beliefs" (Quinn, 1999:41) in terms of "methodology and methods" (Henning et al., 2004:37) thus providing the reader with informed insight to the way the researcher's view and position in the social world is construed (Huberman and Miles, 1998). Additionally, Padgett, (1998:41 citing Ely et al., 1991) believes that it may be beneficial for the researcher to "practice bracketing." This means that once the researcher identifies their stance in terms of assumptions, beliefs, values and feelings pertaining to a situation, that they wilfully and constantly make efforts to suspend these in order to prevent researcher biases from clouding the way the researcher views the interviewee's experience of the situation.

The interpretive approach is closely affiliated to hermeneutics, that is, the study and interpretation of texts (Crabtree and Miller, 1999), which could stem from a "conversation, written words or pictures" (Neuman, 2000:70). Researchers may make use of methods like field research and detailed observation of research participants, in order to document, describe and understand a specific context (Quinn, 1999) on "how people create and maintain their social world" (Neuman, 2000:71). For example, this approach is rooted in the belief that human actions are inextricably led by inherent and dynamic social and culturally developed meaning systems (Neuman, 2000 and Esterberg, 2002), and that participants are so socialised in these systems, that it is more a way of being rather than being made explicit on a day-day basis, or from one context to another. This excerpt by Winch (1958 cited in Snyman, 1993) refers: "The concepts we have, settle for us the form of the experience we have of the world...there is no way of getting outside the concepts in terms of which we think of the world" (1993:79). This in turn implies that a researcher in this paradigm would need to closely study a text, for example, of an interview transcript, in order to glean the multiple messages contained therein, which may not be as immediately obvious to the researcher, on a first reading (Neuman, 2000) nor "the straightforward answer to the interviewer's question that it is presumed to be" (Mason, 2002:231). This kind of activity further implies that the researcher, in this paradigm, is in close contact with the research participants (Padgett, 1998; Neuman, 2000). While Winch (1958 cited in Snyman, 1993) has argued that this does not necessarily mean that the researcher has to duplicate the observed participants' emotions themselves, the researcher needs to beware of the "hidden and unknown" (Romm, 1993:181) or "slumbering variables" (Henning et al., 2004:8) of a participant's realities, in order to piece together an informed 'secondary account' and gain an understanding of a participant's actions, within a particular context.

3.2.3 Critical social science

The critical paradigm is often identified in the literature as the "conflict theory" (Neuman, 2000:76). Unlike positivism and interpretivism, which respectively seek to "predict and control"

or "understand and interpret" given situations, the critical paradigm is aimed at active transformation and redress (Esterberg, 2002:17). This approach is critical of what it views as the placid nature of the previous two approaches as it operates on the belief that simply observing or understanding phenomena does not change or empower an individual's existing and sometimes oppressive situation. Thus, this approach not only seeks to understand people's situations and feelings, but also has a transformative agenda once it gets to the root of the interplay that encourages and supports the suppression of others' rights (Esterberg, 2002). Key to this approach's tenet is that its supporters believe that challenge and transformation are necessary in order to shift power imbalances (Henning et al., 2004) where "unequal social relations" are seen to exist (Esterberg, 2002:17).

Furthermore, Smith (1987 cited in Esterberg, 2002) has argued that a critical stance is especially important because the reality of an oppressed person may be conditioned by what she refers to as the "relations of ruling" (2002:18). This means that an oppressed person may not be able to see beyond their existing situation and therefore merely serve to unknowingly assist in perpetuating their oppression (Esterberg, 2002). Despite this approach's intention to champion and empower the oppressed, it has been criticised for its assumption that general solutions are sufficient to incite change that would transform an oppressor's practical problems. It has also been criticised for facilitating "the transfer of power from one group to another" (Quinn, 1999:42).

3.2.3 The Paradigm used in this study

This research is informed by the interpretive research orientation with overlaps from social constructivism. Thus, this thesis seeks to "...avoid the de-humanising and technicist elements of the positivist research tradition" (van Rensburg, 1995:31). Interpretive studies seek to describe and understand, as opposed to correlate and predict. By using descriptive data I aim to "highlight the complexities and promote broad insights" (van Rensburg, 1995:31) into student perception and use of feedback, in a given context (Esterberg, 2002). Thus, as Neuman (2000) asserts, a researcher in the interpretivist orientation is concerned with a participants' perceptions of what is important or meaningful to them. For example, in this study I was concerned with students' views of comments that they found helpful versus those they found unhelpful. Thus, by using this orientation I grapple with and probe some of the complexities and issues of assessment feedback as experienced by Hospitality Management students, for the subject Hospitality Operations, when located within the institution of the DUT.

Additionally, in this research orientation, knowledge and reality are perceived to be socially constructed and the central endeavour of research is to gain insight and understanding into the subjective world of human experience in terms of its actors (Esterberg, 2002). Interpretive researchers try to understand phenomena through the multiple meanings that people assign

to them, and assume that access to reality is via social construction such as language, consciousness and shared meanings (Myers, 2002). Thus, this orientation rests on the premise that "Persons exist and grow in living webs of relationships" (Mahoney, 2004). In light of this study, interpretive research assists us in "discovering the meanings which research participants give to their activities" (Quinn, 1999:41).

Although I did not set out to or initially assume to have any explicit critical-emancipatory aims, I believe that my research does offer the potential for students and lecturing staff involved in a drafting-responding process, to be empowered beyond where their current experiences of assessment and administering of assessment respectively reside. This in turn may have bearing on a more powerful other, which is the institution, as it may imply change at a higher level to facilitate yielding the fruit of an evolved assessment policy. My own experiences and practices since 2003, have certainly evolved and been positively influenced by the research I have undertaken, and they will hopefully continue to do so.

The purpose of this research was thus, to document and analyse data on how students interacted with and used feedback when they are afforded an opportunity for feedback to feed forward, for the same piece of work. That is, to determine if learning through reflection and assistance from a more informed other (Vygotsky et al., 1978; Atherton, 2005b), made a difference to students' work when placed within a recursive process (Papert, undated). Importantly, prior to participating in this research, the student participants had not been exposed to a drafting-responding type assessment. Within this context, I aimed to use data gathered from the student interviews as well as from the student's assignments (draft and final), in order to piece together detailed observations of participants' opinions, expectations and use of feedback.

3.3 Case study

A case study research is undertaken because the researcher assumes that there is something worthwhile to be gained, observed or understood from the phenomena under study (Henning et al., 2004). Although Henning et al. (2004) indicate that case studies may be associated with positivist, interpretivist or critical research paradigms; they also cite Merriam (1999), to indicate that qualitative research, especially, in education is associated with a long and successful history of case study analysis.

Padgett (1998:30 cites Snow and Anderson, 1991) to indicate that case studies "focus on bounded systems of action", that is, description and explanation of "systematic connections among observable behaviour, speculation, causes and treatments." Henning et al. argue that the processes informing the case; that is: "a description of *how, where, when and why* things happen" (emphasis in original) are a vital part of the research too (2004:41). However, while

case studies may be credited with providing contextually rich information (Padgett, 1998 and Stake 2002 cited in Henning et al., 2004), they may be criticised for their potential for researcher subjectivity.

Another criticism levelled at case studies, is the use of a single case study or a small number of cases. However, Padgett (1998) has argued that the use of a single case study or a small number of cases in qualitative research does not diminish the quantity or quality of the data that may be gathered. Furthermore, in conducting qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (1998a) and Padgett (1998) remind the reader that findings are not sought to make generalisable assumptions but rather to obtain an in-depth understanding of people and their interactions, in a particular context. Walsham (1993:15) captures this essence eloquently with the following words:

the validity of an extrapolation from an individual case or cases depends not on the representativeness of such cases, but on the plausibility and cogency of the logical reasoning used in describing the results from the cases, and in drawing conclusions from them.

This was very relevant to my thesis as it was directly in line with my quest to explore and present 'rich' logical and useful data from a small number of research participants within a particular context.

Additionally, Quinn (1999:45) cites Walker (1992) to indicate that using a case study methodology

address[es] important questions regarding educational practices, [of] what works and what doesn't, [and] can add to a body of research and add to theoretical understandings of teaching and learning grounded in specific contexts.

Thus, given the nature of my research, I believe that my qualitative case study inquiry with its interpretivist orientation was appropriate for framing my quest into the dynamics associated with feedback and its impact on the learning and teaching cycle, when experienced by student participants enrolled for the subject Food and Beverage Operations II, at the DUT.

3.4 Methods

Corbin and Strauss (1998:3) broadly define methods as "a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analysing data." These are partly informed by the research inquiry and its context (Denzin and Lincoln 1998a), researcher's use of logic, design preference of

researcher, the theory associated with the inquiry and the research orientation (Henning et al., 2004).

The main methods of data collection for qualitative research includes for example "interviewing, observation, document review" (Padgett, 1998:13) in order to generate "raw data" (ibid:3). While Padgett (1998), Henning et al. (2004), and others indicate that it is possible to mix methods, for example interviewing and observation (Ely et al., 1991 cited in Padgett, 1998), the literature also indicates that "interviewing is at the heart of social research" (Esterberg, 2002:83). Data gathering is followed by procedures to "interpret and organise the data", referred to as coding, and finally, analytical processes like the "writing of memos", to present the findings (Corbin and Strauss, 1998:12).

3.5 Data gathering tools:

3.5.1 Assignment

The student assignment in this research was undertaken and completed as part of the assessment requirements for the subject Food and Beverage Operations II, in the first semester of 2007. The first part of the "raw data" (Padgett, 1998:73) was gathered from the participating student's assignment drafts and final copies. The data included comments made by the lecturer, on both the draft and final copies of the assignments.

3.5.2 Interviews

The second part of the "raw data" (Padgett, 1998:73) was gathered during the participants' interviews. An interview methodology assumes that interviews usually involve "conversation with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984 cited in Mason, 2002:225; also see Babbie, 1998, Denzin and Lincoln, 1998b). This means that the interviewer must use key objectives to stimulate the interviewee to talk about particular aspects, while she listens carefully to what is being said, including how it is being said. In this way, the interviewer is able to interpret and obtain clarity, where necessary, on what has been said (Mason, 2002). However, Kvale (1996:3) has argued that there is more to an interview than just the simplistic notion of the "interviewer as miner" juggling questions and answers. For example, the interviewer needs to determine how they will "drive the conversation" in order to extract the requisite research data (Mason, 2002:226). This type of focus on the 'interview goal' will help inform the questioning strategy adopted by the interviewer. Research also indicates that the use of different types of interviewing techniques influences the way interviewees answer questions. For example, Fontana and Frey (1998 cited in Mason, 2002:237) argued that for questions to be answered properly and thoroughly, they "must be asked person-to-person". Similarly, Mason (2002) has argued for the interview process to be regarded as a fluid "site of knowledge construction"

with the interviewee and interviewer as contributing role players to the processes that unfold (Mason, 2002:227). For this thesis's purposes, interviews signify the importance of personal contact, situated context and the joint efforts of the interviewer and interviewee within this framework, to co-produce knowledge through the recounting, construction and reconstruction of relevant situations (Mason, 2002).

The interviews I conducted were of a semi-structured nature, which means that the questions posed, were "flexible, iterative and continuous, rather than prepared in advance and cast in stone" (Rubin and Rubin, 1995:43). To this effect, I prepared a list of topics and core questions that had bearing on my topic to help guide the interview process, but this basic preparation simultaneously allowed for student freedom to discuss issues beyond the confines I had predetermined (Berg, 1995). Additionally, although respondents were asked similar questions, as interviewer I could adapt the formulation, including the terminology used, to fit the background of individual respondents (Welman, and Kruger, 2003). I believe that this grounding afforded both the interviewee and I freedom and reflection to allow the interview momentum to shape and guide our successive conversations (Babbie, 1998) and among other aspects, helped to reveal elements and "layers" of "the social" realm within which student experiences and perceptions were constructed or embedded in (Mason, 2002:225). The nature of the interview also allowed me the latitude to rephrase those questions that I realised were too closed to elicit the kind of thick descriptions that I was searching for. The following excerpt refers:

Interviewer: ...Do you think that the drafting-responding process has helped you...?

Student response: hmhhh...yes.

Interviewer: How has this process has helped you?

Simultaneously, the semi-structured interview format allowed opportunity for me check that even though each interview proceeded at a different pace and level of detail, that certain key areas that I wished to probe, could be addressed (Bell, 1999). This ensured that all the important topics were covered while seamlessly allowing the interviewer-interviewee latitude to cover items of importance to each, in the order and style most comfortable to them, thus allowing for a better flow of conversation (Bell, 1999).

Nine students participated in the scheduled one-on-one interview sessions. Although each interview varied in length, the average interview lasted approximately 90 minutes, and each student was interviewed once. During each interview, I had both the draft and revised versions of the student's assignments present. I used both my verbal interaction with the students as well as the assignments copies as tools to stimulate and then tease out and

probe each student's thoughts, perceptions, understanding and experiences of the overall feedback provided within the drafting-responding process.

All my interviews were tape-recorded. The tapes were then transcribed by an external non-DUT employee and verified by myself to check the accuracy thereof. I believe that taping of the interviews gave both the interviewee and me the opportunity to focus on a free-flowing interaction rather than carefully orchestrated questions and answers. Also, I hoped that certain questions would trigger animated responses from the interviewees and I felt that copious note-taking during such instances could distract the interviewee (Padgett, 1998) and simultaneously shift my eye contact from the interviewee to my writing page thus creating potential barriers for my rapport with the interviewee. Furthermore, as a slow writer who has little knowledge or experience of short-hand, I did not want to lose important data or momentum by writing furiously or worse, asking the interviewee to slow the pace of their response to accommodate my note-taking ability.

I do however, take cognisance of Bells' argument (1999) that taping of interviews may unsettle participants as they may feel that they have to be careful of what they say as it is a more permanent type of dialogue and that transcriptions are time consuming. With deference to Bell's argument, as much as verification and analysis of the interview tapes proved to be time consuming, it also proved to be a positive too, as I was able to go back to the data repeatedly to double check or re-assess my interpretation of what had transpired during the interview. Additionally, as detailed later in this chapter, I made several efforts to relax the interviewee in a bid to make them as comfortable as possible.

Research indicates that practice can develop and hone one's interviewing skills (Babbie, 1998). For me the interviewing process was a learning process but perhaps some of the lessons I learnt came a little too late to impact on the data that I had gathered. For example, I felt that prolonged silence during the interview was uncomfortable and I usually filled this gap with a question, prompt or stimulus, as I did not want to lose what I perceived to be guidance and 'control' of the interview (Babbie, 1998; Parkerson, 2000). However, on reflection, I see that sometimes, the silence could have just been the student's way of taking time to make sense of something before they framed what they wanted to say next (Babbie, 1998; Parkerson, 2000). Furthermore, although I entered the interviewer-interviewee relationship as a researcher, I realised that I could not fully divorce myself from my other role of lecturer - in charge of the student group and tasked with ensuring that certain criteria and issues of the day, were dealt with. Thus, in hindsight, it made me realise that biases are not overt, they creep up unexpectedly like gremlins skewering data in their wake.

Kvale (1996) asserts that an interview interaction between a lecturer (as interviewer) and student (as interviewee) is not equal. In cognisance of this reality, I made several efforts to

minimise the impact of this power differential. For example, following Quinn's example (1999), prior to each interview, I set aside time to provide the student with a brief purpose and overview of the interview including how the data was going to be used as well as reminding students that the interview would be taped. Also similar to Quinn's study, students were offered two opportunities to help avoid compromising what they said in any way. That is, students were offered the opportunity to remain anonymous and importantly, were given the opportunity to peruse my interpretation of interview transcripts, to check that I had not misinterpreted or incorrectly cited what they had dialogued, in a particular context. However these gestures do not eradicate the power differentials between the parties in this context.

In essence, I had an advantage over the interviewee in that not only was I in control of the interview, but I was keenly aware, at all times, that my questioning had an underlying intent (Mason, 2002) to elicit certain key interviewee "lived experiences" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:11) on related issues. Furthermore, even at the pre-interview stage, I had had plenty of time to familiarise myself with the general nature and scope of my intent and to frame the questions for what I wanted to ask and how I might ask it (Mason, 2002). This was unlike the interviewee, who was likely to be hearing a particular vein of questioning at that particular time only. Also, as the number of interviews I conducted increased, reflection thereon helped my questions evolve and I also became more comfortable with the interview process and its nature. However, my subsequent experience and growth in confidence of the interviewing process would have evolved differently when compared to each of the interviewee's one-shot experience.

Cognisance of the power differentials inherent in relationships between a lecturer and student or interviewer and interviewee, also advised the little gestures I enacted and orchestrated, to minimise the impact of my position of power as lecturer and interviewer. For example, I selected a neutral interview venue in which to conduct the interviews which hopefully moved me out of the context that students might associate with being summoned to a lecturer's office. Importantly too, I ensured that I sat alongside rather than across a desk to the students being interviewed. Additionally, prior to each interview, I ensured that I was organised (that is tape recorder, tapes, assignment copies etc.), offered students tea and during the interview, used body language or made appropriate verbal indications to support and encourage students' recounting of situations (McKenna, 2004) in a bid to capture a carefully orchestrated 'relaxed environment'.

A huge learning experience for me was encountered during my checking of the interview transcripts and related to the quality of my recordings. I checked each interview transcript by listening to the recordings while reading the transcriptions. This time consuming effort was compounded as the quality of my tapes was poor. I had borrowed a standard tape recording device to record my interview data and only realised at a later date that the quality of its

recordings was inferior. Although I managed to borrow another recording device for my last two interviews, I abandoned the use thereof after experiencing technical difficulties associated with the use of a technologically advanced device without a manual and misplaced software on how to download the recorded interview data.

Further to the above, although the interviewee and I sat close to the recording device to aid the recording process, the recordings also captured static, magnified background noises, for example students talking outside the interview venue (not obvious during the interview), and the rustling caused when the participant and I referred constantly to the draft and final assignment copies. I must acknowledge that in some instances, despite reviewing the tapes and transcripts several times, these disturbances meant that sometimes data was lost or incomplete, both to the transcriber and me, due to lack of audibility.

3.6 Making sense of the data

Padgett (1998:75) indicates that unlike quantitative research, where the researcher may be assisted to manage and analyse the data gathered, in qualitative research, the researcher himself is the "instrument of data collection and analysis." Thus, once the raw data was collected from the field, I began the systematic processing aspect, that is, gathering and sorting copies of all documents, observation and field notes, consent forms etc. which made up my "field text" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998b:170). I also had the interview tapes transcribed and then checked the transcripts against the tapes to verify them. These transcripts were then added to my field texts. In transcribing the data, I had advised the transcriber not to make what Padgett (1998:76) describes as "cosmetic revisions." Thus, the interviewee's speech is recorded verbatim with the exception of those instances where the quality of the tape interfered with audiology. In these instances, I did not attempt to fill in the blanks but rather opted for the use of question marks to denote lost data.

In a bid to make sense of my data, I began the interpretative process using the data repertoire from my "field texts" to produce my "research text" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998b:170). This entailed reading through each of the student's assignment copies as well as the interview transcripts carefully. I did this several times in an effort to get "closer to the data" (Padgett, 1998:75) and also to see what themes emerged from the data rather than forcing the student's words into preconceived categories (Seidman, 1991 cited in Quinn, 1999). I believed that this stance would allow me to really focus on students' perceptions on feedback. Thereafter, I used Nvivo as a data management tool to "organise and store data" (Padgett, 1998:75) for easy "retrieval" (Huberman and Miles, 1998:180). This process can facilitate among other aspects, noting, grouping and coding of recurring themes or to highlight any unique differences within the data transcripts (Huberman and Miles, 1998; Babbie, 1998). These themes can then serve as cues to probe and sometimes compare how different

research participants react, behave or handle a similar incident, within a given context (Babbie, 1998). It is also worth noting that as themes emerged I made use of memos containing short descriptions and rationale to justify and remind myself of the reasoning informing, for example, my use of different codes or my thoughts and concerns, etc. at that given time (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995 cited in Padgett, 1998).

With time becoming a critical commodity for my semester enrolled research participants, I opted to circulate copies of my initial analysis among the student participants for member checking and at the same time, to my work colleagues and research supervisor for their input and feedback. Part of my actions were informed by Crabtree and Miller's (1999:189) belief that "significant others...may provide unexpected insights, drawn from their own differing life experience, [that] may provide new inroads and perspectives" to one's data. I believe that sometimes, in re-telling another person's lived experiences, the essence of the communication could be distorted, incomplete or overlooked (Esterberg, 2002). However, by opening up my analysis to the research participants' scrutiny, I could give them an opportunity to voice their opinion and or objection to how their experiences were portrayed (Esterberg, 2002). My offer led to fruition for, although students seemed satisfied with the categories identified and coded, issues centring on anonymity, which are discussed under ethics in this chapter, were raised.

Further to the above, feedback from my colleagues and supervisor helped me to re-assess my initial analysis. This resulted in me narrowing my very wide range of themes. I realised that in letting themes emerge from the data, I had experienced an unexpected negative - a strong sense of ownership of these emerging themes. I did not want to let any of them go. Rather, I wanted to include all the themes in my thesis. However, my supervisor's suggestion that my voluminous data collection read more like a report helped to redirect my focus towards ascertaining key categories which I could theorise and discuss in-depth. This involved an iterative process that entailed going back and forth between layers of data, that is, my initial themes and coding, my data and the related literature and theories (Borkan, 1999). Sometimes this process resulted in the merging of existing themes or the emergence of new themes (Padgett, 1998) in my bid to capture similarities, identify uniqueness in my participant's experiences (Padgett, 1998) or to make "contrasts/comparisons" in the data (Huberman and Miles, 1998:181).

3.7 Discourse analysis

I used a form of discourse analysis set within a hermeneutic framework to sift the data for relevant themes and differences (Henning et al., 2004) on how students perceived, reacted to and used the feedback provided in the drafting-responding process outlined in this thesis, to improve their assignment draft. Discourse analysis seeks to understand the "rules or structure

of communication" (Crabtree and Miller, 1999:30). Thus, the researcher focuses "directly on conversation itself, using transcripts of naturally occurring conversations, such as between doctor and patient...to uncover a portrait of the forms, mechanisms, and rules guiding the conversation" (ibid:30). This understanding is especially important for this thesis – for example, by attempting to identify and understand the discourses underlying students' perceptions of feedback, academics can paint a fuller picture of how a student's reality is constructed, deconstructed and negotiated within different contexts, and in particular, within the drafting-responding context. The discourses arising from the analysis of data transcripts will be addressed in Chapter Four.

3.8 Researcher as contextually informed lecturer

In Chapter One, I provided an outline of the way I came to be involved in this research undertaking and elsewhere I have alluded to the impossibility of using pure objectivity when portraying the data in this research. Simultaneously, I believe that it is this acknowledgement of my biases and world view that enables me to periodically step back from the data, that is as Fetterman (1989 cited in Padgett, 1998:47) advocates, to review the data "with an open mind, (not an empty head)." Thus, I believe that from what unfolds next, in the selection of my research participants, my data gathering and analysis thereof, that my stance in this research could hardly be described as a "detached" (Padgett, 1998:56).

As established at the outset of this thesis, I had a vested interest in this research, both as a researcher, working to fulfil my degree and also in terms of my "professional interest" (Padgett, 1998). That is, I approached it as a lecturer following a similar learning and teaching practice in my own classrooms, with the hope of improving such practices. Meaning that unlike other studies where research and practice tend to follow divergent paths and have little in common (Schön, 1991) this thesis may be seen to mutually support my research and practice initiatives (Carr and Kemmis, 1993). Thus, the relevance of my research topic and findings to my own learning and teaching practices are so intertwined (Schön, 1991) it means that like McKenna (2004:46), I must confess that I am "unavoidably present in my own research." My thesis reflects my presence with the constant use of 'I', and is a constant reminder to readers that this thesis is merely my view of a particular reality (Kvale, 1996). Like Ellingson (1998 cited in Esterberg, 2002), I understand that another researcher using the same data may arrive at totally different findings and perceptions to mine or even pose questions of a different nature to those in my thesis. I hope, however, that the overt development of argument, the inclusion of quotes from the data, and the references to the literature means that my findings and perspectives have meaning beyond my own reading.

My "state of mind" or what Padgett (1998:45) also refers to as the "field" establishes my stance as that of an informed observer, who has taken on the role of researcher but

simultaneously has prior knowledge and firsthand experience of the research context and the way it may unfold (Padgett, 1998; also see Schön, 1991). For example, as indicated in Chapter One, I have had previous involvement in setting an assessment activity, providing guidelines, allowing for drafting opportunity, providing written feedback, conducting verbal information sessions with students, allocating time for student revision and resubmission, marking, etc. Essentially, my involvement with, insight into, and experiences of these aspects coupled, with findings from my literature review means that while I am alert to and have an insider's knowledge of "some of the dominant understandings [and unfolding] of the teaching and learning process" (McKenna, 2004:46), simultaneously, I am actively and constantly practicing the art of bracketing in a foremost effort to step back (Padgett, 1998; Esterberg, 2002) and keep my focus on understanding my participants' experiences. Thus, on the one hand, while my experiences inform me, I did not want my past experiences to 'blind' me to "new perspectives" (Padgett, 1998:27). Additionally, as an insider or "key informant" (Padgett 1998:53), although I am informed by a similar context to my research context, I am also aware that contexts vary in any number of ways, for example from one cohort of students to another, and that this could have multiple implications for the introduction and exposure to a similar intervention. Thus, following Kvale (1996) and Padgett (1998), it would be remiss not to explain that my prior knowledge informs the way the interview texts will be interpreted, and also shapes the way the data will be presented (Padgett, 1998).

3.9 The research processes

3.9.1 Background of research context

The Hospitality Management Diploma offered by the department of Hospitality Management Sciences, is designed to equip students with both the practical skills and the theoretical background into the diverse hospitality industry. During the first year of study, students complete a range of food and beverage related subjects which are compulsory. In the second year of study, students complete a compulsory set of subjects and also have the opportunity to choose, via an elective, to specialise in particular areas of namely: Food and Beverage Operations II, Accommodation Management or Professional Cookery. It is within the Food and Beverage Operations II elective that my study is located. Food and Beverage Operations II focuses on the technical and operational procedures for a variety of food service outlets. Accordingly, Food and Beverage Operations II is designed to include those areas of study that will ensure that students have the requisite knowledge and skills to enable them to identify, select and rationalise, suitable food production systems to suit specific needs, in a profitable manner.

The lecturer for the subject, Heleen Grobbelaar⁴ uses tests and assignments to assess students' progress. I need to point out that the identity of the lecturer who lectured the Food and Beverage Operations II students could not remain anonymous in this study. The lecturer identity was obvious in the DUT context as she was the only lecturer who lectured the student group for the subject Food and Beverage Operations 2 during 2007. Moreover, I believe that Heleen's identity would be recognisable to some readers anyway by virtue of the description of her lecture context. Heleen indicated that regardless of this reality, she was very comfortable with the research context and was willing to participate in the study. To this effect, she signed an informed consent to indicate her participation in this research (refer to Appendix C).

Heleen has been at the DUT for fifteen years and has accumulated a wealth of experience that informs her practices. For example, she has built a practical component into one of the two assignments for Food and Beverage Operations II, such that the practical and theory components for the assignment complement and support each other. For example, during their subjects' theory component, students may be tasked with increasing a recipe from 5 portions to 45 portions. Although it is important for students to learn to use the ideal mathematical formula to determine the correct ingredient quantities for the increased recipe yield, it is not sufficient for students to merely be able to do good maths. Alongside the numerical changes, students have to consider what the practical implications may be when one increases the yield of a recipe from serving 5 portions, to 45 portions. For example, this kind of a change may necessitate a larger baking pan versus smaller baking pan. In turn, the size of the baking pan will also impact on the end product. That is, a larger pan may result in a more rapid evaporation of liquids and therefore may necessitate an adjustment to the liquid proportion. The cooking time may also need to be adjusted. For example, the cooking time may decrease due to the increased surface area of the larger pan. Thus, this practical component when combined with a theoretical recipe increase allows students the opportunity to learn by doing - how to standardise a recipe according to the equipment and utensils of a specific kitchen. The added benefit from this procedure is that students also become more aware of the importance of equipment when dealing with food preparation.

The completion of the theoretical ground work is then followed with implementation, where students cook the standardised dish in gradual stages of increase e.g. 5 portions, 15 portions, 30 portions etc. in order to ensure that an end product with a consistent and desirable quality is achieved, regardless of whether 5 or 40 portions are being produced. By cooking the gradually increasing recipe, students are able to identify problem areas within the process as

⁴ I have referred to the lecturer participating in this research alternately as Heleen and Ms Grobbelaar. This defers to my relationship with her as a colleague and also allows for verbatim interview transcripts to avoid interference with the way students referred to her in the context of their interview.

well as how to take remedial action in cases where shortfalls develop during the recipe implementation stage e.g. increased evaporation of liquid in soup due to the change in pan size from 10 litre, to bulk cooking pan (bratt pan). This will also demonstrate other practicalities to students. For example, the need to increase stock liquid for increased recipe yield.

Thus, unlike essay writing where students are using the related literature to substantiate and argue their point of view, the hospitality discipline resides in a more practical and vocationally based context, where students are provided with an opportunity to learn by doing and combining theoretical aspects with the practical. In this way, students pick up many valuable aspects from one exercise which they would not have been privy to if practical and theory was not so complementary. I believe that it is also important for students to see for themselves via practical application there are greater implications informing practice than the lecturer merely pointing these out in theory. As posited by Dewey (1913; 1938), by affording our students opportunities to engage in learning at "first-hand", academics may create turns for students' personal experience to develop multiple capacities (Dewey, 1926:238). It is within this practical, vocationally based context that I have investigated students' perceptions of feedback.

3.9.2 Obtaining the research participants

At the beginning of 2006, I approached Heleen and asked her if she would be interested in participating with her Food and Beverage Operations II student group, in a study which I was undertaking and which would be the grounding for my thesis towards the partial fulfilment of my Master's degree.

To support this request and inform her opinion, I provided her with a copy of my research proposal and followed this up with a verbal account to flesh out the nature, possible structure and purpose of my study. I did this because I wanted her to realise that this was not just a means to an end for my degree but rather, that I was deeply committed to, passionate about and interested in evolving both my teaching and learning environment and my practices. Apart from this, as a fellow producer of feedback, I was hoping that she might ponder the potential for informing, reflecting upon and possibly evolving the current way of doing things and how this could impact on the way students perceived and interacted with feedback.

I was keen to work closely with Heleen. My perception of her teaching is probably best described as one for detail, thoroughness and depth. I felt that in her practices, there may be certain nuances and ways of doing things, normally only gleaned through experience, which I could adopt or re-condition for my own use. Part of this I believe is also based on the fact that

I did not have a mentor when I was appointed as a lecturer, so in a stance similar to Sotto (1994) a lot of my practice was evolved through my experiences as a student and from there, what I wanted to do differently. I was also just simply curious as to the mystery associated with another lecturer's practices (Batt, 2005).

It would be remiss of me not to mention that although I was essentially implementing the same processes as outlined in my thesis in my classroom too, I opted not to undertake my research on my own student cohort. I was informed by and leaned towards literature like Padgett (1998:37), who advocated that the playing of dual roles by researchers, that is, both lecturer and researcher, could "preclude the free flow of information and openness inquiry" that is the hallmark of good qualitative research. In fact Straub (1996) has asserted that students are unable to separate the lecturer's persona from the comment that the lecturer has provided. This then impacts on students' reception and interpretation of the comments (Straub, 1996).

While my learning and teaching experiences (as detailed in Chapter One) informed my research, I did not want them to dwarf my findings to the point that it could hide or distort the data findings. I sincerely believe that being both the researcher and current lecturer to the same set of students may have lead to students feeling inhibited in providing honest responses and full details to the questions I was planning to pose. I was therefore very grateful when Heleen agreed to my request to participate in my research.

3.9.3 Convenience sampling

Padgett (1998) indicates that convenience sampling bases the selection of research participants on their ready availability. For example, the convenience associated with the use of one's easily accessible students, enrolled for a particular subject. The added benefit is that acceptance by the participants may be less demanding than that associated with a researcher who enters an unfamiliar context. However, the convenience sampling method has been criticised for a possible lack of representivity (Myers, 2002). Sometimes there could be a danger of having all or the majority of one's participants who are for example shy or unable to articulate efficiently and this could distort the data gathered and the subsequent analysis. However, in acknowledging this possibility, I also admit that I desired to probe the kind of data I would obtain in as natural a setting as could be possibly achieved. I believe that in reality, a class is composed of a mixture of students of wide ranging personality types, and I wanted to obtain as fair an indication of that mix, as possible.

In finalising the ten research participants, I wanted to ensure that I did not in any way coerce students into participation, hence the method detailed below to select the aforementioned ten

participants (Padgett, 1998) while simultaneously affording students the informed option to participate in the study or not.

The programme Hospitality Management was first offered in 2005 by the Department of Hospitality Management Sciences. This meant that in 2006, our department had our first batch of second year students ready to choose their electives or areas to specialise in. I had no idea how many students would register for the Food and Beverage Operations II elective. However, once I received Heleen's acceptance to be part of my study, I began the initial planning to put procedures into place to support my research processes. For example, I met with my HoD to inform him of my intention to conduct the research and also to request permission to do so (refer to Appendix D). I also had to get Heleen to confirm personally with the HoD that she was willing to participate in the study. Once these technicalities were dispensed with, I then met with the student group who had enrolled in the second semester of 2006, to inform them of my research intention, the purpose of my study and to seek their opinion and probe their willingness to participate in the study.

Before going any further, I must point out that the formation of the Department of Hospitality Management Sciences was a result of the merger of the Departments of Food and Nutrition (ex Technikon Natal), Catering Studies (ex M. L. Sultan) and Hotel Management (ex M. L. Sultan). Apart from having an underlying tension amongst staff at all levels, especially in terms of former Technikon Natal versus former M. L. Sultan, our merged department was also under pressure to increase student numbers. However, our course is resource intensive, requiring, for example, large quantities of consumables as well as non-consumables, general and specialised equipment, regular maintenance, adequate kitchen sizes etc. The existing practical venues could not accommodate a large increase in student numbers without costly renovations, which the DUT was not willing to incur. Our newly merged department, therefore, initiated a new double intake system for 2005, to accommodate a larger student body. This meant that a total of 150 students would be enrolled by our department. That is, 100 in the first semester, starting in February and a second group of 50 in the second semester, starting in July. After this plan was adopted, discussions at several staff meetings indicated that the new double intake system was potentially flawed. For example, there was consensus between lecturers that the morale of the group that began in the second semester was very low, and coupled with that, attendance at lectures was poor and inconsistent and overall student performance was low too.

Unfortunately, only 4 students out of the possible 50 second intake of students had enrolled for the Food and Beverage Operations elective. This result may have been based on the information and perceptions that students from the second intake elicited from students in the first intake. This cue-seeking behaviour is not unlike what Rowntree (1987:48) and others referred to as the "hidden curriculum". There was a student perception that the subject Food

and Beverage Operations II was more difficult than the other two electives offered for the diploma in year two. However, I do not intend for this thesis to credit or discredit this widespread student perception when the second intake of students were ready to choose their electives. Rather, I have included this well-circulated student hearsay as part of the context that could have shaped the enrolment outcome described. This enrolment number was further reduced to three, when one of the students abandoned her studies, citing personal reasons. However, my proposal was accepted on the basis of my having more than just three participants. While increased participation would not equate to ensuring my data validity, I believed that more representation would assist in the sense that "the picture will become more complete" (van der Mescht 2002 cited in M^cKenna, 2004:43). Thus, I approached another colleague, Lecturer B⁵ to enquire if she would be interested in participating in my research with her group of 10 third year students, alongside Heleen and her students.

I provided Lecturer B with a similar briefing and overview of my study as had been provided to Heleen and her students. Once Lecturer B had consented to participate in my study, I also briefed her students and sought their approval to go ahead with the study. Students in both the groups seemed very supportive of their inclusion in this study. At the stage when I addressed the students, the students in both the lecturers' classes had already completed one assignment each for their respective lecturers and perhaps based on that outcome, the students seemed intrigued as to how this drafting-responding intervention could impact on their next assignment performance.

The basic concept for this data gathering foundation was that an assignment (assignment number 2) in accordance with their respective disciplines would be handed to both Heleen and Lecturer B's Hospitality Management students. Students would submit draft assignments which would receive written formative feedback from the respective lecturer. The drafts would be returned to students to allow them to interact with, connect with and process the feedback. They would then be given an opportunity through an informal meeting with their lecturer; to query and or clarify any aspects of the feedback or assignment they were having difficulties with negotiating and understanding. Based on this feedback cycle, students would then revise and submit a final assignment for summative marking.

Everything went according to plan until students received the feedback on their assignment draft from their respective lecturers. Lecturer B had mistakenly provided her students with both comments and marks. Unfortunately, once students had a mark, they indicated to Lecturer B, that they were not very keen on making changes based on the feedback provided. This meant that I did not have any research participants to interview from Lecturer B's class.

⁵ A pseudonym has been used to protect the identity of the second lecturer who was willing to participate in this research.

Further to this, Heleen was having difficulties with her three students whose morale and interest in their work, was at an all time low, meaning that my research participants were diminishing to a grand total of two. With these dynamics unfolding in the background and time becoming crucial, as I was still involved in my own heavy lecture load, I carefully weighed my options before taking a research changing decision. I opted to thank but then abandon these two groups of research participants in the hope of having a better start with the group enrolling for 2007. However this decision did mean that I added a whole year to the period of my study. While the resulting lengthening of my study period was unavoidable, the overall morale of the student group enrolled for second year Hospitality Management in 2006 was so low; I believe that it would have distorted my data.

In 2007, the number of students enrolled for Food and Beverage Operations II increased dramatically, from three to twenty-five students. This number was high enough to ensure that there would be sufficient research subjects in one group to fulfil my research intent. Thus, for pragmatic reasons I reverted to data collection from only one lecturer and her student group. In general, student morale, attendance and performance were up from 2005 with its double student intake. After meeting with Heleen again in 2007, we set aside a date for me to meet with and address her student group to inform them of my research intention, the purpose, their participation and possible implications. I also explained to the students that although all the students in the class would go through the identical drafting-responding process, only ten students would be needed to go through to an interview process.

I did not ask for volunteers as I had previously taught almost a third of the current students doing Food and Beverage Operations II when they were in first year, during team teaching, and I did not want these students to feel obliged or coerced to participate in the study (Padgett, 1998). Rather, after Heleen and I conferred, I sought the class opinion on my intention to put the names of all willing students into a hat and draw ten interviewee names at random. The students seemed most satisfied with this option.

The ten students whose names were drawn from the hat, were informed of who they were in the presence of the rest of the class. I followed up this selection process by chatting to the participants and scheduling each student for an hour long interview. However, due to other obligations, some of these interview dates and times were later renegotiated and adjusted to accommodate both the participant and myself. Further to this, the participating students were given a consent form (refer to Appendix E) to complete as an indication of their willingness to participate and to inform them of the opportunity to still change their minds about participating in the research. Students seemed particularly willing and eager to participate in the study, with some even enquiring if they would be also be videotaped apart from being taped on a recorder only. However, from the ten research participants, only nine students went on to complete the interview as anticipated. One student, after rescheduling his interview, simply

did not arrive at the rescheduled interview. He also remained unavailable on the phone numbers he had supplied to me. This was a pity as he was one of only two males (each of different race groups) who were drawn randomly. Although I had not planned to make comparisons between data gathered from, for example, female versus male participants or different race groups, it would have been interesting to use the interview session to probe and uncover the discourses that shaped and guided the views of a black male student, within this research context.

3.9.4 Ethics

Given that interviewing is not a neutral data gathering tool (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998b) I employed various tactics to ensure that I safeguarded my research participants' interests while at the same time making my role and intentions as clear as possible. For example, despite receiving overwhelming support from the students and lecturer in the 2007 study during my verbal information session, where I provided an in-depth overview of my study, my role in it as well as the expected participants' roles and procedures, I did not simply rely on the participants' informal acquiescence as consent to proceed with my study. I drew up a formal consent form for my participants to sign as a way of ensuring "informed consent" (Padgett, 1998:35; also see McKenna, 2004). This was aimed at addressing some of the ethical issues, e.g. confidentiality, anonymity, participation, benefits etc. that arise with studies which involve other people and what could be construed as personal data (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998b; Padgett, 1998). Furthermore, the informed consent provided participants with a brief overview of my role as researcher, as well as the nature and type of research to be carried out, including details on the expected level of participant involvement in the study, as well as the researcher's intention etc. (Padgett, 1998). I felt that this was important so that the participants would be aware of their rights (to e.g. confidentiality, voluntary participation, anonymity, etc. (Padgett, 1998; Babbie, 1999) and also to make them aware that they had some measure of control over the intervention rather than them viewing the experience as something over which they had no say.

Furthermore, unlike other studies, where some form of deception is critical to the quality of data mined (for example, LaPiere's controversial study on discrimination cited in Padgett, 1998), for my study, I believed that full disclosure about my role, purpose and proceedings for the research would yield the richest data. I believe that involving my participants in this informed consent made the research proceedings more transparent, provided students with informed option and allowed the participant and me to "gain rapport" (Padgett, 1998:35). I also stressed the aspect of confidentiality to the participants. For example, they were told that they had the right to veto interview transcripts about which they may have felt sensitive. Apart from this, I also indicated that I would not be lecturing them in any subject in the future so they could rest assured that anything they revealed during the interview would not have any

influence on our future relationship as student - lecturer. I felt that the latter disclosure was important as I was inviting students to share their innermost mechanisms on how they read and used or rejected feedback. As such, I did not want to give the students cause to embellish their responses to fit what they may think I want to hear, in the fear that I would now have an insider's knowledge on the way they actually received and used feedback. Simply put, I wanted the students to be as genuine as possible in their responses, without reprisals for their true beliefs and perceptions.

3.9.5 Ethics, the bigger picture and implications

Padgett (1998) has argued that sometimes when a researcher looks at the bigger picture framing their research, there could be implications for the way they organise or change things around in order to protect their research participants. For example, before the interview, none of the students opted for the use of pseudonyms. However, post-interview, once the students had access to the partially analysed data, the issue about the anonymity option was raised. Given the fact that some students' responses provided direct examples of the sometimes negative way teaching and learning unfolded in other subjects they were studying for this diploma, as well as the fact that the study was confined to one department in a particular institution, where these same students would return to complete a third level of study, there was the implication that if their responses were quoted, it could potentially compromise students. Pseudonyms were, therefore, used for all students participating in the study. Additionally, I believed that the use of pseudonyms would also help to avoid any possibility of student intimidation or comeback, if the data gathered for this research was used for any other studies in the future.

As a final measure for confidentiality, and as indicated earlier, I made use of a transcriber, who was not linked to or part of the DUT, to type all my interviews. Additionally, I explained to her the need for confidentiality of my interviewee identities. I have also avoided the use of any signifiers in quotes that reveal particular lecturers or subjects beyond those which are explicitly the focus of this study.

3.9.6 The assignment topic

The assignment used for data collection in this study is based on a coffee shop concept (refer to Appendix A for further details). The nature of the assignment necessitated that the student synthesise information from many topics covered within the Food and Beverage Operations II subject while simultaneously drawing from other subjects like Food and Beverage Studies, Professional Cookery etc, as well as calling for creativity and originality, in order to present their concepts. This included students using the knowledge and skills they had gained during their first year, to assist with their current assignment. This assignment was therefore aimed at synthesising and applying a range of knowledge and skills, across time, for success. For

example, students were required to identify and motivate a suitable food production system for their coffee shop as well as plan a related food menu and beverage list. This entailed the inclusion of a detailed design layout of the kitchen, bar and dining area. Further to this, students were required to specify the equipment and utensils in accordance with the menu and bar list selected for the coffee shop. Within this framework, students were also required to indicate their target market.

3.9.7 The assignment draft

Under non-research conditions, the Food and Beverage Operations II students would not have been given an opportunity to receive the type of 'feed forward feedback' they were exposed to through the drafting-responding process outlined in this research. Rather they would have handed in one copy of their assignment which would have received only summative feedback and a mark. Additionally, for this research purpose, students were encouraged to approach the lecturer for clarity if they encountered problems both during the initial stages of the assignment, once feedback was received and when they were revising the final assignment copy. As per my agreement with the participants, and also to facilitate my data gathering and prevent any loss of data, after Heleen had annotated and provided feedback on the drafts, she passed the ten research participants' assignment drafts to me, to make copies of. This process was necessary but quite time consuming as many students had opted to hand write their draft, resulting in the need for large volumes of copies per student. Further to this, sometimes the type of paper students had selected for their drafts, proved to be non-printer friendly resulting in poor quality copies. The copying of back to back hand writing on a printer, which did not readily support such printing technology, also contributed towards the difficulties experienced with copying the students' assignments.

Once all the participants' annotated drafts were copied, but prior to the distribution thereof to the students, Heleen addressed her class asking them to read carefully through their drafts in conjunction with the feedback provided, for areas they may want clarity or advice on, or an opportunity to respond to. Unfortunately, due to my lecturing commitments, I was unable to be present at the lecture session when students received their assignment drafts and had their verbal information session. In my absence, Heleen tried to assist me by encouraging students to submit their queries in writing. However, she conceded that more students came to her with informal verbal requests for assistance than that which was reflected on the formally written enquiries that she passed on to me. Nevertheless, Heleen reported that students did seem keen to take advantage of the information session to get better acquainted with the feedback provided to enable a feed forward function.

Heleen also used the information session as an opportunity to provide feedback to the class on general issues, for example, strengths of the drafts she received as well as common

errors, sentence structure, referencing, depth of information, layout, etc. Thus it is obvious that the drafting-responding process in this thesis was more than just the provision of feedback in process but included many other facets that facilitated and supported the whole feedback system.

3.9.8 Assignment final copy

After the information session, students were given a further two weeks to revise their assignment draft in accordance with the feedback provided. The final copies of the students' assignments were then marked and also received feedback; both in text and on a cover sheet (refer to **Appendix F**). Students were given time to read through the comments on their final assignment and engage with the Heleen on any issues relating to the assignment and the overall drafting-responding process. With the ten participant's approval, Heleen then collected the ten final assignments for me, thus eliminating the need for making copious copies of the final assignment too.

3.10 Limitation

As indicated in *Chapter One*, the students participating in this research were semesterised students who spent their first semester at the DUT and their second semester in industry doing their work-integrated learning. This means that their semester is very full and busy. Apart from this, the nature of the drafting-responding process in this research meant that students did an assignment redraft but were not given any decrease in the total number of assessment tasks they had to fulfil for Food and Beverage Operations II, for the semester. The heavy student schedule and the fact that data was gathered from assignment number 2 meant that the due dates for the final assignment copy, student exams, participant interviews as well as placement interviews for student's work integrated learning all coincided. Further to this, post placement, many students had accepted work integrated learning posts in distant locations e.g. Cape Town, Gauteng etc. This limited me to having only one interview session with each participant. However, the ideal situation would have been one where a follow-up interview occurred, in order to round off, seek clarity and focus on themes that emerged from the data. Attempting to contact all participants through telephonic interview follow-up, (to ensure a similar treatment to all participants), proved to be an almost impossible task. Apart from not answering their phones, some students also shared cell phones with friends, and simply failed to return calls or were unavailable.

In this chapter, I have detailed the research methodology underpinning this study. An analysis of the data appears in *Chapter Four*. As indicated in this chapter, similarities and unique findings in the data will be described, compared and discussed. Where possible, these research findings will be supported with readings from the literature.

CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the transcript data obtained from interviews with the intention of identifying and providing a view of the patterns of feelings, actions and perceptions of students about how they dealt with the intervention. A discussion of unique issues raised by individual students as well as common themes raised by many will provide the content of this section. As my main research question indicates, I was interested in understanding how students experienced feedback provided within a drafting-responding process. As a result, parts of the discussion are led by a framework developed by Higgins (2000), for understanding students' reaction to feedback. Higgins believes that texts generated from the study of students' reaction to feedback cannot be fully analysed if done in isolation to the social context in which it is embedded. Thus, such a study would include the identification and probing of aspects which may not be overt, like the "interplay of power relations, competing discourses, emotion and identity" (Higgins, 2000:n.p.) which may have influenced and shaped the way individuals within a particular context behave or react. With this framework in mind, I made use of an Nvivo assisted analysis to facilitate the grouping of data into the following themes: students pre-research experiences of feedback, post schooling exposure to assessment and feedback, conflicting literacy practices, the contentious nature of feedback, students understanding of feedback, differing forms of feedback, impact of feedback pre and post drafting, impact of feedback on students emotional well-being, dialoguing as common ground, language as a barrier, student perception of what helpful feedback entailed, motivation and reflection and selectivity in the use of feedback.

4.2 Analysis and discussion

4.2.1 Students' pre-research experiences of feedback

Feedback on assessment tasks is a common denominator in all spheres of life and an integral part of the learning and teaching cycle. Given that students have been exposed to a learning environment for a minimum of 12 years prior to entering a tertiary education system, they will have received a lot of feedback of one sort or another. In no way am I implying that quantity of feedback equates to quality feedback. Rather, at face value, when students complete their schooling and enter the tertiary education system, lecturers may not stop to ponder students' past exposure to feedback and their ability to interact meaningfully with it. There is an assumption that ex-scholars must be well versed in receiving, engaging with and using feedback (Paxton, 1995; Kasanga, 2001 and 2004). This assumption may compound the problems associated with the giving and receiving of assessment feedback when these students enter the higher education sector.

For example, students responded in the following manner to the type of feedback they received while at school:

...We just got a percentage, ja, and maybe a comment...'good effort' or 'poor'... (Sli⁶)

...the only feedback we got was our mark, and maybe a comment or two saying we could have done better...which was hardly like – it was just vague (Phume)

...teachers would write 'well done' or 'you could have researched more'... (Phindile)

...Feedback is a mark...we just got a mark (Dhiya)

In Chapter Two I indicated that lecturers use several types of written feedback (Butler, 1988). There are marks only, comments only or marks and comments. I propose that ex-scholars⁷ interaction with these varying forms of feedback can assist or thwart students' future ability to interact with and utilise high quality formative feedback. For example, Butler (1988) described how the provision of different types of written feedback impacted on the learning dynamics unfolding in her study and concluded that the 'comments only' type of feedback had the most beneficial impact on enhancing student learning. Thus, I believe that the type of feedback that ex-scholars were conditioned to receive while they were at school, has a significant influence on the way in which feedback is conceptualised by students when they enter the higher education system.

It must be noted that particular care was taken in this research undertaking, to ensure that the above student answers were solicited in response to a question about feedback received on student assignments, while students were at school. Unlike the research conducted by Carless (2006), I wanted students' responses to speak directly to feedback received on assignments and did not want the data clouded with students' experience of feedback on exams, as I believe that the general lack of feedback on exams could distort the data findings.

Congruent with a research finding by Smith and Gorard (2005), the responses of Sli, Phume, Phindile and Dhiya speak to the fact that students exiting the schooling system may be conditioned to receive and thus expect marks or percentages at the end of a piece of work. In fact, students appear so well conditioned to receiving and expecting marks, that an observation made by one of the teachers in Smith and Gorard's research (2005) that students are almost "gagging for their marks" (Smith and Gorard, 2005:33) is borne out in the comments below:

...We want it, even if it's a mark or a percentage; we want something – a number. (Zama)

⁶ Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of all students participating in this research.

⁷ I use the term 'ex-scholars' to denote students who exit the schooling system on completion of their National Senior Certificate

...we're used to getting marks so we just like, we all think about marks, marks, marks (Phume)

Thus, when students enter the tertiary education system, lecturers should hardly be surprised that students are so mark-driven. Research indicates that this mark-driven focus is exacerbated if the tertiary institution's assessment practice is dominated by a testing culture (Gipps, 1994; Monty, 2003).

On the other hand, even when comments were provided at school, participant responses indicate that these comments were mainly what the literature refers to as "outcome feedback" (Butler and Winne, 1995:250). That is, feedback focussed on the "state of achievement" (ibid:250), for example, "you could have researched more" (Phindile). Including non-directed criticism, for example "poor effort" or "non-directed praise" (Lackey, 1997:55) also referred to as "general praise" (Wiggins, 2004:n.p.) for example "good effort, well done" (ibid:n.p.). However, students' frustration with feedback of this nature indicates that far from assisting students, it vexes students and acts as a barrier to learning. For example:

...Sometimes you get frustrated. You know when you put a lot of hard work in terms of assignments and you kind of want some feedback...and the teacher writes there 'Well done' and it gets around about 60%. And then I thought why did I get a 60%? ...because you don't know what 'Well done' is... everything, or is it whole assignment or is it on my introduction or is it on my body, or parts of my body, or my conclusion? (Phindile)

...'Could have done better', 'could have performed better'. Same old, same old, assignment after assignment...I could have thought maybe I should have done more research, I should have - my assignment should have been more neater, because in high school we didn't even have to type our assignments (Phume)

...she should have given comments like...how she just arrived at 100% if she didn't like even look at it properly. I mean there was so much of work done and put into it. What is the criteria that you did mark it on, did it meet your standards? (Dhiya)

These excerpts are congruent with Stefani's dictum (1998) that while general praise or blame type commenting captures student's interest, this interest is short-lived as these types of comments fail to "provide students with guidance on how to improve, as well as opportunities and support to understand how to make the improvement" (Smith and Gorard, 2005:34). Additionally, researchers like Hyland and Hyland (2001:207) have posited that lecturer use of predominantly praise and criticism comments "expresses and confirms the teacher's right to evaluate a student's work" (ibid:207) and therefore enforces and emphasises the power of the lecturer in the student-lecturer relationship (also see Ivanič et al., 2000).

Further to the above, general praise or criticism comments assume that the meaning resides "in the text" (Olson 1977 cited in M^cKenna, 2004:2), in this case the feedback text, and will therefore be obvious to the reader. However, Sli's response (below) indicates that this assumption is false. I believe that the difficulties in negotiating meaning when "outcome

feedback" (Butler and Winne, 1995:250) or general praise and blame type feedback is provided are expressed in Sli's response and reiterated by Kishore.

...so... 'can do better'... What does it tell you? (Evonne⁸)

...I've no idea. I think it tells you that you – you didn't put any effort in it (Sli)

...feedback...should be something that we...understand as well...because sometimes for example the lecture might put 'How?'...We do not understand the 'How?' If we're given a certain amount of information and we worked with that, we wouldn't really know 'how' (Kishore)

In turn, it means that providers of feedback cannot assume that comments like 'How?' and ...'Can do better', will magically convey their meaning to students or, have the same meaning to a lecturer and a student, or multiple students. This reality is authenticated by Phindile's opinion:

...comments are helpful, but telling you to change that, it's helpful but just that it's not specific. I could not maybe use it but for someone else it could be helpful, like to me, how? I'd be confused. I might keep it the way it is and hand it in and say I didn't know what to change, I thought it was good. But maybe for someone else, maybe they'd change the [font] colour and ma'am would like it (Phindile)

Phindile's rationale may be seen to support an argument made by Johnstone (1990); Mutch (2003); Smith and Gorard (2005) and other researchers, that when general praise or criticism comments are given to students, they have no way translating these comments into improved writing. Thus, it follows that superficial comments like "Well done" or "Poor effort" which simply function as an "adjunct to a mark or grade" (Smith and Gorard, 2005:33), are only useful when supplemented with specific and detailed feedback along with processes to support it (Stefani, 1998; Bardine et al., 2000; Wiggins, 2004; Smith and Gorard, 2005). As argued by Sli:

...It's no use criticising someone, if you don't give them help, this is what you should do, what you should have done (Sli)

Supported by Smith and Gorard (2005) and Carless (2006), I believe that as readers and commentators of our students' texts, it is important for us as lecturers to probe and pay attention to student input and perception of our assessment and feedback practices. If we fail to probe, follow-up and in-turn adjust our practices where problem areas are identified, shortcomings relating to feedback as mentioned by Sli, may remain hidden and therefore unaddressed. Lecturers may be unaware that their taken for granted assumptions about the helpfulness and relevance of their assessment and feedback practices are not always borne out in their classrooms (Boud, 1995).

⁸ Evonne represents the voice of the researcher during the interviews

Overall, the data review on participants' past experiences of feedback reveals that despite years of involvement with feedback while at school, some students may have been trapped in a cycle of receiving trite assessment feedback (Kasanga, 2004; Weaver, 2006), which may be of an inadequate type, "vague" (Rowe and Wood, undated:n.p.), incomplete or acknowledged with token surface comments like "good effort, well done" (Wiggins, 2004:n.p.). Exposure to such superficial feedback is insufficient grounding to provide students with suitable practice opportunities for handling and engaging with the type of feedback that will encourage the kind of deep approach to learning (Biggs, 1999; Gibbs, Simpson, and MacDonald, 2003) desired for tertiary level students. In fact, research by Bangert-Drowns et al. (1991) and Butler and Winne (1995) on the quality of feedback, contends that provision of only outcome type feedback can actually be detrimental to students' cognitive processing of content.

At no time do I intend for my previous statement to be interpreted as my understanding that the provision of quality feedback alone is sufficient to address all problems plaguing the feedback cycle. Rather, with reference to the experiences of the research participants detailed in this study, as well as research conducted by Black and William (1998); Kasanga (2001 and 2004) and Stiggins (2002), I wish to draw the readers' attention to the possibility that when these ex-scholars enter the tertiary education system, their past exposure to feedback influences the way they will interact with and react to ensuing feedback. For example, I believe that a surface level engagement with feedback while in school, could mean that some students may lack a general ease and ability of negotiating quality feedback when it is provided in a process-orientated approach to writing. In other words, when students lack experience of having engaged with feedback on a deep meaningful level (Nonaka, 1991), it could have an impact on the way in which students interact with and use feedback provided in general, as well as when provided in a drafting-responding framework as part of a research intervention.

4.2.2 Post schooling exposure to assessment and feedback

Further to the aforementioned lack of grounding to inform students' understanding and use of feedback, research indicates that on entering the tertiary education system, the type of assessments and feedback designed for students does not alter significantly (Biggs 1996 and 1999; Ivanič et al., 2000; Kasanga, 2004). That is, even in the tertiary classrooms, students are not benefitting noticeably from the body of research extolling those practices that best facilitate student learning and the simultaneous advancement of progressive teaching practices. In fact, all nine students interviewed indicated that even after completing a full year of study at the DUT they had had little or no exposure to formative processes and feedback towards their assignments. For example, exposure to assessment practices where their writing would be judged as a process rather than as a product (Ivanič et al., 2000).

...and here, at the DUT, except for this assignment here, did you all have any other assignment where you could get feedback and use it? (Evonne)

...No, just Ms Grobbelaar's⁹ assignment (Sli)

... Not like we have to like do Ops [Food and Beverage Operations II]... a full draft and then hand it in (Zama)

However, this status is then in conflict with the literature on assignment-type assessments (Refer to Biggs, 1999 motivation in Chapter Two), which are categorised as a divergent assessment practice (Tynjala, 1998; Torrance and Pryor, 1998 and 2001, as discussed in Chapter Two). Students' experiences prior to the drafting-responding research intervention in this study indicate that the emphasis on assessment of assignments closely resembled that of a test. That is, product-related and mark-orientated (Biggs, 1996). Where students' ability to memorise and aggregate the correct answer is emphasised (Torrance and Pryor, 1998 and 2001) rather than enabling and focussing students' effort on learning using recursive processes (Paxton, 1995; Barnett, 1989; Zeiser, 1999; Gibbs, Simpson, and MacDonald, 2003) and collaborative efforts to revise, reflect on and know differently to what they had known previously. Thus, collaborative learning, which enables the student to move up the developmental gradient of his or her 'zone of proximal development', is stunted (Vygotsky et al., 1978).

While I concur with researchers like Baume and Yorke (2002) who claim that a less desirable effect of this collaborative student-lecturer effort may be reflected in the difficulty with determining the true extent of the students' actual effort as well as the possibility that the student may have difficulty in managing unassisted once they enter their next level of study, I believe that lecturers and students must not lose sight of the learning gains that can be achieved through the opportunity for practice, modelling and socialisation.

In this context of shared understanding, I believe that Polanyi's dictum (1958:54) that "Connoisseurship ...can be communicated only by example, not by precept", is as relevant today as it was at its first utterance. Additionally, I believe that this dictum is applicable to both lecturers and students. If our students are to benefit fully from the opportunity of being guided by someone with more knowledge (Vygotsky et al., 1978; Atherton, 2005b), rather than ignoring a valuable learning avenue on account of the difficulties highlighted by researchers like Baume and Yorke (2002), lecturers can aim to include exercises and measures that periodically check and counter the impact of such effects.

For example, lecturers can devise and include measures that monitor student ability, progress and development, when students are assisted as well as when they are unassisted (Yorke, 2003). One way in which this can be achieved is, after collaborative efforts to complete a task, another similar task can be set for students to undertake by themselves. This process can be repeated several times during the course of the academic year. In this way, multiple

⁹ As explained in Chapter Three, the identity of the lecturer was obvious in the DUT context and is used with her consent.

measures of collaborative efforts can be compared alongside unassisted efforts throughout a given year, to provide a more complete indication of actual student development. Using this method will also help assess the extent to which "function[s] in the child's cultural development" has moved from the more experienced other, to the child, that is, for the students' own use (Vygotsky et al., 1978:58). I also believe that periodic checking could serve a dual purpose of being a reminder to students and lecturer alike, that the aim envisioned by Vygotsky et al. (1978) and Atherton (2005b) is one of ultimate student independence rather than one of fostering a culture of student dependence (Boud, 1995 and Yorke, 2003).

Moreover, I believe that this form of dynamic checking positions the collaborative student-lecturer efforts in a favourable state of flux. That is, there is leeway to adjust the type and amount of assistance provided according to need (Funch, 1995 and Barrett, 2004). The assumption here is that sometimes students may need less guidance as they socialise into and thereby adopt certain academic practices and ways of knowing within a discipline, as their own (Bandura, 1977, Vygotsky, 1978; Higgins, 2000; Rust et al., 2003; McKenna, 2004). The adoption of concepts and terminology and the broader altered ways of being which stem from the socialisation process, are occurring all the time. An albeit small example, quoted below, indicates that students do build their academic capital by association with others, become comfortable with it, and then use it as their own (Parkerson, 2000).

...what kind of feedback is good for you? (Evonne)

...I think constructive criticism (Sli)

...What is that word, because that sounds very fancy? (Evonne)

...It is, it is (Sli)

...Where did you hear that word, constructive criticism? (Evonne)

...It's always used...in our subjects (Sli)

...So what does constructive criticism mean? (Evonne)

...It's criticism but, let's say for my assignment, for my draft. I was criticised but the criticism wasn't – it was constructive because it helped me improve (Sli)

Thus for Sli, assistance in the form of constructive criticism from a more experienced third party, was able to assist her in improving her work (see Vygotsky et al., 1978). Conversely, the absence of collaborative efforts, may lead to frustration at a system that stifles students' ability to progress and effectively acts as a barrier for the advancement of student learning. This is clearly indicated in Kishore's lament.

....Only for this one [Food and Beverage Operations II] we were given an opportunity to do a draft...I actually prefer doing it that way, because it gives you an opportunity to see where you went wrong, and correct it. Like last week, for example, I know I did two assignments for

[subject W¹⁰] and I failed both my assignments...by 5% and 3%, and I couldn't understand exactly why...but with a draft opportunity...I would have definitely passed both times. (Kishore)

As indicated in the excerpt above, as well as the literature by Barnett (1989); Paxton (1995) and Zeiser (1999) on the merits associated with a product versus process-oriented approach to academic tasks, the absence of a process-orientated approach to assignments may be detrimental to the advancement of student learning. I believe that the frustration experienced by Kishore with a system that has muted and clearly failed him, is particularly poignant and avoidable. To pay the adage that 'students have a pivotal role to play' in their learning (McDonald and Boud, 2003) more than mere lip service: students must be given a voice and due consideration to be heard and responded to. By this, I do not mean simply a subject evaluation conducted at the end of the year – in fact Chang, et al. (2003) have indicated the diminished impact and value of this method of assessment. Instead, I refer to actions like questionnaires, peer and self evaluations, brain storming sessions, recursive processes, etc., while work is in progress (for example, Bardine, 1999; Zeiser, 1999) to follow-up and facilitate learning (Vygotsky et al., 1978; Chang et al., 2003). In this way, I believe that there should be space for reflection, and suitable actions can be suggested timeously and implemented while they are relevant, in order to transform learning.

Failure of the system to listen to and hear students' voices was not an isolated finding in the data. In Chapter Three, I indicated that students are assessed through tests, exams and assignments for the subject Food and Beverage Operations II. Similar to the literature on dominant assessment practices (Gipps, 1994; Boud, 1995; Biggs, 1996; Kasanga, 2001 and 2004; Maryellen, 2003; Yorke, 2003; Rushton, 2005; Carless, 2006 and 2007), the weighting thereof at the Department of Hospitality Management Sciences leans in favour of test and exam marks to determine a student's pass or fail. However, when students' opinions were solicited to indicate the type of assessment which was more helpful to aid their learning for Food and Beverage Operations II, student responses leaned strongly in favour of using assignments as a truer reflection and means of expressing student learning than that afforded through standardised tests only (see Tynjala, 1998; Gibbs and Simpson, 2002; Monty, 2003). Betty offers the following reasoning for her preference for assignments over tests:

...Assignments... because in assignments you can't cram ...and for a test you just cram and you pass, you see (Betty)

...What do you mean by cram...? (Evonne)

...Well I mean cramming is in taking – reading something as it is and just going to the test venue and writing the test and copying it exactly as it is from the notes to the test grid...without any understanding behind it, but you just crammed it and all this like 20086a has to be in column A. We just do that and we get marks and you pass (Betty)

¹⁰ The name of the subject has been blocked to protect subject and lecturer identity.

Betty's response and deductive perception about the different kinds of learning approaches valued in tests and assignments, was not isolated. The following excerpt from Sli's interview refers:

...I think assignments are good because...while you're doing your research you find other information, although it may not be relative to the subject you're researching on, but it's still relative to – maybe the whole course you're doing (Sli)

...and what about tests, are tests a good way to learn about a subject? (Evonne)

...No, I don't think it's a good way. Because a test you just learn the information maybe they hand out to you in class and then you just study it, cram it and then you write it... if you ask me tomorrow about the test I wrote the previous day, I don't remember ... whereas in an assignment you're really get there, you like ...it gets in and you remember it for much longer (Sli)

Aside from highlighting the conflict of student versus institutional assessment preference (Biggs, 1996; Gibbs and Simpson, 2002), and how students have deduced the kind of learning valued by different assessment modes, these extracts also reveal that the notion of playing by 'the rules of the game' (Rowntree, 1987; Brown et al., 1995; Biggs, 1996; Entwistle, 1996; Webster et al., 2000; Yorke, 2003; Bloxham and West, 2004), is a recurring theme in the data. Moreover, these extracts also support an argument made by Ramsden (1992:187) that:

From our student's point of view, assessment always defines the actual curriculum...Assessment sends messages about the standard and amount of work required, and what aspects of the syllabus are most important.

As a result, even though students are able to identify and clearly describe the benefits that the literature usually associates with divergent (open-ended) assessment practices, student responses indicate that they have simultaneously gleaned the importance of the "hidden curriculum" as described by Rowntree (1997:48) and Webster et al. (2000) and have cannily figured out what they need to do in order to obtain a pass (refer to Chapter Two, cue seeking students).

Students like Betty and Sli, may thus be willing to sacrifice understanding and pursue "surface approaches to learning" (Biggs, 1996:5) by 'cramming', in order to 'get marks' and 'pass' (see Betty's response). I believe that it is important for policymakers and providers of feedback to be cognisant that as much as students are cast in the role of recipients of assessment and feedback, students simultaneously function as constant monitors of their own learning (McKoon and Ratcliff, 1992). This means that students will use assessments to drive their goal setting followed by ways to best achieve the goals set (Black and William, 1998; Ivanič et al., 2000).

Kishore, Zama and Phume also indicated a preference for assignment type assessments.

... for example when we're doing our assignments, we learn a little more than what we learnt from the textbook itself, because we're using various textbooks, as opposed to using prescribed, and then when it comes to exams as well, any question that – out of general knowledge, or a question we're given, you can elaborate and score more points off (Kishore)

...I think assignments are actually a very good thing – you have a better chance, I think, well personally for me, I do better in assignments than I would in tests, so with assignments, assignments bring your marks up, because with this...it's not like you have to learn for it or anything, you don't forget anything, it's all there for you, it's related to what you have to do (Zama)

...I think I'm quite a creative person and the assignment requires you to put your creativity into it, and so then you are actually learning in your creative way ...You take the lecturer's notes you know, and like transform them into your own kind of way, in that creative way and the assignment – it wasn't enough for you just to have knowledge that you got from your lecture, it required you to do the research, you had to go to the internet, you had to know which wine goes with what food and things like that, and there were a whole lot of things you couldn't just know from the lecturer (Phume)

The student responses above indicate a preference for divergent assignment type assessments, which afford them opportunities to approach learning that moves beyond the prescribed text (Kishore), away from rote learning (Zama) and encourages creativity and knowledge transformation (Phume). This reality implies that there is much scope for higher education policymakers and academics to make more concerted efforts to relook the dominant type of assessments that they enforce on their student body (Boud, 1995; Monty, 2003). Simultaneously, the student responses above capture a reminder that students have little control and influence over the type and number of assessments that are imposed on them (Boud, 1995; Biggs, 1996). Thus, as argued by Boud (1995) students are like the proverbial pawn caught between the power relations exerted, on the one hand, by the institution which administers and regulates assessment policies and, practices and on the other hand, by the lecturer who marks and judges their work (Knight, 2002; Carless, 2006). Phume's conflicted explanation of how she goes about assessing her academic progress within these imposed constraints and power relations, indicates that students who see the value of open-ended assessment practices may be torn between the urge to follow the system and do what it takes to measure up and pass, while simultaneously realising the shortcomings inherent in this route:

...Well, I usually rate myself according to my test – but then that's not very reliable because it could just say I can like remember things but, because sometimes you tend to be cramming things, not specifically studying as in learning things...you might not be understanding it...like a parrot...I rely on my tests but they're not very reliable like I said, but I rely on them (Phume)

Essentially, assessment practices selected by policymakers and the manner in which they are implemented at classroom level by lecturers, may force students into the role of mindless mark or grade collectors.

Furthermore, I believe that the discourse underlying Phume's responses implies that when dominant high-stakes assessment practices like tests and exams guide students' learning approach, they may ignite an underlying sense of acceptance, inevitability and helplessness amongst students and send them the message that their subsequent behaviour must alter to suit the different assessment demands (Boud, 1995; Moher cited in Crone-Blevins, 2002). In other words, "students learn to attribute significance and insignificance to their learning", in order to "produce what is expected" (Pardoe, 2000:128). Thus, attributes like creativity and knowledge transformation which Kishore, Zama and Phume identified as advantages associated with divergent assessments like assignments, may need to be sacrificed when convergent assessment practices like tests and exams dominate (Van Heerden, 2001 cited in, M^cKenna, 2004). The student responses indicate that these attributes of creativity and knowledge transformation have been implicitly gleaned as incidental to the reproduction of uniform answers desired by particular assessment systems, for example, standardised tests (Lunt, 1993). Thus, Boud's caution (1995:37), about the "unintended consequences in assessment" is a little too late for the students in this research. In this regard, both Phume and Dhiya's responses are particularly damning:

...because the test is like you have to give a specific answer...although you don't have to have the exact same words, but it's the same answer even if you didn't say it in the exact same way, whereas in an assignment you can say other things, as long as you back up, you've got proof, you've got support for what you said and it makes sense, you get your mark. (Phume)

...assignments... you're asked to do a certain amount of research on a certain topic, and you at least – you know you're getting marks...in tests, you either get it right or... wrong. (Dhiya)

Apart from verifying Boud's dictum (1995:37) that when reading lecturer comments, "Students are not simply responding to the given subject", the above excerpt indicates that student perceptions "won't only be a function of the assessment tasks set, but of all the experiences of assessment students have had in the past" (ibid:37). These experiences may in turn guide students in adopting a strategic approach to learning.

Moreover, the student perceptions indicated above, speak of a text-book perfect rigidity and uniformity of doing things that truly holds little value within the dynamic hospitality industry (Ewell, 1997). Additionally, while the use of high-stakes assessment practices like tests and exams allow for "standardise[d] forms of assessment" in order to create a "common currency" (Biggs, 1996:6) for making pass or fail verdicts, manipulating assessment policies to duplicate standardised responses will not be very beneficial to students. That is, encouraging uniformity in students response to assessment, will hardly provide students with the kind of genuine educative experiences that encourage knowledge transformation (Rushton, 2005), and the development of higher order and critical thinking skills (Tynjala, 1998) which may be prevalent when students are allowed to integrate their personal experiences with their developing academic learning (Dewey, 1938). This type of student development is especially relevant in

this study, as the hospitality industry by its very nature, values and demands that students wishing to enter its portals be able to assess, create, reflect, adapt and improvise, sometimes at short notice (Ewell, 1997).

However, student responses have indicated that these characteristics are not as valued in a high-stakes testing culture. Therefore, in preparing students for the hospitality industry, dominant high-stakes assessment approaches may be seen to suppress the very traits it presumes to instil in its students (Kasanga, 2004). Further to this, it must be remembered that in the absence of a testing culture, student responses describe an overarching desire to engage in the type of learning usually synonymous with a deep approach to learning (as discussed in Chapter Two). Thus, following Ferris (1997) when policy setting, selecting and designing of assessments is undertaken, I believe that decision-makers should be careful to ensure that attributes like creativity and independent learning are safeguarded and not sacrificed to the detriment of student learning. In other words, there must be inclusion and emphasis of those criteria which allow for student input and advancement of learning.

The amount of time that students were allocated when doing high stake versus low stake assessments was found to influence students' perceptions of their ability under different constraints (see Lunt, 1993).

...some people say they do better in assignments than in tests. Because maybe they've got more time (Phume)

...An assignment you're like given more time and there's no pressure because you're like doing it in your own time, with a test...the time frame that you got to write the test is the problem. I mean you might know the answer but you then have to sit and think and then that means you're wasting your time (Regina)

...assignments are better, because you know you're given a certain amount of time (Dhiya)

Student descriptions of their lived experiences of assessment practices imply that high-stakes test and exam type assessments take place under unnatural and limiting settings. For example, under these high-stake conditions, students are conceived of as being able to participate automatically, in order to reproduce desired responses (Biggs, 1996; Boud, 2000). I believe that the difficulties experienced by students in conforming to the demands of testing are compounded when one considers it alongside South Africa's post apartheid education context. To date, socio-economic effects are evident in the type of resources that different schools have access to and this in turn has an impact on the level of preparedness of students exiting different schools (Monty, 2003, M^cKenna, 2004). Thus, some students who have less ease and practice with the type of literacies being tested may be further disadvantaged. I believe that even Regina, who is a first language speaker of English, makes a convincing case that test responses, which assume equal preparedness, ease and access to literacy practices for all students, are not well founded (Lunt, 1993; Street, 1996), thus

hinting at added difficulties second language speakers of English may have to deal with under test and exam type assessments (Lunt, 1993; Paxton, 1995). Moreover, tests, which "guarantee[d] to test the individual on his or her own" (Brown and Knight, 1994:69) are unlike an assignment, where students are encouraged to seek assistance from peers, the lecturer and other sources, in order to get clarity and advance their ways of knowing. Thus, tests present a very narrow scope of a student's true ability. Unfortunately, in a test or exam environment, the ticking clock compounds the multiple problems our students may be grappling with. This means that tests and exams may continue to present students, academics and other role players with a distorted representation of student learning (Shepard, 2000; Monty, 2003).

There were other aspects informing students' perception of test and assignment type assessments. For example, assignments, which are referred to as divergent assessments in the literature (Torrance and Pryor, 1998 and 2001; Rust, et al., 2003), were perceived by students as being less rigid than a test. That is, when compared to a test, an assignment is open to multiple interpretations (Street, 1996). For example, if a student provided a menu for a coffee shop in a given location, provided that they considered their target market, applied the relevant theory within the discipline, as well as resources when selecting their menu items, their response to the assessment could be correct. Thus, while anchored in the discipline, the response genre implies student freedom to explore, and use "higher-level thinking skills" (Monty, 2003:44) to construct diverse responses to the assessment task. Phume's response encapsulates this neatly:

...in an assignment you can say other things, as long as ... you've got support for what you said and it makes sense (Phume)

Simultaneously, I believe that Phume's response describes an awareness that this does not mean that just anything is acceptable in an assignment (Neuman, 2000).

Thus, by providing our students with assessment vehicles that allow them to mull over, reflect, revise, and integrate their personal views on a given piece of work, students can employ true active thinking and thereby move towards a shared understanding and development of what it means to be literate in a discipline while simultaneously drawing from the unique and alternative identities they bring (Street, 1996; Gough, 1999). Moreover, within this framework, there is scope for students' home and other literacies to coexist, rather than be obliterated by dominant assessment literacies. Students' home and other literacies should not be marginalise to such an extent that these are regarded as meaningless and incidental to any learning taking place within the higher education environment (Street, 1996; Gough, 1999). In fact, when this kind of an assumption is made, it would falsely imply that any learning gained outside of an educational institution is incidental and irrelevant to knowledge creation (Street, 1996; M^cKenna, 2004). Moreover, given the importance and allure of local ethnic, social and

cultural practices on the growing South African hospitality industry, such an oversight would falsely render such vibrant practices as irrelevant. Thus, ingredients like time, opportunity, appropriate assessment practices and processes can encourage students to truly enhance their learning (Biggs, 1999a and 1999b) and become active and integrative "knowledge producer[s]" who are empowered to selectively adopt and simultaneously challenge their multifaceted ways of knowing rather than becoming simple "reproducers of knowledge" (Sioux, 2004:24).

It is essential that academic practitioners and policymakers constantly review, question and remind themselves what purpose their assessments are meant to serve (Straub, 1996). That is, are assessments gatekeepers or transformers of knowledge? Additionally, there must be clarity on who the learning is meant to benefit and how? In this equation, how students learn is a question that cannot be over looked. These checks can then be used to follow-up that our existing assessment practices are sufficiently addressing and aiding the core purpose for doing assessments. Importantly, if these checks are not in place or reviewed and adjusted to fit purpose, then it will simply encourage students to believe that all one must do is play by "the rules of the game" (Gibbs and Simpson, 2002:12), for example, strategically engaging in "discourse that is not 'naturally' or immediately theirs" (Bartholomae, 1986:12) in order to enjoy the rewards offered.

4.2.3 Conflicting literacy practices

Part of my assumptions informing students' perception of assessment and feedback is founded on or makes reference to the research participant's school history. I believe that such a discussion would be incomplete without a mention of the discourse associated with the role of context in creating a culture for conflicting literacy practices (Dison and Rule, 1996). There were several excerpts in the transcripts which indicate that rather than empowering students to use or mesh their school literacy practices as a base to inform their developing tertiary literacy practices (Street, 1996), students instead found themselves battling to discard habits they had valued and relied on while at school but which were deemed useless by their new learning context. Dhiya for example indicates that she is now cognisant of a reality that schools and tertiary institutions value different literacy practices:

...In school we didn't really do bibliography for every assignment and here on campus [DUT] it is a necessity – it is called plagiarism so in school they should teach stuff and teach the proper methods of doing it, not just to write the name of the book you used (Dhiya)

Dhiya also indicates that for her, another difference between assignments done at school and tertiary institutions is that:

...in school they don't really worry about what you put in [an assignment] rather they worry about your presentation and the emphasis is different (Dhiya)

A further difference between literacy practices of schools and tertiary institutions is indicated by Regina:

...at school somehow the info was...in your notes. ...it's easy for you to put things together and it is easy research, but like with now at university level is hard, because you have to go out and look at different books and read different topics together...you can't just put anything in there (Regina)

The autonomous literacy model posits that the construction of texts are neutral and therefore immune to differing contexts, but these student responses have shown an understanding that this belief is false. Moreover, as voiced by Dhiya, when educational institutions embed their practices in an autonomous model, it in turn informs their lack of attention to facilitating students' ability to transport even basic literacy practices from one institution to another or to "society in general" (M^cKenna, 2004:5), as scaffolding for future learning. Instead, students have to unlearn existing practices and adopt a whole new way of thinking and being. The aforementioned excerpts highlight that students are becoming more aware that what counts as knowledge within one context may be very different in another context.

Concurrently, students indicate that more than just creating awareness, in order to succeed; they have to adjust their literacy practices in order to fit the demands of the new context. Unfortunately, what remains hidden is that the discovery of what counts as knowledge and learning is not an easy process and students struggle to find a balance, common ground or difference between their school literacy practices and those academic literacies practices now demanded at the DUT (M^cKenna, 2004). Additionally, rather than acknowledging the difficulties associated "in accessing or producing the expected meaning of these texts" in the absence of "shared norms", students' lack of understanding and inability to produce the desired literacies are often trivialised as a lack of language proficiency (M^cKenna, 2004:ii). Moreover, Regina highlights that texts become harder to negotiate when assessments demanding use of multi-disciplinary efforts are required (Paxton, 1995). This reality which compounds the difficulties contained within it are similar to that described by Dison and Rule (1996) in their description of student feedback experiences at the University of the Witwatersrand.

4.2.4 The contentious nature of feedback

In the course of an academic workday, students pursue feedback and lecturers aim to provide it (see Higgins, 2000; Higgins et al., 2002; Mitchler, 2006), but in practice, feedback belies its seemingly innocuous and gentle dictionary definition because "what constitutes feedback may also be disputed" (Carless 2006:223). Several studies like those conducted by Bardine et al. (2000); Higgins (2000) and Carless (2006) albeit under different circumstances, have iterated findings highlighting differing perceptions of feedback when these perceptions were compared between providers and users of feedback in each study. For example, when I first introduced

the concept of a process-orientated approach to assignments in 2003, I felt that verbal feedback was sufficient to inform and guide student's next draft. However, my students did not fare as well as I had expected and it was only at a later date that the majority of my students confided that they would have preferred the feedback to be both verbal and written. Thus, reality is sometimes at odds with a lecturer's intention when formative feedback is provided (Mitchler, 2006).

A key factor contributing to the above reality is that when feedback occurs between lecturers and students, such communication usually unfolds on an assumption that both parties to the communication have the same access to and understanding of academic discourse in which this assessment feedback is provided (Lea and Street, 2000). However, Lea and Street (2000) argue that this assumption is false as students' access to these discourses are limited moreover, academics should be wary of making unfounded assumptions about students' understanding of the rules and conventions that govern dominant academic literacy practices (M^cKenna, 2004; Carless, 2006). For example, Lillis and Turner (2001), indicate that unlike academics for whom the academic terminologies associated with assessment are inherent and a natural part of an academic day's work, the same cannot always be said for our students. Thus, terms like "plagiarism" (Lillis and Turner, 2001:58) and "clarity" (ibid:63), can have very different connotations for students and lecturers respectively. Lillis and Turners' suggestions have direct reference for this research. Dhiya, for example, indicates that her understanding of plagiarism was different to her lecturer's:

...I didn't really understand why did she write plagiarism, but when I went through it, and like I did photocopy it [the pictures] and just stick (Dhiya)

Additionally, Dhiya indicates that the word plagiarism written next to the pictures she had used, did not clearly articulate to her how she had committed plagiarism. Thus, in this instance, lecturer-student difference on the rules and conventions that inform acceptable academic literacy practices (see M^cKenna, 2004) only came to light when Dhiya sought clarity on the feedback provided:

...I didn't really know what she wanted...I asked her what she meant by that [plagiarism]. She told me that I had to reference every picture. Every picture that I have, I have to reference it, from where it came from, the pages, so that was really helpful [written and verbal feedback] (Dhiya)

Students are rarely aware how the rules and conventions of a discipline govern what can be said and how it should be said. For example, when compiling a menu in the discipline, it is expected that students would be alert to and employ market awareness, menu planning guidelines, menu formatting, menu costing and creativity. Founded on these key elements, the menu can then function as an effective marketing tool for an establishment and present opportunity for successful interface between customer and establishment. In her commentary

to Sli, the lecturer indicates that Sli falls short of designing an effective menu in a number of ways (refer to Appendix G for comments numbered 1-4). The comments on the student's draft are not neutral (M^oKenna, 2004), rather, they encapsulate what the lecturer and in turn, the Hospitality industry counts as knowledge within the discipline. For example, comment number 1, 'too much chicken', is informed by the lecturers experience and understanding of what is acceptable within the discipline. That is, under the section titled wraps, four of the seven options provided by Sli, contain chicken. This is too limiting as it presents fewer options for customers who may not want to eat a wrap with chicken. Moreover, there is only one wrap containing red meat and no provision has been made for vegetarians. For a student who is not a vegetarian, it may be an easy oversight to omit vegetarian options; however, this would not be an acceptable practice within the Hospitality discipline, as it would fall short of preparing students to enter an industry that has to meet the needs of a diverse and demanding customer base, within which vegetarianism is a growing trend. Thus, Sli would need to offer more informed options in order to avoid excluding segments of her target market. This implies that in designing an effective menu Sli is expected to show cognisance of multiple influences brought on by what counts as knowledge within the discipline.

Comment number 2, "name is not suitable" refers (see Appendix G). This comment is another example of how the rules and conventions of the Hospitality discipline governs student's academic literacy practices. It is expected that students will take on particular ways of speaking when they design menus. However, these conventions are not as explicit to students as they might be for an academic. For example, Sli fails to make use of what Thackston (2004:n.p.) refers to as "sensory activity", in her menu write-up. That is, to make use of requisite descriptive language in order to "fill the gap of what customers would see, hear, smell, taste, or feel if they were standing in the presence of the product." For example, the term 'chicken strips', is not very informative (see appendix G), rather, terms like char-grilled, sautéed and herb-rubbed, which engenders greater sales appeal, is a better fit of what would be regarded as appropriate. Thus, Sli's choice of names for her menu dishes as well as her omission to include a detailed descriptive copy for all her menu items is not very acceptable as the purpose of the menu to inform, tantalise and encourage the reader to buy the product, may be diminished.

The data also indicated that academic literacy norms associated with assessment practices are not explicit to students. Thus, even when students are given assessment criteria, it does not automatically qualify the reader as literate in the jargon associated with assessment. For example, Dhiya, who I perceived to be an articulate student, indicated that she had to check her assimilation of what she had read in the marking criteria, with the lecturer, to ensure that she had interpreted it appropriately. Dhiya for example indicates:

...I did [understand the marking criteria], but then there are some questions where I had to go and ask the lecturer to clarify them (Dhiya)

Therefore, even when students are given frequent feedback as well as marking criteria aimed at making assessment and feedback more transparent (Rust et al., 2003), it cannot be assumed that students will automatically relate to these (Sli), understand them (Dhiya) or be able to use them to advance their learning.

With reference to these examples, I believe that academics cannot assume that both parties to a communication have the same access to and understanding of academic discourse, in which assessment feedback is provided (Lillis and Turner, 2001). Further to the differing perceptions and meaning making associated with feedback, the literature on communication tells us that advantages and disadvantages associated with different forms of communication varies and thus influences and impacts differently on the way in which feedback is perceived by students (Bandura, 1986 and 1993; Ivanič et al., 2000; Read et al., 2004). Issues relating to and influencing the different forms used to provide feedback in this research will be discussed in Section 4.3.1 of this chapter.

4.2.5 Students' understanding of feedback

Researchers like Ivanič et al. (2000) and Hounsell (2003) have argued that for feedback to take its rightful place in the course of advancing learning and teaching, current practices of giving feedback, including scrutiny of both the content and form thereof deserves addressing in order to fit purpose. Within this framework, student inclusion, contributions and perceptions on feedback is critical especially if the intention for students to take such feedback seriously remains (Ivanič et al., 2000). Therefore, it becomes essential to probe what the research participants' understanding of feedback is.

A strong theme emerged from the interview data on students' understanding of the role and purpose of feedback. I will quote a few excerpts to highlight this.

...the comments that we do get, perhaps we didn't reference it correctly, so the lecturer would say, you know, your referencing is incorrect, or if you give too much information or too little information (Kishore)

...um, it's telling us where we could have improved, and what we should have done or should not have done...and it's like, um, going through the assignment with us (Natasha)

...when we get feedback it is, um, it's a way of correcting our mistakes (Betty)

...information that we get back from the lecturer and teachers telling you where you went wrong or where you can improve or what...you can do to get a better mark (Regina)

...feedback – it basically means okay, like you didn't do something like. Basically it's telling you what you've done and how you can better it (Zama)

...feedback to me – it's like a report on your assignment, its comments what you did right, what you did wrong and what you didn't touch on... (Sli)

The responses of Kishore, Natasha, Betty, Regina, Zama and Sli indicate that, similar to the finding of researchers like Bardine et al. (2000), an essential part of students' perception of feedback is as a means of error correction and provider of some type of negative commentary. That is, as a means of using an "outsider" (Li Wai Shing, 1992:53) to inform students of where they went wrong or what was lacking in their work (also see Boud, 1995). Similar to Quinn (1999), I believe that these students' perceptions could be partly informed by the discourses of their experiences of feedback, which as discussed earlier in this chapter consisted mainly of outcome feedback; non-directed criticism and non-directed praise type comments. This reality indicates that student perception of feedback is inextricably influenced and shaped by the feedback content, as well as the intention, understanding, assumptions and ability of the feedback provider, in a given context (Gipps, 1995; Ivanič at al, 2000; Higgins et al., 2001; 2002). Thus, when students have been conditioned to receive corrective feedback there should be little surprise relating to the way students construe feedback and its potential role in their learning. I believe that these cohorts' aforementioned perception and experience of feedback could have lent some impact on the extent to which students eventually conceptualised the feedback provided in this drafting-responding process. Additionally, while it was not expressed overtly, the perception I gleaned during some interviews was that the abundance of 'advice' provided in this research context proved overwhelming to some students.

However, the above discussions do not mean that students' experience of feedback while in school or lecturer experience and construction of feedback are the sole variables that shape student perception of assessment and feedback. On the contrary, this research indicates that a number of other variables presents a fuller picture of student perceptions of feedback (Baynham, 2000 and Read, et al., 2004).

4.3 Other factors influencing students' perception of feedback

There were many factors that contributed towards students' perception of feedback. I will now discuss a few of these examples.

4.3.1 Differing forms of feedback and the need for reflection

For the purpose of this study, feedback form refers to whether the feedback provided was verbal, written or embracing both forms. Communication and feedback was central to the Food and Beverage Operations II assignment, and was provided to students at several stages in the drafting process. For example, when the assignment was given to students, Heleen provided a written marking criterion. She followed this up with an interactive dialogue session where she went through the criteria with the students. Students then produced a draft assignment and were given written comments on their efforts. A further verbal session was scheduled where students were given an opportunity to read their comments and engage in

dialogue with the lecturer to assist them with their final revision process. Thus, the communication between students and lecturer may be seen as a mixture of written and verbal comments. Cognisance of this variable is important and has implications for students as research indicates that regardless of feedback form, "all comments exercise some form of control over student's writing" (Sprinkle, 2004:278).

Given my own experience of providing feedback in different forms (detailed in Chapter One), I was curious to know how students in this study perceived different forms of feedback and what impact these may have on the way in which the students interacted with feedback. It must be borne in mind that outside of this research context, students usually only received written feedback on an assignment and that feedback would be provided at the end of the piece of work. Student perceptions from the interview data will highlight how significantly even one seemingly unimportant aspect of feedback, that is feedback form, is viewed by different participants of the same study; and the varying impact it has on their interactions with it.

Further to the debate on the best form in which to provide feedback in, Crone-Blevins (2002) students' responses on form of feedback hints at the range of individual needs that students may be seeking to satisfy through feedback. This means that providers of feedback have to be simultaneously cognisant of several aspects when giving feedback in order to provide comments that are delicately balanced. For example, written and verbal feedback has to "encourage, motivate, inspire, liberate, and challenge our students" (Crone-Blevins, 2002:93). However, at the same time, providers of feedback have to be "honest in our reactions" and mindful of the fact that comments made to students can have "long-term psychological effects on students" (ibid:93). Balancing this range of needs in a bid to provide the most helpful feedback to students can be a challenging and daunting experience.

In retrospect, a personal experience of mine refers. As a new lecturer providing feedback on a food assignment, and at that stage, unaware of the literature on feedback and its impact on the participants, makes me realise and appreciate just how well placed my reflective outlook was in serving me and in turn, my students. I was team teaching the subject Food 1 with another more experienced lecturer, when the prospect of marking an assignment for the subject loomed. Unlike my confidence in marking a test with its more defined answers, I was now faced with the confidence sapping prospect of open-ended answers (Crone-Blevins, 2002) which as indicated by Phume earlier in this research, if well-motivated, written and substantiated, could be correct. Worse yet, there was going to be irrefutable and lasting written proof of how I had interpreted my students' work, meaning that unlike the informal banter and feedback I provided post testing, for me, the mantle of my new lecturing robes presented a daunting task in terms of providing written feedback that was now both formal and permanent. Because of all these factors, I approached the marking of this assignment with great trepidation.

I remember spending my whole July vacation assessing assignments, not solely due to the immense researching I had to conduct to verify the gist of students' open-ended work but because I found it intimidating to commit my thoughts and opinions of my students' work to paper. My past experiences as a receiver of feedback ensured that I worried that I would not say what needed to be said correctly or fully enough. For example, I did not want my comments to hurt my students but at the same time, I also did not want to omit necessary guidance. After discarding the first few feedback sheets I had attempted to respond on, I realised that my initial perceptions on a piece of work could change by the time I had read another paragraph or a page more. However, by responding in-text, I was providing feedback as I read with only partial insight to the whole of what the student was saying. This meant that my comment was already captured and could be damaging to the student. I resolved my dilemma at the time by doing my feedback in pencil. I gratefully counted down my snail paced marking and breathed a sigh of relief when I closed the last assignment.

I then started reading over the feedback I had provided, to assess my handiwork. What an appalling shock I received. The embellished feedback I had written in my student's feedback sheets was truthful but scathing. That is, what researchers like Hyland and Hyland (2001) might have referred to as lacking in mitigating devices of any sort to cushion any criticism or directive comments given. While I had included positive comments too, when I read through the feedback I had provided, the force of the negative was so powerful it obliterated the timid voice presented in my positive comments.

In retrospect, I now realise that my previous style of providing feedback could have been due to what researchers like Griffin (1982), Loel (2004) and Weaver (2006) have suggested as a lecturer tendency to focus on the negative rather than on positive aspects when providing feedback. But research indicates that this style of providing feedback can have a critical impact on students. For example, researchers like Straub (1997); Bardine et al. (2000) and Loel (2004) have shown that positive rather than negative comments have the greatest ability in influencing student writing, especially with regards to students' attitude (Loel, 2004).

I have also realised that my previous style of providing feedback was not dissimilar to an observation made by Smith (1997) that providers of feedback tended to follow a universal pattern of providing feedback by starting with positive comments and then graduating towards the negative. However, as indicated previously in this thesis, prior to undertaking my Master's study, I was unaware of the theory supporting assessment and feedback (McKenna, 2004). Thus research among others, like Griffin (1982), Straub (1997), Loel (2004) and Rowe and Wood (undated), on the importance and benefits associated with a positive tone in one's feedback, were on some levels, lost to me.

In the absence of a theoretical background to inform my feedback style, I thanked my intuition and foresight for using a pencil to comment and then went back to each assignment and using a different approach (Sommers, 1982), looked for the positive and interesting aspects of what students had compiled rather than honing in on the negatives and error correction (Sommers, 1982; Bardine et al., 2000). I believe that the changed attitude with which I approached my students' writing resulted in a form of feedback that moved away from comments laced with discouragement and demotivation. While I allude to the charge made by Edgington, that such an effort was "time-consuming and emotionally draining" (2004:290), similar to researchers like Kearns (1991) and Bardine et al. (2000), I believe that by stepping back, revisiting and reflecting on the feedback I had provided, I had shifted part of my style of providing feedback forever. My colleague on the other hand, with her wealth of experience to back her practices, was highly amused at my antics and what she viewed as a willful sacrifice of holiday time.

Bearing the above framework on the form of feedback in mind, analysis of the data revealed a strong preference for written feedback, with all nine participants indicating that this form of feedback was useful. Most students attributed their preference for written feedback to the fact that written feedback had permanence and was therefore less likely to be forgotten (which supports the studies of Falchikov, 1995; Parkerson, 2000; Gibbs et al., 2003). Phindile, for example, indicates this by stating that:

...the written, it stays, you can keep it with you (Phindile)

However, Phindile also identified a different aspect on the importance and value of written feedback. She felt that written feedback is important because it captures and reveals the lecturer's perception of her work at exactly that point when she was marking it. Phindile, for example states:

...she'll say how she felt when she was reading it. So I can get to see her perspective according to the assignment at that particular point of the assignment (Phindile)

Phindile's view of written feedback implies that if the lecturer were to provide feedback at a later stage, e.g. verbal feedback when she sees the students later, that the lecturer may not be able to recall and provide her precise feelings about each students work compared to that exact point in time when she marked it. Phindile's view on written feedback is confirmed by Betty who explained to me that:

...most of the time...the lecturer marks the assignment two weeks back...so the written comments is something that she wrote incidentally on that time when she marked, so she's recognising the mistake in that time (Betty)

Responses by Phindile and Betty implies that students may feel that written feedback exceeds verbal feedback in its ability to capture and provide a truer reflection of how the lecturer really felt when she marked a student's work. Thus unlike Gibbs et al. (2003:8) who found that "verbal feedback has a high impact" when "given closer...to the time of assessment", my research revealed that students may perceive written feedback with its ability to capture the way the lecturer felt when she read their texts at a precise point in time, as having a higher impact and being more helpful.

Student perception of written feedback as a capturer of lecturer perception on student texts may be unconsciously related to the belief of Tsoukas (1996); Polanyi (1998) and Webster et al. (2000), which relates to a lecturer's tacit knowledge and ways of being. For example, "I cannot describe it, but I know a good piece of work when I see it" (Rust et al., 2003:152). This then fuels student perception that what lecturers verbalise as being important may be somewhat different to what lecturers subsequently write on their completed piece of work. In turn, this reality makes Phindile and Betty's comments particularly important because it indicates that students who are gaining currency in a discipline's conventions may use written feedback as a means to gain insight to a lecturer's tacit knowledge and thereby, a fuller picture and of what works and what does not, in a given context. I believe that this tendency is encapsulated in several of the students' responses:

...I do read comments – I feel they're important...just to see how the other person felt about my work...I reference it back to where it is and see exactly where she's coming from and what she's thought of it (Dhiya)

...I'd like to know how does she feel about the assignment...I'd like to know her comments - how did the assignment come across to her (Betty)

In providing students with written feedback, lecturers may not have expressly intended for their feedback to be probed by students in order to glean insights into what counts as valid knowledge. However, student responses depicted above, have indicated otherwise. This shows that students use written feedback provided in a process-orientated approach as one of the ways to gain insight into the "ways of knowing" (Bartholomae, 1985:134) that would otherwise have remained relatively "impenetrable to the non-cognoscenti" (Webster et al., 2000:73).

With many students offering similar perceptions on written comments, a strikingly different theme in Regina's response captured my attention with the additional explanation she provided on the importance of permanence with written feedback:

...written it's always there...proof that...the lecturer did give it to you (Regina)

Firstly, Regina's response implies that written feedback functions as proof of her integrity, for example, that she was actually advised by someone more experienced than she was, to change some aspect of her work. Secondly, I believe that Regina's response acknowledges the power difference inherent between a student and lecturer (Ivanič et al., 2000 and Read et al., 2004). This is relevant if one considers that sometimes when students are given verbal feedback, there may be opportunity for the lecturer to advise inappropriately but at a later stage deny having provided such advice. Regina indicates here that under these circumstances, written feedback functions as proof to back-up student's revision undertakings.

While it may be unintentional, it is important for academics to acknowledge that opportunity for lecturers to advise incorrectly could arise. Especially, if one considers that the reality is that a lecturer is human, afflicted by stresses just like other people and may therefore be having a harried day, may have a large class to provide feedback to, or as the reader of multiple student texts, may be experiencing language difficulties (Paxton, 1995). The language difficulties brought on by differing language practices can be a two-way street for lecturer and student. The majority of the lecturing staff employed at the DUT "speak English as their first language and very rarely speak an African language" (McKenna, 2004:81) meaning that lecturers may be more likely to experience difficulty in "understanding and interpreting the essays of second language students" (Paxton, 1995:195). A similar difficulty may be experienced by students, who may be first language speakers of Isizulu.

Furthermore, the power relations that exist between student and lecturer gives the lecturer the upper hand in the student-lecturer relationship (Boud, 1995; Ivanič et al., 2000) and means that when verbal communications unfold between student-lecturer, it is more likely for whatever the lecturer says, to be regarded as the "truth" (Ivanič et al., 2000:43; also see Read et al.). In this light, Regina's response implies that it would be difficult for a student to insist that a lecturer was at fault in the type of feedback they had provided, if it was done verbally. The power relation inherent between these two parties would ensure that the authority of the lecturer is deferred to and upheld (Read et al., 2004). However, Regina's response indicates that the proof provided through written feedback provides leverage in the student's favour to challenge the power exerted by the lecturer, if an opportunity for query arose. This 'power' ascribed to written comments may be particularly important if a process-orientated approach to assignments replaces current product-related assignments in the Department of Hospitality Management Sciences at the DUT. With the adoption of a process-orientated approach to assignments, students are expressly tasked with using all forms of feedback provided, to revise. As a result, opportunity for queries based on the soundness of feedback provided may be increased. I wish to note that while the difficulty I experienced in securing follow-up to my initial interview with the students meant that I could not verify the

undercurrents I detected in Regina's response, I believe that the choice of her words left little leeway for misinterpretation.

Apart from the permanence and proof offered by written feedback, several students, including Sli, indicated that written feedback was preferred as it was:

...easy to understand...because you know exactly what the person wants you to do (Sli)

However, this perception was not always borne out in the later data transcripts or in the literature (Lea and Street, 2000; Read et al., 2004; Carless, 2006). For example, when I queried what would happen if she misunderstood the feedback, Sli paused thoughtfully, and then responded:

...oh, then it becomes a problem (Sli)

However, in Sli's case, the problem of misunderstanding the written feedback could have been averted if she had attended to the feedback earlier, rather than, the night before the assignment was due. Sli acknowledges this herself:

...sometimes it may be that you didn't understand and that it wasn't enough time for you to go back to the lecturer and ask for help or ask her to explain more on what she meant.

This reality where one thinks that one has understood written feedback only to find that one has actually misunderstood it, is captured effectively with the words of Lea and Street (2000:35) that writing is not a "transparent medium of representation." Thus in certain instances, well-meaning or intended advice can hinder student progress (Carless, 2006). As mentioned earlier, large volumes of research acknowledging the differing perceptions in assessment and feedback matters bear testimony to the barriers that differing students-lecturer perceptions on texts introduce (Wiltse, 2002; Read et al., 2004; Smith and Gorard, 2005; Carless, 2006; among others). However, as indicated by Sli's response above, and her resulting difficulties in accessing the written feedback provided, students are sometimes unaware of how their progress is being hindered by their lack of understanding (Elbow, 1991) and limited access to literacy practices (Lea and Street, 2000).

I believe that this tendency to misunderstand written texts may inform some student's preference for a combination of written and verbal feedback. It also affirms an assertion made by Brinko (1993:579) that, "feedback is more effective when conveyed in a variety of modes." Kishore for example, indicates:

...if you've got anything [feedback] written down you're not going to really understand it and sometimes if its given orally you wouldn't really remember it..., so if it's both – if it's written you'll remember what's written there as well as explained at the same time, orally (Kishore)

Kishore's response clearly conveys that written texts can have different meanings for students and lecturers. Further to this, in a stance similar to that advocated by Parkerson (2000) and Gardner (2004), Kishore indicates that the ideal scenario in terms of the form of feedback is one where students can enjoy advantages from different forms of feedback. That is, of having the permanence provided through the written medium, which simultaneously captures and provides them with the lecturer's tacit perceptions on specific aspects at a given time while also having the verbal medium which provides the opportunity to dialogue, confirm, verify and get clarity on a variety of issues (Parkerson, 2000; Rowe and Wood, unpublished).

However, a mixed form of delivery, that is, verbal and written comments did not escape unscathed from students' negative perceptions as it created a cause for concern with at least one student in this research. Betty indicated that:

...some comments you find that they were done verbally and for you she wrote something and but then she said something else... (Betty)

Here Betty raises a concern that she is unable to negotiate what she sees as different and conflicting messages from the oral and the written feedback forms. Betty then felt confused and did not know which form of feedback to follow, the verbal or the written advice. Betty's comment raises the issue of avoiding ambiguous comments in the sense that lecturers should check that they are not contradicting themselves in a bid to provide students with useful feedback (Kasanga, 2004; Mitchler, 2006). It could also hint at underlying tensions possibly informed by Betty's lack of ability to negotiate meaning when provided with comments in writing as opposed to when they were provided verbally (Lea and Street, 2000). I believe that this possibility is revealed and amplified in Zama's response:

...but then when you write – when you ask the question you ask it in such a way that we do not understand what you wanted...from us (Zama)

On the other hand, Betty may have experienced difficulty in reconciling the two forms of feedback because verbal feedback is perceived by students as being greater in quantity and richer in detail and therefore easier to understand than written feedback. For example, Phindile indicates that although she likes written feedback, she likes verbal feedback too because:

...its more [quantity] than when compared to written feedback (Phindile)

Phindile justifies her opinion by stating that she felt that "it's just too much to do", for a lecturer to write everything down, therefore, she believed that when it comes to written feedback, lecturers "just outline what they're trying to say." Phindile's response indicates a student awareness that rising student numbers and therefore increased demand on lecturer time may

result in verbal feedback being the padding on the base provided through written feedback. This is congruent with my discussion in Chapter Two. Thus verbal feedback, with its lower physical demand on a lecturer when compared to written feedback, is perceived as being greater in quantity than long written comments provided to a large student body (Parkerson, 2000).

The perception that written feedback is of a smaller quantity than verbal feedback is also supported by Gardner's analysis (2004) on how differences between verbal and written feedback influences feedback provision. Using the support of findings from her study as examples, Gardner asserts that "spoken feedback is typically around seven times longer than the written feedback" (2004:26)

While experienced providers of feedback will justly argue that quantity of feedback does not make up for quality feedback, Gardner, who uses Halliday's concept of 'complexity' to differentiate between written feedback and verbal feedback, indicates that rather than running at the quantity-quality debate like a charging bull, we may be missing vital hidden details that inform the overall picture. That is, "The complexity of the written language is static and dense. That of the spoken language is dynamic and intricate. Thus when feedback is provided in writing, there may be increased opportunity for "grammatical intricacy [to] take[s] the place of lexical density" (Halliday, 1989 cited in Gardner, 2004:25-26). Simply put, I believe that what is essentially the same feedback differs dramatically when it is written rather than when it is verbalised. For example, when providing written comments, lecturers may be tempted to resort to questions like: explain, why, how, what etc as a quick way to 'respond' to students. However, if the same lecturer was providing verbal feedback, they may phrase the same comment very differently. For example, the lecturer could say, 'Betty, in doing your financial planning, I would have really liked a few examples to show how volatile crude oil prices influences the business, the customer and the supplier.' In turn the quantity of comments when provided in writing rather than when verbalised, can be seen to impact on the content and the tone thereof (see Gardner, 2004).

When one reflects on the profoundly different way in which feedback with similar meaning alters when in written rather than a verbal form (Gardner, 2004), it supports Paxton's argument that in-text comments are often "cryptic and difficult to follow" (1995:195).

During the interviews, I also perceived a common thread that written feedback may be perceived by students as being brusquer than when compared to verbal feedback. Further to this, my personal experiences led me to believe that in face-to-face verbal communications, providers of feedback may make use of more mitigating tactics like hedges when conveying feedback than if they had to do so in writing (Gardner, 2004) thus increasing the volume of feedback and simultaneously softening the tone and the 'blow' that critical feedback is sometimes accused of delivering (Parkerson, 2000; Gardner, 2004; Wiggins, 2004).

4.3.2 Impact of feedback pre-and post-drafting

From her exposure to feedback at school, Phindile indicated that there was too little feedback provided at school for it to be of much use.

...Only, teachers would write 'well done' or 'you could have researched more on e.g. ants' if it was Bio or something...I guess back then...sometimes you get frustrated. You know when you put a lot of hard work in terms of assignments and you kind of want some feedback...And the teacher writes there 'well done' and it gets around about 60%...And then I thought why did I get a 60%,...because you do not know... (Phindile)

On the other hand, after the drafting-responding intervention, Phindile commented that sometimes there could be too much feedback:

...at the time you're reading it, it might seem like 'why did she have to do this to my assignment'? (Phindile)

The issue of too much feedback and its potentially overwhelming effects are raised by Bardine et al. (2000:101) who caution that in the presence of too much error correction, "It is easy for students to feel frustrated or overburdened." This may result in students experiencing "task overload" (Barnett, 1989:32). Their warning is teased out by Wiltse (2002) and Carless (2006) who play devil's advocate by stating that while some academics intend to provide detailed and plentiful feedback to students in order to facilitate revision, such feedback could have a dual effect. For example, it may reduce students' self-esteem and subsequently their "self-efficacy beliefs in their ability to write", to such an extent, that students may disconnect and "give up trying to improve" future drafts (Wiltse, 2002:126).

There are several proponents to counter this effect. For example, that feedback should focus on a holistic response rather than grammatical errors, to "prevent a student from being overwhelmed" (Sommer, 1989 cited in Mitchler, 2006:449). Another study conducted by Semke (1984), indicated that commenting on content rather than focussing on the correction of all errors, leads to an overall improvement in the quality of student writing. Research conducted by Barnett (1989) also advocates a move away from focussing on error correction in order to improve students' attitude towards writing. The dominant theme in the provision of feedback is then centred on shifting the focus from correction of grammar and spelling to that of meaning making (Griffin, 1982; Paxton, 1995; Bardine et al., 2000; Higgins et al., 2002) especially if such feedback is provided at the draft stage (Barnett 1989).

Apart from the above, I believe that in aiming to provide useful feedback to our students and becoming cognisant of the inherent opposing intentions of feedback also necessitates an appraisal of the context, in which such a scenario unfolds, which is critical in informing the overall picture. For example, in Chapter One, I indicated that students participating in this study had a limited exposure to quality feedback. That is, both their experiences while at

school and after the first year at the DUT, comprised feedback mainly expressed as a mark or percentage with one or two comments that simply functioned as an adjunct to the mark. Thus, pre-intervention, Phindile's response speaks to a desire to receive more feedback than that she had previously been exposed to. On the other hand, after the intervention, Phindile seems overwhelmed by the feedback she received and has limited ideas of how to make the most of the opportunity presented to her through the drafting process.

I propose that part of this reality may be attributed to Phindile's past experience of not having received detailed feedback and then suddenly having to deal with feedback provided through multiple forms and follow-up mechanisms. In essence, this 'onslaught' of feedback was too radically different to her past exposure to feedback. For example, Phindile's final view on the drafting-responding process resides as follows:

...it's okay, because, um, it's the first time doing an assignment like this anyway [drafting-responding]...I was quite excited with that. You know I like doing this assignment because it's more practical and more real (Phindile)

To counter this yo-yo effect, I propose that students' limited past experience to feedback indicates that students may report further gains if they are provided with gradual but multiple opportunities to practice and develop the art of using feedback effectively. I believe that this kind of induction into and regular practicing may help to facilitate and prepare students on how to deal with this transition from limited to abundant feedback while simultaneously aiming to halt the development of crippling complexes brought on by "writing apprehension" Wiltse (2002:126).

4.3.3 Impact of feedback on students' emotional well-being

Another interesting theme pertaining to written feedback that emerged from the data and which was borne out in the literature on students' writing, was related to the "choice of writing implement" selected by the lecturer to provide feedback (Ivanič et al., 2000:50). In their study, Ivanič et al. (2000) describe how the different choice of writing implements that is, pencil, pen, word processor, including the colour of the pen, influenced and impacted on students' perception of the feedback. For example, earlier in this chapter when I recounted my first exposure to assignment marking, I experienced firsthand Ivanič et al.'s (2000) findings: that penciled feedback was perceived by students as tentative, discussable and therefore alterable that is, less final and condemning than that of a pen. However, that was not all. Ivanič et al. (2000:51) also suggest that feedback penned in red signified lecturer power and their right to impose their "unchallengeable judgments" upon student texts (also Boughey, 1993; also see Boud, 1995 and Bardine et al., 2000). Research by Glover and Brown (2006) also makes reference to a student disparaging a comment penned with a red pen. However, their article does not concentrate any further effort on the implications of the red pen used.

Although in my study Heleen only utilised a red pen as the writing implement when providing feedback, the data revealed that the colour of the writing implement when providing written feedback did in fact have an impact on the way in which feedback was perceived by students. Zama for example, indicates that she is passionately against having red lines all over her work, and Paxton (1995:195) lends support to this wasted lecturer effort by stating that "scratching out terms...often serves no purpose other than to confuse students."

...why, red marks ...because I heard you mention that earlier (Evonne)

...because it's just so demoralising, especially if you're just going to put a red mark through my whole answer and I've written like half a page... (Zama)

...would a green pen change it? (Evonne)

...ja the colour plays a part....you know red is like the worst- it's...an irritant...all the teachers mark with a red pen and then you just put this red line through my answer that...I have just poured my heart and soul into... (Zama)

Further to the power play evident when a lecturer uses the stroke of a red pen to reduce student texts to nothingness (Ivanič et al., 2000), Zama's outcry indicates that whether intentional or not and regardless of form, feedback has the ability to engage students on an emotional level (Wiltse, 2002). The concept of feedback and emotional engagement is reflected in the literature by Romano (cited in Crone-Blevins, 2002) who very eloquently posits that, "we speak a word of praise or a word of criticism, and someone we've known only weeks may be permanently changed in some way" (2002:93). I believe that it is crucial for providers of feedback be cognisant of and understand feedback's ability to impart multiple messages or else the implicit difficulties and responsibilities contained in literature which cautions providers of feedback to recognise the "emotional burden that most [responses] carry" (Wassermann cited in Crone-Blevins, 2002:98) may remain undetected.

Research also indicates that comments which engage students on an emotional level impact not only on the way in which feedback is perceived and interpreted (Ivanič, 2000; Wiltse, 2002), but also on a student's self-esteem (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Ivanič et al., 2000; Read et al., 2004), their sense of self-efficacy (Bandura; 1993; 1997) and subsequently, their construction of themselves as a good or successful student (Read et al., 2004). Ivanič et al. (2000) further argue that difficulty creeps in when the inherently different power relations between lecturer and students sets the scene for students to read comments "for possible evaluations of themselves" (2000:60). In this scenario, students may be prone to interpreting comments to mean "What you wrote is inadequate" and by extension "You are inadequate" thus creating a "potential to undermine students, to sap their confidence" and to "increase their sense of inferiority" (Ivanič et al., 2000:61). As cautioned by Boud (1995:18) sometimes when we judge, we do not realise "the extent to which students experience our power over them." In the process, promising students like Regina, Phindile, Zama and Sli may have their

self-esteem crushed "because they don't see many good things in their writing" (Bardine et al., 2000:101). The following excerpt refers:

... Its like, you feel like how could you do a mistake when you like, you had a chance to redo it and you still go and do it wrong again (Regina).

...I won't lie, at the moment, especially if it's um, if it's negative [feedback], to you it's negative)... When you're reading it you like, agh, agh but I tried, you know...At the time you're reading it, it might seem like 'why did she have to do this to my assignment?' (Phindile)

... you feel just like oh my god you know you just feel I have smashed this assignment and then you get the marks back and its like, okay...., what did I do wrong, did I not understand what the lecturer wanted (Zama)

... I knew that's backtracking, but now I just did not know where to put what so I just gave up...because I did it the first time and it was a mess and I sorted again and again. I did it like maybe three times and I just gave up (Sli)

The above comments reveal two aspects from my data. Firstly, that Regina's feelings about feedback are not isolated and secondly, that feedback in this study (regardless of the form) did engage students emotionally. Although the first few pages of my data transcripts showed that some students expressly believed that critical comments made by lecturing staff are not personal, this perception was not always borne out in the later pages of their data transcripts. Dhiya, for example, explains that the negative comment she received about plagiarism, did not affect her on a personal level:

...actually when they do those [negative] comments, it's not on you personally; it's on your work, so you shouldn't take it to heart (Dhiya)

However, in the same breath, she indicates awareness of a student tendency to take comments personally too:

...I know some people do (Dhiya)

Dhiya's awareness that students and lecturers sometimes interpret feedback differently implies that her stance on the personal impact of feedback could alter under different circumstances. That is, that feedback is a socially situated process (Rowntree 1987; Hyland and Hyland, 2001; Gibbs et al., 2003, Read et al., 2004 and Carless, 2006). Being socially situated means that there is potential for multiple variables to influence not only the way a comment is shaped, worded, received and interpreted, but also the way in which it engages the student and the provider of such feedback (Dewey, 1938). Under different circumstances, *inter alia* depending on what the comment is directed at, the actual content of the comment, how the comment is couched, the relationship between the communicating participants (Fleming, 1999; Loel, 2004; Batt, 2005), the mood of the feedback reader when reading the comment, etc, I posit that a reader's belief about the ability of feedback to engage a student on a personal level, may change.

Towards the latter part of Dhiya's interview, when referring to a comment she received about the inappropriateness of using uncommon French words to indicate menu dishes in an English restaurant, Dhiya's perception on the ability of a lecturer's feedback to engage her emotions alters:

...the one thing I did feel is she shouldn't have been so mean to me about was the names used (Dhiya)

Further to the above, research indicates that if students perceive feedback to be, "more critical than helpful" (Straub, 1997:110, also see Parkerson, 2000 and Higgins et al., 2001), they may not be encouraged to use the feedback to feed forward. Instead, their attention is captured by the "negative emotions the comment engenders rather than on the point the lecturer is trying to make" (Parkerson, 2000:128) and the feedback is then read as "a statement of fact" rather than as an explanation of why something was perceived as incorrect (Gibbs et al., 2003:9). Natasha's response for example, describes how the judgemental tone and content of verbal feedback she received for another assignment has had a lingering impact on her sense of self esteem while simultaneously shifting her attention from the lecturer's point of reference, to focus on the negative and demotivating feelings it engendered:

...It's like sometimes we do something and the lecturer says 'oh no, it's wrong, how could you do that?' You know like they criticise us. I don't like when the lecturer does that and when they're mean to us. ...If they tell us in a nice way and say 'this is what you did wrong, it's not correct but you can change it, its fine', it's just I don't like when they criticise... (Natasha)

She felt this way because she said that the tone of the feedback could be demoralising.

...I don't want that, I want him to speak to us properly (Natasha)

Research by among others, Brinko (1993); Boud (1995); Bardine (1999); Brown (1999); Parkerson (2000); Hyland and Hyland (2001) and Gardner (2004) may be seen to support Natasha's projection that students are sensitive to the way in which their work is received, handled and commented on. For example, Atwell (cited in Bardine, 1999:240) explains that students want "responses that are [is] courteous and gentle, that give help without threatening the writer's dignity." Moreover, the language in which comments are provided must be respectful and non-threatening or condemning, regardless of whether they have written something right or wrong on a particular topic. Essentially, it is the work that was right or wrong, not them personally (Boud, 1995). Boud (1995:44) for example, argues, "Too often we fail to make absolutely clear the distinction between giving feedback on a specific product which has been produced by a person and judging them as a person." Thus, our hastily scrawled comments or nonchalantly spoken words are imbued with the power to fatally affect

students' sense of self, their "doubts and uncertainties" and in turn, to compromise their sense of self-esteem (Boud, 1995:44).

Furthermore, Natasha's appeal to receive respectful feedback, indicates that even if feedback embodies criticism, it is important for providers of feedback to be aware that the language of their feedback and the manner in which they couch their feedback can have far-reaching consequences (Bardine et al., 2000; Hyland and Hyland, 2001; Batt, 2005). Language use when providing feedback is especially important if such language comes across as being "abusive" (Boud, 1995:44).

While I do not intend to imply that feedback must now be thoroughly "couched in ambiguity" in order to "spare the student's feelings" (Parkerson, 2000:128), I do believe that there is some leeway to mitigate comments (Bardine et al., 2000). That is, with regards to criticism it should be written in such a way as to make it less oppressive (Boud, 1995) and directive and thus engender a motivated student approach to writing as a process in the hope of leading to improvements (Bardine et al., 2000). For example, after marking the draft, Heleen realised that students could benefit from and enhance their understanding if they accessed certain books and materials she had accumulated over the years. Rather than criticising the students for what she could have viewed as a sign of laziness, Heleen encourages and invites students to access her information. Bongzi showed that she really appreciated Heleen's approach:

...she would actually highlight...about the assignment...she'd ask us 'please come and borrow the equipment book', 'please do this', 'please do that' and for me she didn't have to do that. It was something that she did out of concern for us (Bongzi)

This implies that feedback not only embodies content of the communication but the tone, level of respect, judgement and type of language that different styles of commenting directs towards the reader of such comments that makes the perceptual difference (Bardine et al., 2000).

Researchers like Ferris (1997) and Bardine et al. (2000) and Gardner (2004) who advocate and highlight the benefits associated with the use of hedging devices led evidence contrary to the finding by Hyland and Hyland (2001). These differing perceptions on the impact of hedging devices begs that rather than avoiding the use of a tool that we are not fully familiar with to possibly enhance feedback, lecturers' efforts would be put to better use conducting further research into ways in which inter alia, directive and criticism type feedback comments can be somewhat mitigated. Simultaneously, academics can take heed of the warning by Hyland and Hyland (2001) that in using hedging devices to provide feedback, one must ensure that one does not render such feedback "unclear" or create "confusion and misunderstandings" for one's students (2001:207). Granted, such a task would be particularly

challenging given the diversity of our student body in South Africa. However, rather than ignoring hedging as a means to temper feedback and thereby improve its receptiveness and in turn helpfulness to students (Bardine et al., 2000), further research to counter negative impacts engendered may transform the use of hedging devices into a resource.

4.3.4 Dialoguing as common ground

Given the fact that academics' and students' access to academic discourse varies, students may need varying levels of assistance (Elbow 1997) in a bid to socialise towards a shared understanding and ways of being (M^oKenna, 2004). This is another way of stating that, "feedback is constructive only when both the instructor and student understand how to provide and use the given information", respectively (Chang et al., 2003:n.p.). Phume's response below, indicates that in practice, even when written feedback is provided, and is perceived as "...a way of communicating" (Phume), this written commentary may not be sufficient in terms of its "quality and content" (Wiltse, 2002:126), to enable a student's revision. This implies that dialogues and explanations of, among other aspects, assessment and feedback are necessary, and not a luxury, in order for students to engage with it fully and usefully (Brown and Knight, 1994; Paxton, 1995; Carless, 2006). Phumes' example encapsulates this intention aptly:

...she said I must, I must include a protein in my salad and the first thing that came to my mind, it was like Miss Grobbelaar but I've got meat in the salad, and then she said what about vegetarians, and I said but they don't eat meat, and then she said not only meat is a source of protein (Phume)

Instead of the student ignoring the feedback provided or the lecturer merely assuming that she had wasted her efforts, interactive "assessment dialogues" can be used as an effective tool "to reduce the gap in perceptions" between lecturer and students (Carless, 2006:220, also refer to Chapter Two, dialogues). That is, one needs to create an opportunity to enable "the assumptions known to lecturers but less transparent to students," to be shared (Carless, 2006:230). In turn, this encourages the development of a culture of shared understanding between lecturer and student, which is essential if students are to develop the kind of self-regulation skills necessary "for life-long learning" (Carless, 2006:230; also see Mitchler, 2006). In this sense, the statement made by Wells (1994 cited in Gardner, 2004:23) is particularly relevant:

When participants move back and forth between talk and text, using each mode to contextualize the other, and both modes as tools to make sense of the activity in which they are engaged ... students are best able to undertake ... semiotic apprenticeship into the various ways of knowing

Simply put, Phume's account of her clarity seeking with regard to the lecturer's protein prompt indicates how dialogue can facilitate, extend and improve both the giving and using of

feedback and its usefulness. Based on this, I believe that dialoguing can be used as a prompt to evolve inductive feedback, that is, questions "that would lead them [students] to make discoveries on how to improve their essays" towards comments of a deductive nature, that is, comments which informed students "where they needed to improve their essays and how to go about doing it" (Sweeney, 1999:214). Phume's perception on the helpfulness of dialogues is reiterated by Betty, who states:

...when the lecturer gives you comments verbally...they give you comments and ask you questions, and you ask questions as well (Betty)

In this cycle, Betty claims that verbal feedback is a "relationship" and therefore very unlike the closed and final nature of written comments, which excludes students. For example, Betty states:

...You take what she [the lecturer] says; there are no suggestions or anything. (Betty)

A similar perception is revealed in Dhiya's response about dialoguing:

...I think it is quite good because then you [lecturer] get to hear our side of the story, it's like you get to know what we think of it [feedback] and...we get to tell you...exactly what we feel about it, and if it did help us (Dhiya)

Apart from this, I felt that the interaction between students and lecturer shown in Phume's excerpt and hinted at in the responses of Betty and Dhiya reveals a more informal type of conversation unfolding between student and lecturer. Thus, I believe that this dialoguing framework has the potential for the inherent power difference between lecturer and student to be downplayed (Mitchler, 2006). Critically, when dialogues are positioned as part of a process-orientated approach towards assignments, it allows space for reflection and revision, while it is relevant, rather than once feedback may no longer be relevant (Rowe and Wood, unpublished; also refer to my discussion in Chapter Two of Fuller and Manning's argument as cited by Brinko, 1993). Here I will take the liberty to propose that in the absence of a process-orientated approach to assignments, students could miss valuable opportunities to engage with, practice, and reflect on and "produce coherent, meaningful ... discourse" (Li Wai Shing:48).

Natasha took the scope for dialogue to a different level. She reflects that for her, the fact that the student is able to interact with and build a relationship with the lecturer is rewarding, as the student is afforded an opportunity to move away from being just an anonymous name in the sea of students (Applefield et al., 2001). She appreciates the dialoguing process as she feels that it,

...actually helps when it comes to...get[ting] to know us.... they get to know your potential and how much of work we do for them for an assignment (Natasha)

However, with massification in higher education today, relationship building is becoming harder (Parkerson, 2000 and Carless, 2003). In this context, it is unfortunately easy for students to get lost in the crowd and become a nameless entity even though some students may desire to have a relationship where they are recognised and valued for themselves and their individual abilities (Edgington, 2004).

4.3.5 Language as a barrier

Student responses also highlighted how diversity in the student body could potentially create further barriers to feedback for some students. Instruction and feedback at the DUT is delivered through English and this in itself may have impact on some students' learning (M^cKenna, 2004). For example, the excerpt below, from Phume's interview transcripts indicates that negotiating feedback is more arduous for her than might be the case for other students, as she feels more comfortable with and better equipped to handle academic work when she is using her mother tongue, isiZulu as a medium of representation rather than English. Citing her own experiences and observations as "a middle class white" lecturer (2004:12) as well as literacy proponents like Prinsloo and Brier (1996), Gough (2000) and Thesen (1997), M^cKenna theorises that students whose home literacy practices do not overlap sufficiently with "dominant forms of literacy" as an everyday norm, may be destined for a more difficult journey into accessing and using "shared understandings implicit within decontextualised" academic texts (2004:4). Thus, Phume's plight highlights that acclimatisation to "academic ways of thinking and expressing themselves," (Parkerson, 2000:118) may be more difficult for second language speakers of English.

...sometimes we...discuss our notes in isiZulu...just translating English into isiZulu it makes it more easier to remember...I'm more likely to not know something in English than not to know a certain thing in isiZulu (Phume)

Under these circumstances, feedback is made more complex for some students, with the barriers introduced by language. That is, prior to using assessment feedback, students like Phume will have to negotiate feedback by first translating it from English to a language medium with which they are more comfortable. However, in doing so, they stand the risk of losing essential parts of the communication.

Furthermore, I believe that although Phume voices a difficulty with her ability to interact with assessment and feedback through an English medium, she truly believes that she has fixed the problem by using translation as a means to pursuing understanding and informing her resulting practices and actions. However, in doing so, Phume unknowingly disengages from opportunities presented for practicing and engaging with English in which dominant discourse at the DUT have been "normalized" as natural and necessary for academic success (M^cKenna, 2004:18). Meaning that rather than adhering to the dominant discourses "ways of being, thinking, acting, talking, writing, reading and valuing [as] natural and obvious, the way

good and intelligent and normal people behave" (Gee 1996:190), Phume's actions casts her practices and ways of being as different to those practices dictated and desired by the dominant discourses (Gee 1996). On the one level, Phume's use of translation to inform her ways of being is counter-productive towards advancing her ways of knowing in accordance with "standard forms" required "within the academy" (Bouhey, 2002 cited in M^cKenna, 2004:74).

On a second level, Phume's use of coping mechanisms like translation and home literacy practices as a means to access the dominant discourse to think, read and write is explicit, she does not hide this form of 'coping' from her peers. However, by not embracing the practices of the dominant discourses, Phume's actions may be viewed as "abnormal" by other students, that is, "discourse insiders" (M^cKenna, 2004:17), who have managed to take on the norms and practices of the dominant discourses (refer to excerpt about Zama below). I believe that Phume's explicit action may have an impact on the social relationships she subsequently forms in her class and this in turn may compound the difficulties that students like Phume might experience when they attempt to access dominant discourses. For example, by acting in ways that are different, Phume (and other students like her) manage to disassociate from identifying themselves as members of Zamas' "social network" (Gee, 1990 cited in M^cKenna, 2004:16). Even if unintentional, I believe that by adopting practices that assist in separating and disassociating from students who seem to have easier access to the literacy practices desired by the DUT, Phume and other students like her, are destined to compound their difficulty in acquiring or accessing those literacy practices required for success in tertiary education.

On the other hand, Phume's actions could also be an expression of her resistance against having to conform to imposed and unfamiliar literacies that may conflict with her identity, personal discourses (M^cKenna, 2004) and home literacies. However, I believe that when students do not "invest strongly in an academically literate identity" (M^cKenna, 2004:iii), this may mean that rather than critiquing while acquiring the discourse (Gee 2000 cited in M^cKenna, 2004), Phume's actions may inadvertently assist dominant discourses in acting as a "gatekeeper" to her success in tertiary education (M^cKenna, 2004:20). While my view renders me guilty of oversimplifying the ease of gaining access to elevated literacy practices, I believe that Phume's actions may result in her failing to read any deeper implication that disengaging with dominant discourses may pose towards her overall learning progress and cognitive development (M^cKenna, 2004). (In light of this reality, I found it interesting and telling that Phume was one of the students who did not pass the Food and Beverage Operations II assignment).

Simultaneously, I also found it interesting to note the response of another student, Zama, alongside that of Phume's. That is, Zama mentions that she also uses isiZulu as a language for communication. However, unlike Phume, who uses isiZulu in a bid to advance her

learning, Zama indicates that she uses isiZulu to facilitate her conversations with other students who do not have a similar access to elevated literacy practices (see M^cKenna, 2004). For example, Zama states:

...I can express myself both in English and in isiZulu...Some students are not, like at the same level as me... so I opt for isiZulu then which is ...which is like easier for both of us to be able to express ourselves (Zama)

I believe that Zama's statement about her agility in switching between English and isiZulu to suit the needs of differing contexts implies that she may have greater ease than Phume, at accessing elevated literacies.

Although my interview questions were not set up to analyse whether exposure to different types of schooling, that is, rural versus urban, previously disadvantaged versus 'Model C' and private, contributed in any way to students' levels of English language proficiency and acquisition of academic literacy, a few aspects both during my interview and in the data transcripts, captured my attention and gave me pause for consideration. For example, firstly, Zama's schooling background reveals that unlike Phume, who went to a government township school, Zama was schooled at a previously advantaged Model C type school. To date, there is a general perception that the quality of schooling and therefore learning, at an advantaged school is better than that provided at a disadvantaged school, implying an effect on the student exiting a particular type of schooling system. Secondly, Zama's responses during her interview indicate that other subtle literacy practices are at work with people who on the surface seem to belong to a homogeneous group. For example, it would be incorrect to assume that all isiZulu speaking students will have difficulty with accessing dominant literacies; as this would then provide an incomplete and misleading picture of reality. For example, by citing their use of elevated and 'selective' speech and language practices, in relation to other isiZulu speaking students, Zama indicates how exclusive sub-groups are formed and maintained, within a class.

...sometimes the words that I use will be like, not big, but I like use a very selective like language, like I'll say something that only I understand or my friends understand because I mean we heard that word on TV on a certain programme that we all happen to watch and we found the meaning of what it means, and so we'll use that in our day-to-day language...Then...there are some people in our class whose English is not up to scratch...it's not like at the same level. We're not all at the same level...Because some of the people in our class they'll speak isiZulu most of the time (Zama)

In this extract, Zama's response, supported by research conducted by Goethals (cited in Hoover, 2003) and M^cKenna (2004), shows that some groups of students by virtue of their previous home and school experiences, may have an easier time accessing the literacy practices expected of them at the DUT in the course of their engaging with learning and teaching. Additionally, if students using what Zama identified as selective language that other

students did not have a similar access to, gravitate to one another and form an exclusive coterie, then by default it implies that other students who have difficulty in accessing these select practices, may gravitate towards similarly positioned students, to form their own sub-group. By her own admission, Zama's more able coterie of students shuns those students who are believed to be different and of a lower level in terms of their academic literacy ability. Professor Goethals (cited in Hoover, 2003:n.p.), posits that this tendency is possibly due to the fact that "students engage more with students they feel more comfortable with."

On the other hand, I believe that the deliberate behaviour by Zama and her group members to set themselves apart from other isiZulu speaking students, reveals an explicit display of how primary users of English employ clannish behaviour aimed at deliberately excluding students who are secondary users of English and who are deemed to be lacking and therefore outside their circle. Furthermore, I believe that this tendency for like-minded individuals to gravitate towards each other has a bearing on learning (Goethals cited in Hoover, 2003). Especially, when one contrasts Dewey's philosophy of learning from others, alongside the clannish behaviour practiced by these primary language users, it would be interesting to note the quality of learning taking place within that group of students who are using secondary language practices and a narrowed access to elevated literacies practices. For example, like Phume, Betty was another student who resides outside of Zama's select coterie. Phume and Betty are more likely to engage with and turn to other students like themselves when they need clarity and assistance. As a result, these students may be experiencing similar kinds of difficulties as others in their group (Goethals cited in Hoover, 2003). Betty's response may be indicative of the possibility that soliciting help from other students who are at a similar level in their zone of proximal development as those providing the answers (Vygotsky et al., 1978), less beneficial towards the advancement of their learning. For example, while Betty indicated that she did not approach her lecturer for clarity when she did not understand the food production system, she also did not seek help from other students either.

...Did you try asking some of the students as well? (Evonne)

...They didn't understand. Quite a number of students actually struggled with the food production (Betty)

Incidentally, Betty's opinion about other students' ability with the food production system was not well founded as not all the students experienced difficulty with it. Additionally, I propose that Betty could have been referring to seeking help from other students in her sub-group, rather than the class as a whole. That is students who like herself, were experiencing difficulties with the food production system (see Hoover, 2003).

The Food and Beverage Operations II assignment outlined in this study was an individual rather than a group effort. However, I am aware that student's approach to assignments can change when an assignment is based on an individual rather than a group effort. For

example, some students indicated that student efforts are not equal in group work type assessments, thus, students who put in little effort also benefit.

...when you[re] doing a group assignment...everyone's putting their own input. Some people put more, some people don't put anything and the mark is just divided and you just have to you know stick with the mark (Regina)

Cognisance of the tensions brought on by group work is important to me. As outlined in Chapter One, when I began my lecturing duties, the assignment that catapulted my active reflection practices, was undertaken by students in groups of two. Experiences with my own cohort of students who were involved in a number of group-work related activities and assessments have yielded multiple problems (and sometimes solutions), over the years. Problems areas ranged from student perceptions of group work, selection of group members, perceptions of leadership, group dynamics and participation, etc. Simultaneously, I use my exposure to group-work type activities to reflect and adjust existing practices.

For example, I have stopped intervening in selection of group members in the hope of automatically improving student's work. As argued by Goethals (cited in Hoover, 2003:n.p.) although research indicates that "people influence each other" it is misleading to assume that pairing high achieving students with low achieving students would automatically and simply improve the weaker student's situation. Instead, "the concept of students rubbing off on each other is complicated" and could therefore simultaneously facilitate both cultures of discouragement and encouragement for different students (Goethals cited in Hoover, 2003:n.p.).

Given the nature of the Hospitality discipline and the value it places on team work, it is a forgone conclusion that students who are aspiring to complete the Hospitality Management Diploma will participate in some kind of group-work related assessment. Thus, I believe that the dynamics and impact of group work learning and assessment is a worthy and relevant area for further study.

4.3.6 Student perception of what helpful feedback entails

Earlier in this chapter, I paired data from the interview transcripts with the related literature on feedback to reveal that historically, research participants' involvement with feedback was dominated by their experiences of feedback as marks or percentages, non-directed criticism or non-directed praise type comments. Alongside this, I indicated that among others, researchers like Bardine et al. (2000) and Carless (2006) have acknowledged that the perceptions of students and lecturer vary when it comes to the usefulness of feedback. I also advocated that this context necessitated that providers of feedback examine their own understanding and construction of feedback. However, if "the effectiveness of a message is

measured at the level of the recipient" (Perrenoud, 1998:86), it implies that part of any attempt to achieve some form of parity in what helpful feedback looks like, it becomes critical for providers of feedback to probe the type of feedback that students may find helpful within a given context.

Simultaneously, lecturers and students need to be cognisant of the fact that there is no set recipe for helpful feedback (Mitchler, 2006). Instead, perceptions of helpfulness are shaped and reshaped as the participants interact with feedback garnered from different types of assessment, different contexts, including different providers of feedback. Furthermore, these variables are also influenced by each participant's social reality (Mitchler, 2006). As a result, what unfolds as helpful feedback for a participant within a given context may be unhelpful for the same participant within a different context, and so on. However, I believe that probing students' responses on what helpful feedback is can provide invaluable insights to providers of feedback as to the nature of feedback that students value and desire. Essentially, as Perrenoud (1998) has argued, communication occurs between two parties and we cannot assume to know irrevocably how the other party to the communication thinks, feels and acts. Hence, the resulting range of data that exists on a variety of aspects informing students' perception of helpful feedback.

As with the multiple student perceptions that to them feedback was equated to error correction and negative commentary, the data revealed another issue with multiple similar responses. There was a strikingly similar vein across responses from the research participants that helpful feedback was geared towards "assessment for learning" (Barrett, 2004:n.p.). That is, students were able to recognise comments which provided "detailed, specific and descriptive comments" on how to improve within the drafting-responding process (Barrett, 2004). In effect, research participants indicated that students wanted guidance on 'where you can improve' as well as 'how you may have improved' (Sli). For example, Sli indicates that this kind of information is 'important because if you are told where you went wrong, you understand it' thus it becomes 'constructive criticism' which 'gives you direction' and 'more detail compared to the actual question', and thereby, helps you to improve. Thus, students identified the provision of epistemologically focussed feedback as helpful and useful (Chang et al., 2003).

In her description above, of helpful feedback, Sli provides a lived experience that bears an uncanny imitation to that advocated in the literature. For example, in order for feedback to be useful, it needs to be "constructive" (Wiltse, 2002:126). Thus, the quality of the comments provided, may be seen to play an important role in determining the usefulness of the feedback provided (Sadler, 1989). Kishore for example indicates that quality of comments is very important when he states that:

...the quantity [of comments] doesn't really matter, because ...sometimes little can be said, you know, feedback, but it might have a major impact on you, or you can say a lot and it may not be much... it's rather the quality of what's said (Kishore)

Also rated as important, was the need for detailed information on content-specific aspects pertaining to the assignment topic, for example, on the wine list, equipment, menu and floor plan, as students felt that feedback on these aspects could assist them in advancing their ways of knowing about particular aspects in the discipline and thereby aid their constructive revision process.

...I prefer like the lecturers to tell us exactly like...Be specific in your comments, do not be very vague (Dhiya)

This is congruent with my literature finding that unlike the study conducted by Knight and Yorke (2003), where students preferred general feedback over specific feedback, when a process-approach to assignments is utilised, students in this research prefer specific comments as opposed to general comments, to help them revise their work. In this regard, my research finding was similar to that of Paxton (1995); Stefani (1998); Rust et al. (2003) and Barrett (2004). Specific comments, when provided within a drafting-responding framework, would afford students the opportunity to use recursive processes and in turn, improved access to literacy practices, to reflect, develop their ideas and use the timely feedback from an active audience to feed forward (Carless, 2006; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

There was no shortage of comments to students in the drafting-responding process outlined in this study. In responding to students' drafts and final copies, Heleen provided comments on a separate covering mark sheet as well as in-text (refer to Appendix F). Her intention was that the covering mark sheet would provide comments on overall reader perception of respective sections of the assignment while the in-text comment would provide feedback on specific aspects. This method of providing feedback seemed to have a direct influence on students' perception of how helpful feedback was. While students felt that the structured mark sheet, with its clearly defined sections, criteria and space of commenting made it easier for them to link a comment to a particular section than would have been possible if the lecturer provided all the comments for different sections together (Edgington, 2004), students found the in-text comments to be more helpful as they pertained to a particular sentence or idea, and it was therefore easy for them to follow-up in the revision process (Paxton, 1995; Edgington, 2004; Boughey, 2007).

...my most helpful comment... wasn't written here [on the cover sheet] but what I got inside [in-text]...you're able to go back and correct it because you know exactly where you went wrong (Sli)

...the fact that it is located here (in-text), you know it is referring to equipment, it's not just scattered, and it has the comment next to the area, the content area (Phume)

In his interview, Kishore states how the lecturer's in-text comments helped him synthesise and reflect upon how he was going to use the comments provided to revise his work.

...The ones in text [are helpful] because there I can see exactly what Ma'am is talking about and ...its telling me exactly in depth (Kishore)

It would seem that apart from the ability of in-text comments to direct students' revision attention to specific areas, in-text comments also seem to create a perception relating to the provision of detailed and attentive feedback (Batt, 2005). That is, a student perception that the lecturer had invested time and effort to mark the student's work (Rowe and Wood, undated) rather than providing a fleeting and non-committal overview on a cover sheet. I believe that this perception is similar to that shown by students in Gardner's research (2004) on taped oral versus written feedback, in that, ultimately, taped-oral feedback was seen to engage "students more personally" than written feedback (2004:36). In this regard, I believe that the earnest response made by Phindile can be seen to support students' need to engage the lecturer's attention for a deep reading of their texts:

...[I] do not mind it if it is even scribbles or not but I like comments...I would think like, shoo...you read my thing [assignment] and like you took your time with my thing (Phindile)

However this same student's perception may alter dramatically in the absence of comments, especially those provided in-text.

...It's just like they [the lecturer] just flipped through it and said I hate this and this, I like this... or I'd feel that it wasn't properly marked, it wasn't marked, it wasn't read...I might think that...she just looked at it and gave me the mark (Phindile)

Unlike Hyland and Hyland, (2001) who, in their analysis of their data in their research titled, "*Sugaring the pill: praise and criticism in written feedback*," omitted an analysis of in-text comments to inform their findings, in this study, in-text comments were perceived as particularly helpful, specific and important to my students and would therefore have missed important glimpses into student perception of feedback if omitted.

In a similar vein regarding the helpfulness of feedback, student responses indicate that the drafting-responding process itself had ability to influence students' perception of the importance of feedback, including altering the purpose of feedback to feed forward (Paxton, 1995; Bardine et al., 2000; Carless, 2006; Glover and Brown, 2006; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). For example, in her interview, Dhiya claims that feedback on "*The draft is very important...you can improve on it*". For Dhiya therefore, feedback provided at the draft stage

indicated a scope for feedback to feed forward and an opportunity for altering one's previous understanding. Dhiya's perception is mirrored in Kishore's response, wherein he felt that exclusion of a drafting process:

...will have a negative impact on us [students] as students would miss opportunity to improve and learn from their mistakes (Kishore)

These insights, garnered from student responses, are similar to what Vygotsky et al. (1978) envisioned in order to move students through the 'zone of proximal development'.

On the other hand, Dhiya, Kishore and Regina indicated that when feedback is provided on a final copy or outside that of a process-approach to writing, its importance and purpose may change (Boughey, 2007; Rowe and Wood, undated). That is, it may become more definite, closed and in light of Kishore's response, obsolete and redundant. For example:

...Well it [feedback on final copy] just tells you that you know what, I – you can see where you went wrong and ...it just ties it all up (Dhiya)

...When we get something that's a final copy, we know actually its final, that's it, whatever mistakes was made its not going to be undone, its not going to be changed, and you're not going to be given the opportunity to change it (Kishore)

... It's more like final...you would never like...get a chance to improve, you'd think let's forget about it (Regina)

In the extracts above, Dhiya, Kishore and Regina's perceptions may be seen to echo key characteristics of other process-orientated approach related studies like those by Zeiser (1999); Paxton (1995); James (2000); Gibbs and Simpson (2003); Wiggins (2004) and Glover and Brown (2006). These studies have shown that even if comments are provided, for them to be most effective, there is simultaneously a need to provide timely feedback comments. Moreover, if these timely comments are provided within the process-orientated approach framework they may permit a move away from students approaching the feedback provided as irrelevant (Fuller and Manning cited in Brinko, 1993). While Heleen's provision of timely feedback ensured that none of my research participants had any negative experiences regarding the timing of feedback for their Hospitality Operations assignment, Phume's response provides a stark contrast to how student approach to feedback may alter in the absence of timely feedback enabled through a process-orientated approach to assignments:

...if you did not have an opportunity to do a draft and you just got comments in a final copy...would you read the comments? (Evonne)

...I doubt I would because what use is it to me now? (Phume)

It was also interesting to find that the drafting-responding process was perceived by at least one student, as a guaranteed means of securing access to lecturer feedback. I found this

perception particularly poignant as it had personal reference for me. In Chapter One, when I outlined a background for this study, I mentioned that as a new lecturer, after discussing the topic and assessment criteria with my students, I made an informal offer for my students to consult with me once they had completed their draft. I recorded being offended and upset when only a limited number of students followed-up my offer for consultation, especially when I marked their work and realised that a simple consultation may have sufficed in putting paid to what sometimes amounted to a lack of direction. I put the student disregard of my offer down to a lack of interest and effort. However, Natasha, unaware of my experiences and perceptions, provided a very different student perspective on a similar scenario she experienced with another lecturer. For example, she compares comments provided on a draft as concrete, guaranteed, and therefore unlike those offered through an informal invitation, which she viewed as a non-committal promise of comments.

...we [students] have such a hectic life in tech [DUT], we study five days a week and every day and every day there's lectures, right till the end of the day, so there's no time to actually go to a lecturer, and if you have time he's not – it not necessarily that the lecturer has time to see you, when you're free ...so...when they give us a draft back, you know that you're getting comments back...you do not have to go and see your lecturer for you to get comments on your work (Natasha)

Although the research by Higgins et al. (2002) supported the tendency that students do not readily take up lecturer's offer for assistance during office hours, their research did not delve into why this situation prevailed. This situation may have particular bearing in Universities of Technology, where the number of contact periods for lecturing staff is high, which implies that lecturers do not have much office time in which to dispense consultative feedback. Unfortunately, as indicated by my research data some lecturers, even if initially ignorant of the bearing their limited office time has on informal offers to consult, do not adjust their methods to accommodate such consultations. These lecturers may be guilty of knowingly using informal offers of assistance alongside the reality of not being in their office to provide such assistance, to shift the blame for not consulting, to the student. When this reality is placed alongside Natasha's perception of lack of access to feedback, I cannot help reassessing and contrasting it with the lecturer outcry that students do not take up their offers to consult. While I am aware that other factors also inform students' decision to avoid consultations with lecturers during office hours, lecturer non availability may partly explain why students do not take up informal lecturer offers for assistance. I believe that the increase in the number of consultations I had once I formalised set office hour consultations with my students in my second year of lecturing, bears testimony to the impact of this reality.

The context, in which student access to feedback unfolds, is important. It indicates to me that sometimes lecturers are too entrenched in the taken-for-granted differential power relation between lecturer and student (Ivanič et al., 2000), which situates students as the inferior, that is, only conceived of as needing initiative to comply with lecturer rules and guidelines. With

this mindset, lecturers may fail to question or realise that students' lack of participation may not simply be a result of a "lack of motivation or commitment" (Higgins et al., 2002:56), "laziness or recalcitrance" (Ferris, 1997:333). Rather, it could be due to other factors and stresses which may not be so obvious (Higgins et al., 2002; also see Rowe and Wood, unpublished).

4.3.7 Motivation and reflection

Further to the above, I believe that the responses by Kishore and Dhiya (below), which echo several other students in this study, indicate that if students are told repeatedly that they are useless, they may start to believe it. Moreover, if this type of a learning culture is cultivated, there may be repercussions for other areas of learning too. For example, Kishore and Dhiya are quick to attribute poor student participation to laziness and a lack of initiative. That is, students rarely attribute any blame for the lack of participation by students as being a result of "difficulties in taking on the literacy practices esteemed by the academy" (McKenna, 2004:iii). Instead students resort to mimicking a misinformed lecturer perception which only attributes poor student participation to poor student attitude. For example:

...if she's given you the comments and it is not used? (Evonne)

...then we're kind of being a bit lazy and showing no initiative in our work or taking no initiative to improve (Kishore)

...there's some people who just don't want to do their work and that's their problem clearly. If they don't want to learn and they don't want to do it properly (Dhiya)

The above observation also indicates that the power relations inherent between student and lecturer may falsely advocate the view of the lecturer as the "truth" (Ivanič et al., 2000:43). Additionally, when students have limited access to literacy practices compared to lecturers (Boughey, 1999), it may inhibit and thus limit students' ability to theorise about the real barriers to their academic progress (McKenna, 2004). I believe the latter part of my suggestion is also reflected in Zama's response:

...I think in our minds we think that we incorporated everything, but obviously not in the minds of the lecturer...as far as I was concerned I had like changed everything that she had said, but obviously not (Zama)

Zamas' example indicates that what one party to the communication may perceive as "a lack of responsiveness to a teacher's comments" (Ferris, 1997:333) may in reality be very different to what was assumed. Moreover, I believe that the dictum by Higgins et al. (2002) on lecturers' misguided perception regarding student's lack of participation indicates the importance and potential that probing, reflection and adjustment may have on improving current teaching and learning (Bardine et al., 2000; Sprinkle, 2004). Lecturers can use active

and reflective techniques to revise and "adopt new strategies of making commentary" that "provide increased revision options for students" thus "enabling them to view writing and revising from a more informed perspective" (Sprinkle, 2004:279). For example, my assessment experiences during 2003 informed my decision in 2004, to change my consultation policy and make it compulsory for student-lecturer consultations (with mutually negotiated dates set-up in advance). This proved to be mutually beneficial for students and myself.

However, examples of my practices detailed in this thesis do not imply that all other academics whose practices (and in turn student experiences) may be enriched from similar introspective and active reflective processes are following suit (Rowe and Wood, undated). For example, in the course of data collection, student responses sometimes referred to the assessment and feedback practices of other lecturers teaching different subjects within the same diploma programme. My data transcripts reveal that not only do feedback and lecturing practices vary greatly in content and form from one lecturer to another, importantly, reflection, adjustment and best practice is not reflected (or perceived by students) as an automatic tendency for all lecturing staff (also see Rowe and Wood, undated). The following excerpt refers:

...Imagine if every lecturer enforced this [drafting-responding process] you might be saying stop. Stop this feedback process! (Evonne)

...I don't think they would because there some lecturers that are lazy (Sli)

...You do get lecturers who take the initiative...and do their best, and you do get some lecturers who, okay, you come here to study, if you want to study, study, go on home and study (Kishore)

This indicates that there may be scope for the DUT to improve service delivery by looking at the possibility of devising feedback guidelines/policies in a bid to provide more structured and better quality feedback to students (Rowe and Wood, undated) in general.

Fullan (1991 cited in Ivanič et al., 2000:63) has argued that some lecturers are "reluctant to make changes in [our] their work practices unless they can find 'meaning' in the changes" (also see Linkon, 2005). On the other hand, other researchers have indicated that resistance to change is sometimes due to inability of academic staff members to change their practices on their own (Black and William, 1998; Cowie and Bell, 1999 cited in Yorke, 2003; Linkon, 2005). This implies that academics may need assistance and developmental efforts to help them make meaningful changes to their practices. This aspect will be developed further in Chapter Five.

4.3.8 Selectivity in the need and use of feedback

Given students' history of being imbued in a mark-driven culture, I was not surprised that all the student participants in this research indicated that they looked at their marks first when they received their final marked assignment. However, some students simultaneously indicated that they wanted feedback in order to help them understand where they had gone wrong. This was different to the finding by Carless (2002:355) where his research participant revealed, "that it was not his practice to collect the assignment if the mark awarded was low!"

The concept of wanting feedback when one had received a low mark was supported by several students in this study (also see Rowe and Wood, unpublished). The theme emerging here was that when students undertake and complete an assignment, they usually set a target mark that they are working towards. For example, like other students in this study, Phindile indicates that she "...always has a target...60 is always for me..." and if that target is reached, then students seemed more complacent about reading feedback which was then merely viewed as support that their work was carefully read and fairly marked (Jackson, 1995). On the other hand, my data also revealed that if the mark awarded fell short of the target that the student had set for themselves, the student seemed more motivated to read the feedback and determine where they had gone wrong. This research finding is then similar to the finding by Paxton (1995), who found that a student in her study may be more interested in reading her feedback only if she was not happy with what she had scored. For example Sli indicates:

...I thought I'd get, maybe a 55...And then when I get a 48, it's like 'Oh my god!' What's going on here...its devastating (Sli)

Simultaneously, students indicated that they would not have wanted another opportunity to do a further draft, even if it meant that they could improve with a second drafting opportunity. For example, Kishore explains:

...There is a limit, because...I did improve on my final copy, but how much more can I improve? (Kishore)

Boud (1995:159) theorises that perceptions like Kishore's could be informed by the fact that marks are a "form of final vocabulary." This means that once a mark is achieved, students may be less motivated to make changes. Further, I believe that Wiggins's theory (2004) could have been the underlying reasoning which motivated Lecturer B's students rejecting the revision opportunity she presented, especially as they were given (pass) marks at the draft stage. I believe that although students in this research undertaking were motivated to make changes and did improve the overall quality of their work from draft to final copy, the presence of marks does shift student expectations and motivation. Moreover, exposure to a dominant mark-orientated culture from school through to the second year of tertiary study, where the context clearly indicates that marks rather than comments obtained presents the opportunity

to unlock progress from one level to the next, has made its mark on students. It may also explain why students pay selective attention to corrections in order to aim as close as possible to the pass mark and thereafter disengage from learning and development.

However, this did not mean that students who achieved their 'target' did not want feedback. On the contrary, students felt that they were entitled to feedback. Students portrayed responses very similar to that of the "consumer" described by Higgins et al. (2002:59) and Weaver (2006). For example, in my research, these responses speak of students expecting feedback as part of a service offered:

...We're paying a lot of money for our course and we should be told where we are going wrong (Kishore)

...I've made time to do an assignment for you [lecturer], so you must give me feedback I feel it's only right, it's only fair (Zama)

In this regard, Zamas' response was very similar to that of a student participant in a study by Rowe and Wood (unpublished). Paradoxically, although student responses indicated that they valued and read the feedback provided in the drafting process and aimed to use it to improve their subsequent writing and thereby their grades (Ding, 1998; Hyland 2000 and Higgins et al., 2002), students were selective in the comments that they ultimately utilised to improve their work. For example, many of the students attended to feedback aimed at improving their menu. That is, including a descriptive copy or and fleshing out a limited descriptive copy, choosing dishes in accordance with individual restaurant theme, menu formatting and making changes to restaurant and kitchen layout. However, in some instances, students also ignored certain comments (Ferris, 1997) or filed them away mentally, for future use. For example, Kishore had a French themed menu but his menu dishes did not always reflect this; in fact, his dessert section was a medley of desserts from different countries. In his revision, Kishore affirms his use the lecturer feedback to attend to menu changes; however, he simultaneously professes to do so selectively.

...Well, all I did was, I just looked at certain points – key points and I just worked with that. It wasn't like really seeing how I did my final. You've got to look for certain information that's missing and stuff like that (Kishore)

At a quick glance, it would seem that Kishore simply attended to "surface-level errors [rather]... than ...reworking an entire section" (Bardine, 1999:242; also see Dohrer, 1991); however, these actions in response to feedback received are complex and informed by multiple reasons for this state of affairs (Higgins et al., 2002). For example, during the interview, Kishore indicates that he sought help from family members who worked within the Hospitality industry; when he compiled his dessert menu. However, in doing so, he fails to also reflect on the importance of other variables in influencing his menu 'research'. For example, in current economic times, restaurateurs may be forced to adapt and differ to

customer needs (and 'pockets') rather than religiously following traditional cuisine. The scope of such menu deviations may vary from one restaurant to another. Secondly, information gained from these sources would need verification with the theoretical information on the cuisine of a particular country one is researching. If not verified, these menu deviations can be misleading to an ingénue student who is grappling to plan a traditional French menu. However, such mechanics in his menu compilation were not overt to Kishore. Thus, he falls short of sourcing those French menu dishes deemed appropriate by the discipline.

There were also other reasons informing students' selective use of feedback. In Chapter Two I referred to the warning made by Baume and Yorke (2002) and Yorke's (2003), on the distorted level of learning represented through Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. Baume and Yorke's (2002) warning has relevance for this research as it indicated that sometimes lecturer comments were not utilised because students could not support and advance their learning in the absence of the continued support provided by the lecturer. For example, although Sli rated the feedback on her floor plan as a helpful comment, she later indicates that when she tried to use the comment, she was unable to forge ahead:

...I thought when I looked at it that it would not be that difficult when I had to do it on my own." Nevertheless, she indicates "...I didn't finish doing it...because...I was confused...I knew that's backtracking, but...I just did not know where to put what...I shifted everything around and there was still backtracking (Sli)

Thus, in the absence of her lecturers' guidance, Sli professes that she is unable to transform her work and move from one level to another (see Baume and Yorke, 2003).

In light of the above, although Sli made several solo attempts at trial and error corrections, she was unable to progress beyond the point she was at and eventually, she gave up, helplessly stating that:

...you find that you just don't understand...you just give up...you decide...to leave it out, but know the consequences of that... (Sli)

Among other aspects, this status implies that the comments provided on the layout of Sli's draft may have been pitched at a level of cognition beyond the student's ability. Thus, although Sli tried to utilise the lecturer comments, in the absence of the lecturer, she was not able to use them effectively. At a later stage in her interview, Sli's suggestion that having more time for following up on comments so that the lecturer could "explain more on what she meant" and thus help to solve her lack of understanding, adds substance to my perception that Sli was unable to progress in her learning unassisted. Sli's suggestion amplifies what I have iterated earlier, that is, that in providing assistance to our students, academics need to be mindful of the fact that they do not exchange facilitation for student dependence, and in turn render students helpless.

Within Sli's excerpt, I found it interesting and revealing to note how Sli went through a process akin to 'elimination' in order to determine which feedback she would eventually use or alternately ignore in her revision process. For example, she made several attempts to utilise the feedback provided and make successful revisions to her floor plan but after several failed attempts, she realised that she was not succeeding in achieving her goal so she then opts to ignore the feedback provided. In doing so, she indicated awareness that her decision would have certain consequences. However, rather than redoing the work and indicating clearly to the lecturer that she still did not understand, she opted instead to present a brazen 'do not care façade' to her lecturer; to hide her lack of comprehension.

Student responses also indicated that they placed varying levels of importance on the different tools (for example, marking criteria, process-orientated approach, etc) included to assist them in completing their assignment draft and final copies. Regina for example confesses that:

...time will be a problem and a lot of students this year – I know I'm guilty of it – no matter how much time we have we still leave it till the last minute ...and that's where people go wrong, because that's when we...end up doing all the wrong things, you do short cuts, you leave out half the things that you're supposed to do (Regina)

Even Kishore, who is perceived by other students in his class, as a diligent student, admits that he did not use the criteria properly, when he did the draft:

...Well, all I did was, I just looked at certain points – key points and I just worked with that (Kishore)

On the other hand, Sli offers a somewhat flippant response:

...as students you don't – (laughs) we tend not to look at the criteria. Like the first time I did it [the draft], I just looked at the assignment; I didn't really look at the criteria...I knew it was there but you don't really look – as a student you don't look at it because you know you're going to get another chance (Sli)

Such honest acknowledgement about how students used prompts to benefit their writing in the process-orientated approach can be discouraging to lecturers who are being encouraged to shift their practices to include more formative type assessments. However, in this research, I believe that context played a strong role in influencing the way students interacted with the assessment task and it therefore warrants mention. Simply put, I believe that the context in which this research unfolded may have partly contributed towards the time-related problems that students experienced and therefore could have informed the 'short cuts' that students sometimes employed in order to cope (Boud, 1995).

As I outlined in Chapter One (section 1.5), the Hospitality Management diploma second level, is semesterised. This necessitates six months spent in industry and six months spent at DUT. The workload while at DUT is heavy and the pace fast. When the drafting-responding process was proposed to students, students were informed that although they would be spending more time doing this assignment, it was not possible to reduce the obligatory number of assessments they were already committed to completing as part of their diploma requirements. Although students seemed to understand this concept in theory, in practice, I believe that the drafting-responding process introduced more time-related stress to students already swamped with deadlines in an assessment packed semester. In other words, I believe that the charge made by Boud (1995:38) that "students experience the interaction effects of one form of assessment on another", was evident in my research context. Boud's reasoning on the way in which multiple assessments issued within a limited timeframe impacts on how tasks are approached by students, offers potential insight into why the drafting-responding process, which was perceived by students as being innovative and encouraging in benefitting their learning, was sometimes given "short shrift" Boud (1995:38). This in turn may have fuelled student actions like not using the assessment criteria when drafting, not typing the draft (even if it would have been to their advantage), attending to selective comments when revising and lack of attention to detail.

While the nature of this research does not make it possible to determine the exact extent to which this variable hindered the revision process, several student responses attest that it did have an ability to adversely influence the level of commitment to the drafting process on the whole:

...when I did my draft it was actually in a rush, honestly, because we had like so many assignments due within this particular week so I just kind of rushed the draft but the final copy I took a little more time and more initiative (Kishore)

...there were problems that we actually discovered from the task that...the time we got the assignment, it was the busiest weeks of our semester life (Betty)

... I think I was rushing too much....there was too many assignments, too many tests, too many things to do. This semester was very compact (Natasha)

Simultaneously, I am cognisant of the reality captured in Sli's response, which indicates that sometimes even if students are:

...given a lot of time...you won't do it, you'll do it maybe two weeks before it's due (Sli)

This reality may also be credited with the phenomenon of students inter alia, taking shortcuts and being selective about the type of comments they choose to revise. However, Natasha argued that students who are willing to make the most of the drafting process should not be victimised by being denied the opportunity to draft on account of the handful of students that

are not willing to use the drafting process effectively. She felt strongly about her stance and even suggested:

...if you're going to look at a draft and give it back to the student, you should say okay, if you want to give a draft, give us a draft and if you want to just submit you can do that...And then if someone doesn't want to give it [a draft] they can just give a final and they're going to get a bad mark if they if they don't do it right (Natasha)

There is a four-fold implication here - firstly, that use of a drafting-responding process may necessitate revisiting as well as examining the "compounding effects of assessment" (Boud, 1995:3; also see Elbow, 1997). Secondly, when a process-orientated approach to assignments is introduced, there must be the explicit intention of adjusting the number of assessments that students are obliged to complete towards their qualification (Paxton, 1995). The assumption underlying this suggestion is that if students have fewer but better quality assessments, their ability to focus their attention on those assessments are the makings of a deeper level of engagement and reflection on their learning and meaning making (Boud, 1995; Paxton, 1995). Thirdly, follow-ups are important at multiple stages in the drafting process. For example, if the marking criteria are really intended for use at the draft stage, perhaps a checklist could be given to students to tick that they have addressed several key aspects as detailed in the marking criteria. A similar system could also be implemented when the draft is revised. Fourthly, as indicated by a majority of the participants in this study, students' lack of previous exposure to a drafting-responding process could have played a role in the way in which students used the various tools provided to facilitate their revision process. Thus, students would need much more exposure, training and practice with the tools that are being devised to meet changing assessment practices.

4.4 Conclusion

I believe that the issues which emerged from the data highlight the fact that students, lecturers and policymakers have many challenges, preconceptions and differing perceptions about learning and teaching and vis-à-vis, assessment and feedback practices. However, despite the shortcoming and problems identified and experienced in the course of using the drafting-responding process, it did not diminish students' growing perception of the process as a powerful approach for knowledge transformation (Hyland, 2000). Further to this, in the light of evolving learning and teaching practices as well as students' past experiences with feedback, support and developmental initiatives (Ewell, 1997) there is much potential to simultaneously uplift, inspire, facilitate and improve student work and lecturer practice (Ivanič et al., 2000) especially, if institutional policies are amended to accommodate this (Biggs, 1996).

Importantly, it must be borne in mind that although a comparison of students' draft and final copies indicated that students had made efforts, even if selective, to revise their writing in light of the feedback provided, and that the lecturer in this study benefited from reflection on her feedback practices, I believe that readers of this thesis should not think that such successes are going to occur overnight (Linkon, 2005). In essence, diligence at all levels will yield improved learning and teaching if all the 'cogs' in the system are addressed and revised in some way (Biggs, 1996). This implies that all role players need to be actively involved in facilitating these learning and teaching changes, devising and adopting initiatives to support it including the use of follow-ups, to maintain such changes.

I believe that my probing of students' past exposure to assessment and feedback alongside dominant institutional assessment policies has made a strong case for understanding students' tendency towards a mark-driven culture. By assessing this reality alongside the gains (even if small) after just one isolated process-oriented formative assessment practice in the Department of Hospitality Management Sciences at the DUT, indicates that there may be scope for and the desire by students to break away from the mark hex and to refocus their existing ways of being and learning to attend to deeper issues pertaining to their writing in the interests of transforming learning. I believe that Pume's response captures this essence:

... I think it's a chance for us to like not just do assignments as a routine where you think that you just want a mark at the end of the day, it's looking at the criteria, looking at what's being asked of you, what you're being assessed on because you're getting feedback on it...at the end of the day you are learning and you know where you're lacking and you know where you need focus on, and it's not just a routine...a matter of getting a mark (Phume)

Chapter Five concludes this thesis. In Chapter Five, I make recommendations and address shortcomings associated with the use of a process-orientated approach in a semesterised course as well as suggest ways in which these shortcomings may be mitigated.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To reiterate, this case study research was undertaken to probe students' perceptions of formative feedback which was provided using a drafting-responding intervention for an assignment-type assessment at the DUT. As a new lecturer, I soon realised that despite my best intentions when providing feedback on final assignments, my feedback was not achieving what I had expected of it. As a result, feedback was becoming a source of frustration rather than the catalyst for change I had envisioned it to be. It became clear that my perception of feedback and its role in enhancing student learning was very different to that of my students. This research was therefore undertaken in order to explore students' perception of feedback. I also intended to extrapolate the type of feedback that students found helpful or unhelpful, to see whether feedback made a difference to students' work and to determine and understand why students sometimes seemed to ignore the feedback provided. Moreover, it soon became obvious that the provision of specific and content-related feedback on final assignments without the opportunity for the feedback to feed forward had an impact on the way in which students approached feedback and learning in general. This discovery indicated to me that the role and actions of a lecturer and an institution are an integral part that shape students' perception and use of feedback, and I wanted to investigate this further.

The findings in this thesis were derived from transcripts of interview data. The interviews were conducted with students towards the end of the second term, 2007, for the subject Food and Beverage Operations II. During their interviews students described their perceptions and compared their experiences relating to feedback when provided within a process rather than product-related approach to their assignments. During the course of the interviews, the students and I made reference to the comments provided by the subject lecturer on students draft and final assignment copies. This helped to highlight the relevance of certain student perceptions and claims. The data was then analysed using Nvivo in order to group similar themes while simultaneously identifying unique or interesting concepts.

In this thesis, I have indicated that through their formative years and even after a whole year at a UoT, participants in this research have been conditioned to conceptualise assessments as mark generating and product-related practices that function as a gatekeeper to success. Subsequently I have shown that this reality impacts not only on the type of feedback that students have come to expect but also on the way in which lecturers provide feedback and in turn, the way students read and process feedback in general. For example, the incorporation of a process-orientated approach with its inherent ability to facilitate lecturer and student approach to writing as gradual stages towards a whole, was shown to shift an assessment practice from high to low-stakes. This means that rather than focussing lecturer and student's attention on a product-related pass or fail judgement, both reader (lecturer) and writer

(student) were encouraged to use recursive processes to revisit and reflect on the developing writing. Comments provided by the lecturer at the draft stage shifted in style from being an "autopsy" towards suggestions for revision (Elbow, 1997:11). This style in commenting in turn shifted the way students perceived feedback per se.

Further to the above, when the student participants experienced writing as a process rather than as a product, students' descriptions of their learning describes a move away from the stifling confines of memorisation and rote learning towards active engagement, knowledge creation and transformation. This reality not only indicates how powerful a vehicle formative assessment is in steering students' learning approach and attitude towards writing but also, that there is scope for an adjustment of assessment practices to unlock a deep way of engaging student learning potential (Gibbs, 1999) in spite of students' past experience of feedback.

However, feedback provided within the framework of a drafting-responding process was not the sole factor bringing about the findings depicted in this study. Other aspects were also found to support feedback and the drafting-responding process in this study. For example, the provision of a detailed marking criteria, in-text and cover sheet comments, written and verbal feedback, including post drafting dialogues were all shown to assist students by making the "rules and conventions" of a discipline (Ballard and Clanchy 1988) as well as the thinking of the lecturer explicit (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993; Polanyi, 1998; Lea and Stierer, 2000; Black and William, 2003). In this respect this research echoes several other studies which have advocated the importance of using different techniques to unlock the tacit nature of academia and its ways of being, as a foundation for developing a shared student-lecturer understanding and for in turn informing and promoting success in academic writing (for example, Tsoukas, 1996; Polanyi, 1998; McKenna, 2004; Loel, 2004).

While the learning gains associated with the adoption of a process-orientated approach to students assignments in this study indicated that students did improve their initial way of knowing and in turn, their latter assignment copy, the implementation of the drafting process as detailed in this research for the second assignment for Food and Beverage Operations II in the Diploma Hospitality Management, was not without problems. Students' long-term indoctrination to a culture of experiencing assessment as error correction and product-related generators of marks is not going to be changed after the introduction of one isolated formative assessment practice. In light of students' past experience of feedback prior to the research intervention, it means that students will need more practice, follow-up and advice on how to utilise the formative processes to aid their writing and develop meta-cognition (Monty, 2003). A long-term focus on the adoption of more formative type assessment practices may be more helpful in steering students away from their adoption of more strategic approaches to learning.

While I initially conceptualised my research as being solely driven by my personal quest to innovate and improve my learning and teaching practices in conjunction with those of my students, I found that this quest was intertwined and thus inextricably informed by many other factors. For example, perusal of the literature on dominant assessment practices (Biggs, 1996; Stiggins, 2002; Earl, 2003; Monty, 2003) indicated that changes to personal learning and teaching practices may be thwarted if undertaken in isolation of the concept of change being addressed simultaneously at an institutional level (Biggs, 1996; Johnston 2003). Thus, my intention to understand how students perceive feedback, and in turn, to evolve my own assessment design and style of providing feedback as well as to address my perception of the gap created by my transition from industry to teaching are inextricably bound with issues relating to institutional influence and policy setting. However, while my research has identified that institutional policy plays an integral role in fostering a dominant high-stakes assessment culture, my research only provides brief suggestions on how this imbalance can be evaluated and addressed. More research is needed to determine the aims of our assessment policies and whether these aims are being met by current assessment practices. Moreover, this research has indicated that when a process-approach to assessment is adopted, it is critical to reassess the total number of assessment tasks that students are expected to complete for a subject. This need becomes more pressing in light of a semesterised course. As indicated by the responses of participants in this study, the total number of assessments that students are exposed to may be critical to the true success associated with a process-orientated approach towards assignments.

Further to the above, I believe that the context of DUT which was formed by the merger of two former Technikons, has contributed additional factors to among other aspects, hinder the advancement of changing assessment practices. For example, I have stated that some of the academic staff inherited by the DUT was recruited on the basis of their content knowledge rather than on the strength of their research ability or academic literacy practices. This stance assumes "an implicit knowledge of academic literacy" (M^cKenna, 2004:116). In Chapter Two, I cited researchers like Sotto, Rushton, M^cKenna and Shay to highlight that such unfounded assumptions could have implications for current and future academic practices. I have also voiced concerns that a laissez-faire attitude about the skills necessary for promoting best practice, especially amongst those academic staff recruited pre-merger, may result in a slower adoption and possibly greater resistance to student-centred assessment practices demanded by the new learning and teaching approach and the OBE approach to assessment.

For example, when one aligns the beliefs of M^cKenna and Rushton alongside the findings from Shay's article and the experiences recounted by Sotto, it raises thought-provoking implications for the quality of learning and teaching which occur at classroom level when academic know-how and ways of being are taken for granted as a generic ability and thus

herded to the background and underemphasised. Moreover, in this context, I believe that there could be potential roll over to not only current but also future assessment practices too. I believe that a person who is grappling to cope with the stresses of a new job and to adapting their subject knowledge to fit academic need, may not really be focussing their attention on new practices they could be incorporating to make their classes more dynamic. Rather, they may fall into the age old pattern of structuring their teaching in accordance with how they were taught when they were at school (Atherton, 2005a also Griffin, 1982; Sotto, 1994 and Higgins et al., 2001). Because of this they may be quite unaware of the theory informing the shifting learning and teaching approach and, in turn the resulting need for revised ways of doing things.

Furthermore, in the above scenario, I believe that a 'cost to student' is accrued. What this means is that while the 'novice academic' goes through the paces of the academic socialisation processes to develop their academic capital (Shay, 2004) the student may be the one who is short-changed by having a lecturer who is not yet fully equipped with the requisite skills to do the job effectively (Stiggins, 2002). Among other issues, students' learning and literacy difficulties may not be so apparent to the novice and may therefore go undiagnosed and uncorrected, causing students to perpetuate similar errors while being misguided about their "own ability to learn" (Stiggins, 2002:762).

Because the merger of academic institutions have become commonplace across South Africa, my argument and pleas about the post merger abilities, struggles and developmental needs of academics beyond the boundaries of DUT must be shifted to encompass other merged institutions which may be experiencing similar implicit learning and teaching issues. Furthermore, my thesis calls for academic staff at the DUT, and other merged higher education institutions in general, to become aware of the importance and relevance of the theory informing their academic practices and "thereby become critically aware of the norms and values underpinning their ways of being" M'Kenna (2004:277).

Citing my own experiences as a new lecturer, I believe that I have presented a strong case which operates at three levels to motivate the need for academic staff to ground their practices in both a theoretical understanding and content knowledge of their discipline. At the first level, given DUT's recruitment policy, I argued that while vocationally based academic appointees are carrying out day-to-day academic functions, the level at which these staff are functioning, may not be geared to encourage optimal student development. Alongside this, I have argued that successful inroads to advancing the use of more formative practices are hindered by the high lecture loads common amongst former Technikon academic employees (Powell and M'Kenna, unpublished). Currently, high lecture loads leave these academic staff with little time to reflect on, devise and implement new assessment practices. This situation compounds the burden endured by these academics.

On the second level, I have argued that the change in approach from teaching and learning to that focussed on learning and teaching; alongside an OBE led approach to assessment, demands a shift in the way learning, teaching and assessment is designed, implemented and conducted in general. Importantly, I have argued that a changing learning-teaching approach is more than a mere difference in attitude but entails a whole new approach to the way learning and teaching unfolds. Further to this, I have indicated that a large part of the potential success of such a shift in practice hinges on reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action for both students and lecturers. In this context, the importance of student participation is emphasised. As such, lecturers are now forced to move away from the concept of teaching as simply equipping students with new 'literacy' skills, to now grappling with issues of how student's home and other literacy practices inform and, at times, challenge their accrual of discipline-specific literacy practices as well as their evolving academic identity (Gough, 1999).

At a third level, in this thesis I have shown that two changes have impacted on the increase in student numbers and the increasingly diverse student body entering higher education institutions. The first inciter of change is brought on by post-apartheid education policies while the second set of influences is brought on by mergers of higher education institutions (Council on Higher Education, 2000). Post-merger, among other aspects, this reality has meant that we cannot assume that academic staff members from two like departments (that are now merged) are necessarily achieving parity in terms of core academic literacy functions like norms and ways of being within a particular discipline. These aspects require thorough evaluation, follow-up and feedback. Additionally, I have indicated that the practical nature across disciplines at the DUT and UoTs' in general, alongside increasing student numbers makes it imperative for issues pertaining to team teaching and group work to be properly planned, structured and evaluated. This will enable the quick detection of problem areas as well as strategies that work successfully.

Further to the above, rather than leaving academic staff to get on with the job, I have proposed a joint effort by staff and the institution to address thee three levels identified above. I have also critiqued the current impersonal method of gauging staff development and training needs which is practiced at the DUT and instead called for a more hands-on mode of evaluating, assessing, goal setting and follow-up. However, it must be noted that my research is not about critical fault finding. Rather, I believe that my perspective indicates that change, reflection and revision are essential components to advancing new ways of knowing and doing.

I believe that this reality suggests an urgent need for staff development initiatives (Ewell, 1997 and Klenowski, 2002). Staff development programmes can also assist by inducting staff on how developmental undertakings, which are grounded in theories of learning and teaching, translate into actual classroom practices (Klenowski, 2002; Black et al., 2003). However,

such plans would lack conviction if institutional policies do not alter simultaneously to fit with what is being advocated (Stiggins, 2002; Earl, 2003; Linkon, 2005). This can be achieved, for example, by facilitating an institutionally led shift in assessment practices from dominant high-stakes towards low-stakes practices. Any changes to practice cannot be envisioned in isolation to other parts of the system (Biggs, 1996). Moreover, if this developmental programme is really intended to be effective, it should take account of and address academics' "beliefs", "values", "and their understanding" of "not just what they do, but why they believe that they do it that way" (Ivanič et al., 2000:63).

References to 'new' academics does not mean that all other staff members are exempt from investing in professional development efforts and can afford to be complacent (Ewell, 1997). On the contrary, evolving assessment practices (Higgins et al., 2001) with gathering momentum in formative assessment practices (Smith and Waller, 1997) and the resulting "development of new *tools*" (Black and William, 2003:623, italics in original) with which to conduct assessments necessitates that all staff participate in continuous reflection and ongoing "professional development and support" (Fullan, 1991 cited in Ivanič et al., 2000:63; also see Ewell, 1997 and Monty, 2003).

Given the growing rather than diminishing call for quality and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment which are grounded in among other aspects, "theory-based reflection" and "new strategies of making commentary" (Sprinkle, 2004:279); it is inevitable that academic staff will come under pressure to evolve practices. To this effect, I have shown cognisance and support throughout my thesis with a dictum made by Straub (1996:248), that "All of us...would do well...to...make whatever changes we can...to...work better." In support of this dictum, I have provided several accounts of how reflective practices, intuition and "common sense" (Perrenoud, 1998:87), aided the ensuing evolution of my own learning and teaching practices. However, I believe that such development should not be left solely to a lecturer's discretion but should be a joint responsibility and partnership with the institution, student and other role players (Wiggins 1996 cited in Ewell, 1997; Sprinkle, 2004). Furthermore, feedback to and from all parts of the system would be critical in abetting this type of staff development (Hattie and Jaeger, 1998).

For example, the anonymous annual lecturer evaluation questionnaire completed by students may be supplemented with one-on-one staff reviews, developmental plans, goal setting, training initiatives and follow-ups to encourage staff to make efforts to "become continuous, open learners" (Ewell, 1997:n.p.). Additionally, the DUT's demand for academics to undertake research activities alongside their heavy workloads and increasing student numbers means that staff development initiatives need to simultaneously focus on equipping academic staff with skills that can foster efficient practices. For example, Ivanič et al. (2000) suggest that well-structured staff development initiatives may equip staff to focus on their provision of

quality feedback to students thereby eliminating unhelpful comments that are time consuming but useless. At least in this regard, the DUT's roll out of assessment training for academic staff is a huge step in the right direction. However, as gleaned from correspondence with colleagues within my department, simply attending a few days' workshop while not being allocated extra time in which to engage with, reflect upon and document evidence to ensure compliance with the heavy portfolio requirements set out in the course, alongside a lack of periodic follow-ups, may render this training step as mere academicism.

When issues pertaining to among other things, staff development, reflective practices, institutional assessment policies and subject evaluations are not fully addressed, evaluated and followed-up, I believe that the cycle of student-lecturer frustration may be perpetuated. Critically, as argued by Monty (2003:45) this may simply culminate in a disservice to the student through the provision of "a continued second-class education." As argued by Hattie and Jaeger (1998), for feedback to be most beneficial unerringly implies that, "A combination of goal setting plus feedback is most effective", not only for students, but for lecturers too (1998:113).

While it is not my intention to romanticise the drafting-responding process which can be time-consuming, I believe that the end justifies the sacrifices. Under standardised assessment practices, when a student is given a fail judgment, the reasons why they have failed the assessment may not be addressed. If left unaddressed, the unguided student could repeat a subject and still fail because they may not know any differently to what they knew previously. This reality could contribute towards the current education crisis where students sometimes take several years to pass first level subjects of a diploma (Kraak and Hall, 1999). Moreover, given the hospitality industry's emphasis on team work, when Hospitality Management students get into the industry, they are more likely guaranteed opportunities to learn from a more informed other than be exposed to a test or one-shot assessment with a pass or fail verdict.

Although this research centred on students receiving feedback from the lecturer, there is potential for the drafting-responding to generate feedback from student to student. However, given that this research intervention was a first experience for most participants in this research, I did not want to overwhelm students by making them responsible for providing feedback to their peers without first giving them opportunity to engage with and have some experience with detailed qualitative feedback and the way in which their work may be evaluated (Reynolds and Trehan, 2000) when the focus shifted from marks. This foresight was useful to my study as Chapter Four indicated that there were instances when students were so conditioned to receiving feedback as a mark or grade that they sometimes lacked general ease and ability of utilising the formative feedback they were given, to advance their knowledge construction. It would however, be interesting to investigate and compare how

students perceive assignment feedback, from peers rather than lecturers, when located in a drafting-responding process.

Overall, despite this being only a small scale study and there being much work to be done with regards to both student and lecturer perceptions, engagement and implementation of formative assessment practices, this research has indicated that there is much benefit associated with a move towards formative practices where writing is conceptualised as a process rather than as a product. Importantly, the fruits of these labours are there for the enjoyment of both students and lecturer.

For me personally, it has been insightful and rewarding to observe feedback from the student's point of view as it has challenged and forced me to reflect on and question my own practices and assumptions when I provide feedback. Additionally, having Heleen and her students journey with me has made my 'voyage' more bearable, for the journey as "bricoleur" (Henning et al., 2004:11) can be a solitary one. For this I am extremely grateful. This research has also helped me to see that the scope for saturating improvement of one's practices is far from fulfilled. Moreover, discussing and sharing my practices with significant others has broadened my outlook to different ways of doing things. Essentially, when one undertakes change, one does not always know the full potential for change until one places it alongside the experiences of others. This may lead to one feeling humbled by the distances yet to be covered.

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Appendices

Appendix A - copy of the assignment

ASSIGNMENT 2 (Individual assignment):

You plan to open an up-market restaurant/coffee shop on the Ritson Road Campus. The target market includes the general public, staff and students at The Durban Institute of Technology. The operating hours are 9:00 – 22:00 weekdays and 9:00 – 16:00 on Saturdays and Sundays.

Instructions:

1. Select the most suitable food production system to implement in this establishment. Motivate your choice.
2. Plan a menu and beverage list.
3. Design the layout of the kitchen, the bar area and the dining area.
 - Draw the floorplan of the layout.
4. Identify and describe the equipment and utensils to be purchased for the establishment.

Appendix B - copy of assignment marking criteria

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR ASSIGNMENT 2

lecturer assessment

	VERY GOOD	GOOD	AVERAGE	WEAK	POOR	YOUR MARK
Food production system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable system selected • Motivation is clear and convincing 	(10-9)	(8-6)	(5)	(4-3)	(2-0)	/10
Menu: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct format used • trends considered • target market considered • gastronomic balance considered 	(20-18)	(17-12)	(11-9)	(8-4)	(3-0)	/20
Menu list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correct format used • trends considered • target market considered 	(15-13)	(12-9)	(8-6)	(5-4)	(3-0)	/15
Menu plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workflow established • Areas indicated on floor plan • Neat, tidy • Accurate • Logical format 	(20-18)	(17-12)	(11-9)	(8-4)	(3-0)	/20
Menu layout: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable equipment selected • Equipment placed correctly • Suitable utensils considered 	(20-18)	(17-12)	(11-9)	(8-4)	(3-0)	/20
Menu presentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment is neat and tidy • Professionally presented • Effort 	(15-13)	(12-9)	(8-6)	(5-4)	(3-0)	/15

TOTAL: _____ %

Comments:



Appendix C - Lecturers' letter of consent

Department of Hospitality Management Sciences
Durban Institute of Technology
Steve Biko Campus

Consent to participate in research study and to publication of results

I (student name) _____ understand that Evonne Singh from the Durban University of Technology will be conducting a research study into students' response to feedback from lecturers on their draft assignments. She will be trying to find out how students perceive the feedback that lecturers provide them with in order to rewrite their assignment.

I have been asked to participate in this research study. I understand that my participation will consist of the following:

- Allowing Evonne access to assignment work (i.e. draft and final version) which I will compile for the subject Food and Beverage Operations II, in 2007.
- Being interviewed once by Evonne.

I accept that the results of this research study will be used towards the completion of Evonne's master's degree. In addition, the results may (at a later stage) be used for writing papers for presentation at conferences or publication in academic journals. I agree to respond to all the questions as fully and objectively as possible

I understand that before any results from the research are published, I will be given an opportunity to see them and discuss any changes that I feel are necessary.

I understand that if I wish, my real name does not need to be used in any report describing the research study. But if I want to, I can be acknowledged in any reports on the research. I would like to be acknowledged by name in the thesis

YES	NO
-----	----

 that arises from this research.

I agree to participate in the research study but I understand that if at any point I change my mind, I am entitled to withdraw my agreement to participate.

Full Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date signed: _____

Researcher's name: Evonne Singh
Telephone number: (031) 3732335
Email: evonnes@dut.ac.za

Supervisor's name: Dr. Sioux M^cKenna
Telephone number: (031) 2601674
Email: M^cKenna@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix D – HoD's letter to conduct research



D U R B A N
UNIVERSITY of
TECHNOLOGY

Department of Hospitality Management Sciences

Durban University of Technology

5 May 2007

Consent to conduct research study

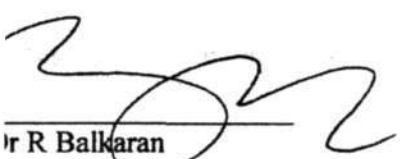
Dr. R Balkaran acknowledges that Mrs. E Singh from the Durban University of Technology, Department of Hospitality Management Sciences will be conducting research study into students' response to feedback on their draft assignments; for the subject Food and Beverage Operations II.

She will be evaluating lecturer feedback and the way it is organized by students in order to rewrite their assignments.

To this effect, participation from students and Ms Grobbelaar will entail the following:

- Allowing Mrs. E Singh access to assignment work (i.e. draft and final version) in 2007.
- Students being interviewed once by Mrs. E Singh.
- Staff member (H. Grobbelaar) being interviewed once by Mrs. E Singh.

It is understood that participation by the staff member and students will be voluntary and that they will provide informed consent. Further, their data will be anonymous and that they retain the right to withdraw from the project. It is also understood that the results of this research study will be used towards the completion of Mrs. E Singh's Master's degree. In addition, the results may (at a later stage) be used for writing papers for presentation at conferences or publication in academic journals. I believe that this study will be beneficial to the department and to the institution as a whole.


Dr R Balkaran
H.O.D: Hospitality Management Sciences



Appendix E – Students’ letter of consent

Department of Hospitality Management Sciences
Durban Institute of Technology
Steve Biko Campus

Consent to participate in research study and to publication of results

I (lecturer name) _____ understand that Evonne Singh from the Durban University of Technology will be conducting a research study into students’ response to lecturer feedback on their assignments. She will be trying to find out how students perceive and use lecturer feedback when provided on an assignment draft that is allowed to feed forward to their final assignment. She is also interested in finding out which feedback comments students find helpful or unhelpful.

I have been asked to participate in this research study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and will consist of the following:

- Allowing Evonne access to assignment work (i.e. draft and final version)
- Lecturer comments

I accept that the results of this research study will be used towards the completion of Evonne’s master’s degree. In addition, the results may (at a later stage) be used for writing papers for presentation at conferences or publication in academic journals. I agree to respond to all the questions as fully as possible.

I understand that there will be no financial benefit to me for participating in this research; there may however be benefits in terms of improving lecturer feedback and improving student’s use of this feedback.

I agree to participate in the research study but I understand that if at any point I change my mind, I am entitled to withdraw my agreement to participate.

I understand that if I wish, my real name does not need to be used in any report describing the research study. But if I want to, I can be acknowledged in any reports on the research. I would like to be acknowledged by name in the thesis

YES	NO
-----	----

 that arises from this research.

Full Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date signed: _____

Researcher’s name: Evonne Singh
Telephone number: (031) 3732335
Email: evonnes@dut.ac.za

Supervisor’s name: Dr. Sioux M’Kenna
Telephone number: (031) 2601674
Email: M’Kenna@ukzn.ac.za

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR ASSIGNMENT 2

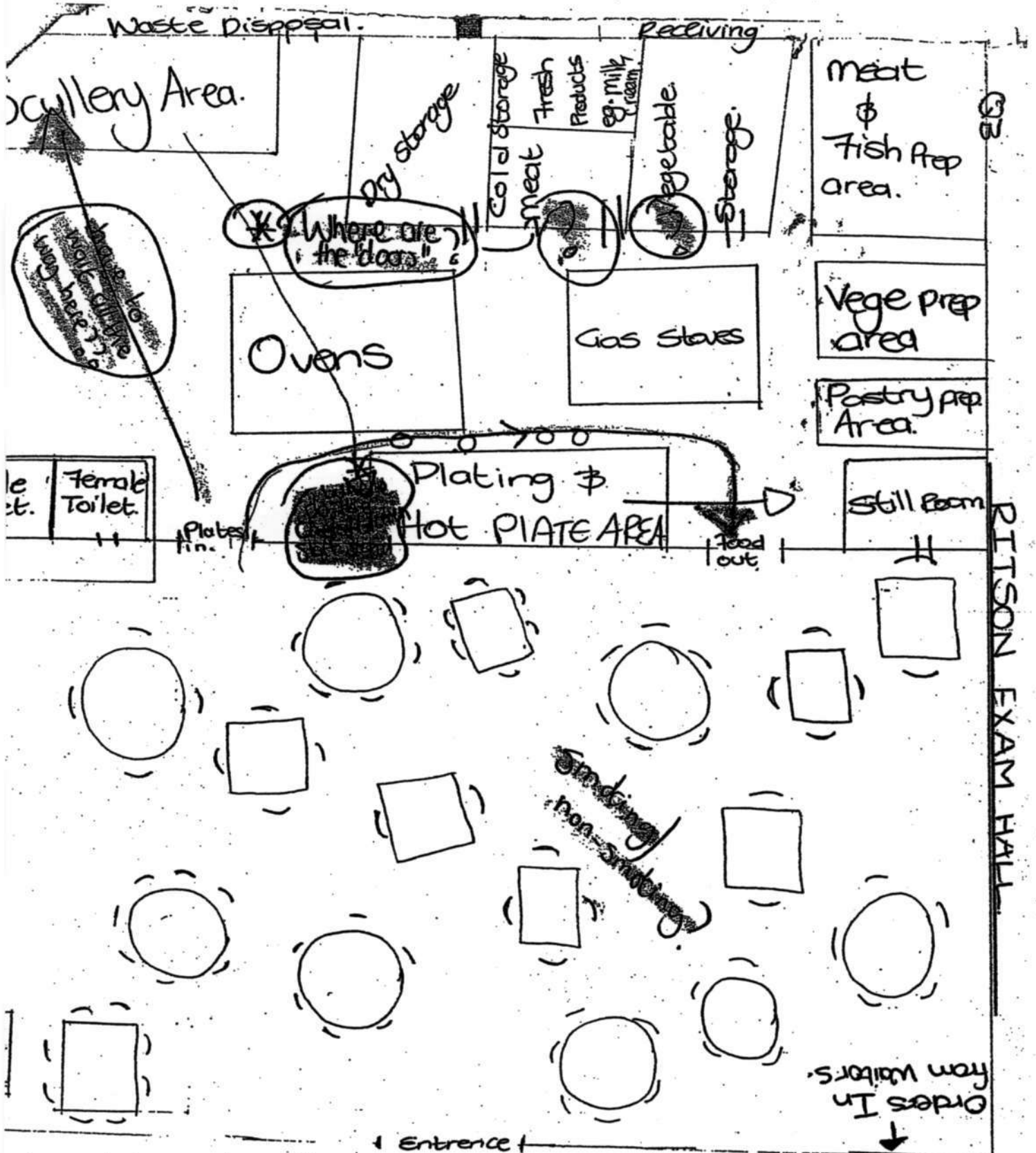
Lecturer assessment

	VERY GOOD (10-9)	GOOD (8-6)	AVERAGE (5)	WEAK (4-3)	POOR (2-0)	YOUR MARK
Food production system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable system selected Motivation is clear and convincing 	Yes	Issues such as costs involved and skilled labour required discussed.				/10
Menu: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> correct format used trends considered target market considered gastronomic balance considered 	heading - then description (see menu) Fair attempt. Quail ?? 'de Fashioned' ? Fair attempt.					/20
Beverage list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> correct format used trends considered target market considered 	not typed - difficult to assess. add "light" options.					/15
Bar plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workflow established Areas indicated on floor plan Neat, tidy Accurate Logical format 	no - cannot assess -> layout is very confusing. yes, but not done correctly. VERY POOR EFFECT (please look again at the many examples of floorplans given/discussed in class.)					* Lots of crisscrossing * " " back track in
Equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable equipment selected Equipment placed correctly Suitable utensils considered 	Yes. However some seem unnecessary eg juice extractor, etc. Sifa not indicated on floorplan. Fair attempt - bar equipment = comprehensive					/20
Overall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment is neat and tidy Professionally presented Effort 	not typed!! good.					/15

TOTAL: _____ %

Comments:

Please check your **SPELLING** on menu & beverage list.



03

PITSON EXAM HALL

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR ASSIGNMENT 2

Lecturer assessment

	VERY GOOD	GOOD	AVERAGE	WEAK	POOR	YOUR MARK
Food production system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable system selected ✓ Motivation is clear and convincing ✓ 	(10-9)	(8-6)	(5)	(4-3)	(2-0)	
	motivation not given. See comments.					/10
Menu: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> correct format used ✓ trends considered ✓ target market considered ✓ gastronomic balance considered ✓ 	(20-18)	(17-12)	(11-9)	(8-4)	(3-0)	
	yes (check writing method) interesting combinations. Good effort. Be careful of the terminology used, eg <i>NAU PRIN SAU</i> etc.					
verage list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> correct format used ✓ trends considered ✓ target market considered ✓ 	(15-13)	(12-9)	(8-6)	(5-4)	(3-0)	
	yes - correct writing method. Cop's!! Such a nice menu with no wine/beer/aler I suggest you plan a wine list to accompany the menu.					/15
Floor plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workflow established ✓ Areas indicated on floor plan ✓ Neat, tidy ✓ Accurate ✓ Logical format ✓ 	(20-18)	(17-12)	(11-9)	(8-4)	(3-0)	
	no - backtracking + crisscrossing. Dining room ✓					/20
Equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable equipment selected ✓ Equipment placed correctly ✓ Suitable utensils considered ✓ 	(20-18)	(17-12)	(11-9)	(8-4)	(3-0)	
	PLAGIARISM - I can not accept this as a submission - therefore not marked. can not assess - not indicated clearly on floor plan except for ovens.					/20
Overall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment is neat and tidy ✓ Professionally presented ✓ Effort ✓ 	(15-13)	(12-9)	(8-6)	(5-4)	(3-0)	
	not typed, except menu. Good research. Trends carefully considered. Good effort.					/15

Check out menu writing on the dessert page and correct the rest of the menu.

See floor plan.

TOTAL: _____ %

Comments:

Food production system for Pied piper

The conventional food preparation system is the most suitable because it is a small establishment, since many people will be coming into the establishment daily it will have a high turn over.

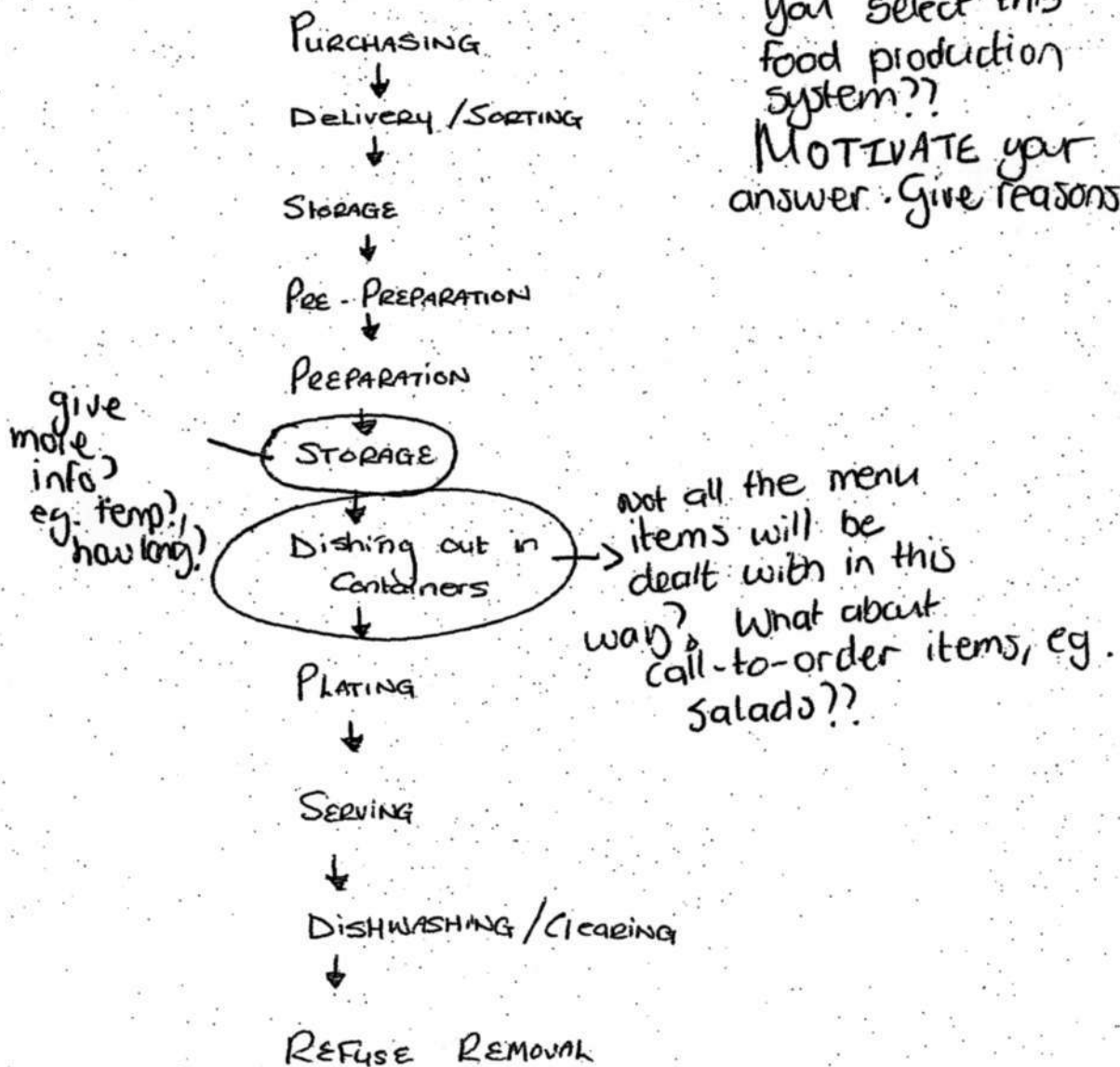
Food is going to be prepared in advance e.g. cleaning of salad vegetable cutting etc. Meat will come cut cleaned and marinated and portioned from the supplier all that has to be done in the kitchen is cook it and serve it.

I am also getting all my bread, cakes and desserts outsourced and it will come in daily so everything is fresh, so therefore in my kitchens I will only have to worry about the production of salads and sandwich fillings etc.

I have large storage fridges to store different things.

This is not a motivation, rather an explanation as to how the system works!

But why did you select this food production system??
MOTIVATE your answer. Give reasons!!



ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR ASSIGNMENT 2

Lecturer assessment

	VERY GOOD (10-9)	GOOD (8-6)	AVERAGE (5)	WEAK (4-3)	POOR (2-0)	YOUR MARK
Food production system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable system selected Motivation is clear and convincing 						/10
Menu: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> correct format used trends considered target market considered gastronomic balance considered 						
Average list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> correct format used trends considered target market considered 						
Layout plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workflow established Areas indicated on floor plan Neat, tidy Accurate Logical format 						/20
Equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable equipment selected Equipment placed correctly Suitable utensils considered 						/20
Overall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment is neat and tidy Professionally presented Effort 						/15

Lots of repetition!
* Desserts are very disappointing

See comments - breakfast too much starch!
Lack of research into pricing is evident - a VERY, VERY CHEAP restaurant

to some extent (Peroni)
no wine champagne, etc!!!
Such an extensive menu with no wine list?? - No way this is unacceptable.

TOTAL: _____ %

Comments:

BREAKFAST

Served from
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Thank you for choosing KRISH'S RESTAURANT. for your Breakfast.
We will serve French bread and warm croissants to start your Breakfast.

The French specialists !!!
Bon Appetit!

A French Red. with
the name Krish's - ??

\$

Sequence of menu \leftarrow SOUP
Breakfast items first!

French Onion soup:	Cup R3.50	Bowl R5.50
Cream of Tomato Soup:	Cup R3.50	Bowl R5.50

confusing
this section
is repeated
on p. 3!

EGGS

Eggs Benedict - R9.75

Black Forest ham, poached eggs & hollandaise on grilled French bread. Served with fresh Omit.

fruit & rosemary potatoes

Salmon Benedict - R10.50

Smoked grilled salmon, poached eggs with hollandaise on grilled French bread.

Served with fresh fruit & rosemary potatoes) Omit.

you have bread on the plate and bread is served

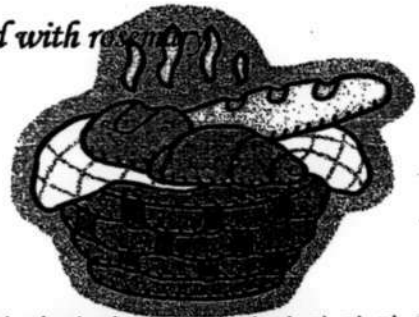
Artichoke Hearts Omelettes - R9.75

Artichoke hearts, sun dried tomatoes, basil, garlic mozzarella & Parmesan cheese. Served with

(fresh fruit & rosemary potatoes) Omit breakfast sausage & assorted fresh fruit. repeat fruit.

Veggie & Cheese Omelette - R9.75

Assorted veggies, chives, crème fraiche & mozzarella. Served with rosemary potatoes, & assorted fresh fruit.



ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR ASSIGNMENT 2

Lecturer assessment

	VERY GOOD (10-9)	GOOD (8-6)	AVERAGE (5)	WEAK (4-3)	POOR (2-0)	YOUR MARK
Food production system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable system selected Motivation is clear and convincing 	motivation not given. See comments.					/10
Menu: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> correct format used trends considered target market considered gastronomic balance considered 	yes (check writing method) interesting combinations. Good effort. yes (1) Be careful of the terminology used, eg NAMA PRIN SAUZA etc.					
average list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> correct format used trends considered target market considered 	yes - correct writing method Oops!! Such a nice menu with no wine/beer/aler I suggest you sign a wine list to accompany the menu.					/15
floor plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workflow established Areas indicated on floor plan Neat, tidy Accurate Logical format 	no - backtracking + crisscrossing yes Dining room					/20
equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable equipment selected Equipment placed correctly Suitable utensils considered 	PLAGIARISM - I can not accept this as a submission - therefore not marked. can not assess - not indicated clearly on floorplan except for ovens.					/20
Overall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment is neat and tidy Professionally presented Effort 	not typed, except menu. Good research. Trends carefully considered. Good effort.					/15

Check out menu writing on the dessert page and correct the rest of the menu.

See floor plan.

TOTAL: _____ %

Comments:

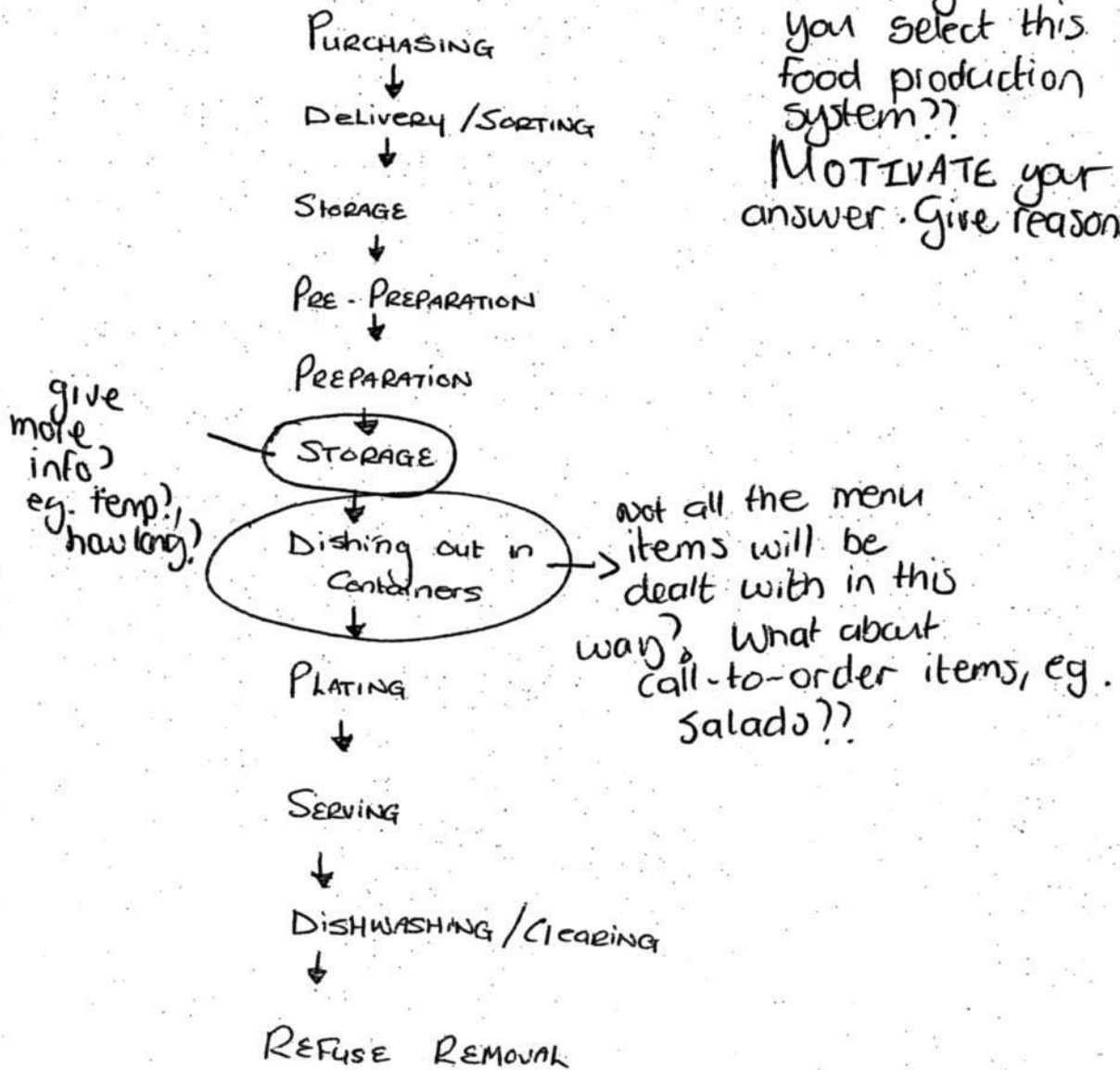
Food production system for Pied piper

The conventional food preparation system is the most suitable because it is a small establishment, since many people will be coming into the establishment daily it will have a high turn over.

Food is going to be prepared in advance e.g. cleaning of salad vegetable cutting etc. Meat will come cut cleaned and marinated and portioned from the supplier all that has to be done in the kitchen is cook it and serve it. I am also getting all my bread, cakes and desserts outsourced and it will come in daily so everything is fresh, so therefore in my kitchens I will only have to worry about the production of salads and sandwich fillings etc. I have large storage fridges to store different things.

This is not a motivation, rather an explanation as to how the system works!

But why did you select this food production system??
MOTIVATE your answer. Give reasons!!



Appendix G - Data comments 1-4

* Too much chicken

COMMENT NO. (1)

WRAP

BLACK & BLUE WRAP

Name is not suitable X
↳ = COMMENT NO. (2)

ROAST BEEF, TOMATOES, ONION, BANANA PEPPERS
& CAYENNE BLUE CHEESE DRESSING
QUILLED IN A TOMATO BASIL FLOUR TORILLA

Big Bird

X name = not suitable

GRILLED CHICKEN BREAST, LETTUCE, TOMATO
& GREEN PEPPER, RED ONION, SPROUTS &
MAYO

CHICKEN

CHICKEN CAESAR WRAP

BREAST, ROMAINE & ICEBURG
LETTUCE, TOMATO & CUCUMBER,
PARMESAN CHEESE, CREAMY CAESAR
DRESSING, WRAPPED IN TOMATO BASIL
TORILLA

↳ = COMMENT NO. (3)

SPINACH WRAP

change this to a vegetarian wrap

SPINACH, LETTUCE, ARTICHOKE HEARTS,
PARMESAN, CREAM CHEESE, TOMATO, BACON
SPROUTS & MAYO.

CHICKEN TIKKA WRAP

↳ = COMMENT NO. (4)

HAWAIIAN WRAP

no descriptive copy

SWEET CHILI WRAP

SWEET CHILI SAUCE, CHICKEN STRIPS,
CREAM CHEESE

Appendix H – Copy of ethical clearance from UKZN



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587
EMAIL : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

14 NOVEMBER 2007

MRS. EV SINGH (20516775)
ADULT & HIGHER EDUCATION

Dear Mrs. Singh

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0687/07M

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Students' understanding and response to lecturers' feedback on assignments for food and beverage management at the Durban Institute of Technology"

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully



MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA
RESEARCH OFFICE

→ cc. Faculty Research Office (Derek Buchler)
cc. Supervisor (Dr. S McKenna)

2007-11-22

Appendix I - Approval of title change



23 June 2008

203516775
Singh, E
81 Charclay
Clayfield
Phoenix
4068

Dear Mrs. Singh


Re: Change of Thesis title - E. Singh 203516775- MEd (Higher Ed)

The Faculty Higher Degrees Committee at its meeting on 25th February 2008 has noted and accepted your request to change the title of your MEd (Higher Ed) thesis from:

Old title: Students' understanding and response to lecturers' feedback on assignments for Food and Beverage Management at the Durban Institute of Technology."

New Title: "Hospitality Management students' understanding of and response to assignment feedback at a University of Technology"

Thank you,



Karen Sallie (Ms)
Postgraduate Office

Tel: (033) 260 5449
alicksk@ukzn.ac.za

CC: Professor D. Bhana **Faculty of Education**
Dr. S. Mokoena **Deputy Dean (Postgraduate Studies and Research)**

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Postal Address: Private Bag X03, Ashwood 3605, South Africa