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KWAZULU-NATAL**

**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF
HIV AND AIDS**

By

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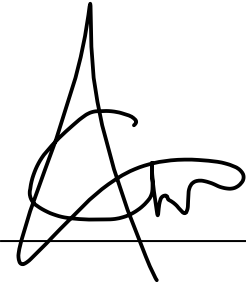
**This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements
for the Philosophy of Education Degree in the discipline of
Educational Psychology
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal**

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DATE OF SUBMISSION: August 2019

DECLARATION

I, Peace Ginika Nwokedi, hereby declare that the dissertation “An enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS” is my own work, both in conception and execution and that all the sources used have been acknowledged by means of complete reference. In addition, this research has not been previously submitted for a degree at any other university.



Student's signature

15 August 2019

Date

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

Signed: 

Name: Dr Fumane P. Khanare

Date: 15 August 2019

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First and foremost, I want to give honour to whom honour is due, God Almighty, the Omnipotent, Omniscience and Omnipresent; the Awesome God for His grace, mercies, favour, wisdom and understanding and for guiding me throughout the period of this study as well as giving me the strength and resolve to complete this study.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late sisters Chinyere and Ijeoma. They are the reason I am here as they have inspired me to become an educated and independent African woman. Their belief in my academic prowess, right from my childhood, challenged me to study abroad, bringing me under the tutelage of this world class university. Thank you, sisters; though you are dead, your spirits still live on. I am grateful for the inspiration and motivation spiritually and physically; I miss you sisters. Without you guys in my life there would be no me. You guys had been the pillars of my strength throughout this study. Thank you, sisters, for your motivation which has enabled me to strive for success and to be the best I can be. I love you sisters and you two will always be the backbone of this great educational milestone/journey of mine. ADIEU SISTERS!!!

ABSTRACT

Ideally, providing an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS is seen as significant due to their increasing numbers in South African universities. This is because an enabling learning environment will help in enhancing their learning and general wellbeing. However, HIV and AIDS is regarded as everybody's business within the South African society, of which international students are part. This implies that international students have a part to play in ensuring that the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS is reduced within their host society. Despite this, their voices in South African universities still remain silent and unheard, showing that their contribution might often be taken for granted on issues about them and on issues pertaining to HIV and AIDS. Meanwhile, DHET (2013) policy states that South African universities need to create an enabling learning environment for all their students in order to enable them to learn, grow and develop holistically. Consequently, recent studies have shown that international students studying in South African universities experience diverse factors within their learning environment that inhibit their learning, growth and development. Based on the above, this study proposes an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and aims to seek ways in which the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

This is a qualitative research study that is guided by an instrumental case study approach within the interpretive paradigm. I employed a multiple method approach for the generation of data which consists of photovoice (a participatory visual method), a self-reflective essay and a focus group discussion method to respond to the main research question and the three critical questions used to underpin this study. Consequently, I drew on the agentic capability theory of Albert Bandura to frame the study and the data were generated from twelve participants' voices on their subjective experiences, views, ideas, values, knowledge and perspectives concerning how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. The visual, textual and verbal data generated was then analysed using the thematic analysis of Tesch (1990).

The twelve participants consist of six male and six female international postgraduate and undergraduate students who were purposively and conveniently selected, first because of their familiarity with the researcher. Secondly, based on the fact that they all reside at or close to the

university environment, inside the Durban metropolis of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, and have been studying at this particular university for more than two years. Thirdly, they are members of the international students' group who come from within and outside the continent of Africa and are doing their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the context of HIV and AIDS.

I drew on the diverse perspectives, identities, knowledge, ideas, opinions and lived experiences of her participants to conduct the study. This indicates that the learning experiences of her participants in the context of HIV and AIDS were varied. However, the findings of the study revealed four themes. The first theme revealed international students' multiple understandings of an enabling learning environment, such as the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, academic support, financial support and encouraging social integration. The second theme was that international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS to augment or improve on their wellbeing and to address the various challenges they are experiencing within their learning environment. In this second theme, the study identified several factors that inhibit the students' learning within the context of HIV and AIDS. These include psychosocial issues, for example, lack of sense of belonging, feeling of alienation and xenophobia, lack of social support and language barriers; some socio-cultural issues like the exclusive university and immigration policies; difficulty in acquiring study visas to continue with their study in their host environment; and lastly socio-economic issues, such as lack of funding and scholarships and lack of job opportunities.

Theme three in this study revealed diverse dynamic multidimensional strategies that could be used in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. These include a comprehensive HIV and AIDS programme; provision of food security; a culturally inclusive university policy; enhancing university security and safety measures; providing more recreational facilities; provision of grants and scholarship for international students; enhancing the teaching and learning resources as well as creating job opportunities for international students. However, the findings also highlight the diverse roles of different enablers such as international students, local students and the university management within the context of HIV and AIDS in enhancing the diverse dynamic strategies that could be used in creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Notwithstanding, in the last theme, the findings in the study showed that employing the photovoice method in this study enabled agency in the lives of the international students by exposing them to visual skills; enabled them to acquire creative skill; enhanced their critical

thinking; was seen as an unconventional way of learning; enabled active engagement; connected them to other people; developed awareness of self and the university environment and lastly helped to empower the disempowered. The findings of the study have implication for research, teaching, training and infrastructure. This implies that the findings could be used by the university as a way of developing an enabling learning environment in the South African higher educational institutions in order for their students to become socially and culturally integrated as well as help develop inclusive policies in which international students will be considered.

The study concludes by contending that an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS should be socially and culturally embedded. Hence, the study has shown that a responsiveness to international students' voices, based on their diverse perspectives, ideas, experiences, identities and knowledge, which have been disregarded, is needed to address their needs in relation to creating an enabling learning environment for them.

Keywords: Enabling learning environment, International students, University, Agency, Photovoice, HIV and AIDS, Participatory visual method.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------------|---|
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| DHET | Department of Higher Education and Training |
| EU | European Union |
| FG1 | Focus Group1 |
| FG2 | Focus Group 2 |
| FG3 | Focus Group 3 |
| HEIs | Higher Education Institutions |
| HIV | Human Immune Deficiency Virus |
| IAU | International Association of Universities |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| ISO | International Students Organisation |
| IEASA | International Education Association of South Africa |
| MEd | Master of Education |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| PVM | Participatory Visual Method |
| PV | Photovoice |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UKZN | University of KwaZulu-Natal |
| USA | United States of America |

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In this introductory chapter, I began by discussing the background of the study and follow this with an explanation of the rationale and problem statement of the study. I further highlight the key research questions and objectives used in conducting this study. I present the key operational terms, the significance of the study and give a summary of the research design and methodology adopted for the study as well as the theoretical and conceptual framework. I end the chapter by providing a concise outline of the remaining chapters and a succinct summary of this chapter.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (hereafter, HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (hereafter, AIDS) is a global phenomenon. The HIV and AIDS disease is an acute health issue that affects everyone. In addition, the HIV and AIDS disease has already been declared everybody's business (UNAIDS, 2015; 2016). This is because of its pandemic nature, which requires that everyone and every organisation gives support, in order to reduce or eradicate its effects in our society and schools. A recent report on HIV and AIDS by Avert (2016) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (2016, thereafter UNAIDS), states that the number of people living with HIV and AIDS in 2015 was estimated at 36.7 million, giving a prevalence ratio of 0.8%. This contrasts with the study conducted by UNAIDS (2013b in 2012, in which an estimate of 35.5 million people was reported to be living with HIV and AIDS. The result of the latter study clearly indicates that there is an increase in the number of HIV and AIDS affected victims. Baloyi (2014) concurs and reports that, in Sub-Saharan Africa, one in every twenty adults is infected with the HIV and AIDS virus, at a prevalence ratio of 5.39%. As at 2015, an estimated 7 million people in South Africa were reported to be infected and living with HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS, 2015; 2016). Young people in South Africa between the ages of 19 and 49 years old are the most vulnerable people living with the HIV and AIDS virus (Higher Education and Training HIV and AIDS Programme, thereafter HEAIDS, 2010; United Nations General Assembly Special Session, thereafter UNGASS, 2012). Although the HIV prevalence ratio varies within provinces of South Africa, KwaZulu-

Natal, which is the province in which my research is situated, has the highest HIV prevalence ratio of 40% compared to other provinces, such as the Northern Cape and Western Cape, which have a lower prevalence ratio of 18% (UNAIDS, 2016). The findings from the study by HEAIDS (2010) also revealed that the University of KwaZulu-Natal had the highest HIV prevalence ratio amongst universities.

The increase in international student numbers in post-apartheid South African universities, according to research, has grown extensively since the inception of democracy in 1994. MacGregor (2014, p. 3) states that “the number of international students has grown dramatically since 1994, the year the country achieved democracy”. Furthermore, MacGregor (2007) points out that the number of international students in South African public universities has quadrupled from 12, 557 to 53,733 between 1994 and 2006. In 2012, they increased further, from “12,600 to 72,875 showing an average growth rate of 4.4% per annum since 2007 which is compared to the national average of 5.47%” (MacGregor, 2014, p. 3). The latest report from the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, hereafter) (DHET, 2013) also discloses that the figure of international students in South African universities and colleges has risen to 70,061 in 2011, which reflects 7% of the total student body. Apparently, the reason for the increase of international students in South African universities and colleges was a new policy of “improving and building appropriate diversity within the universities” and “providing learning programmes, modes of learning, methods of teaching and the assessment for diverse students’ bodies that would support flexibility and innovation” (DHET, 2013, p. 28). Since the number of international students continues to increase in South African universities, it is pertinent to note that this group of students would continue to experience diverse challenges in their host environment, which may include HIV and AIDS, financial constraints, anxiety, depression, isolation, emotional stress and psycho-social issues that may negatively affect their learning and development in their learning environment.

In the context of HIV and AIDS, the university should be identified as a place that is safe for its international students. The phenomenon of an enabling learning environment does not have a universal definition, as its meaning is complex and varies from context to context. An enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS is fluid and constantly changes, due to various reasons (Ellström, Ekholm & Ellström, 2008). However, several HIV and AIDS policies have been developed in South African Higher Education institution/universities to fight against the scourge of the HIV and AIDS disease and to make the environment enabling for students and staff. For example, the policy by the Department of Higher Education and

Training (DHET, 2013) asserts that universities are an enabling environment for knowledge advancement, care and support. Groff (2012) states that universities are a learning environment responsible for the cognitive development of their students. Arambewela and Hall (2013) with Cho and Yu (2015) argue that international students, like any other students, need to be socially and psychologically supported by their host university in order for them to be actively engaged in the learning environment. Consequently, international students can only achieve their academic goals and develop holistically if the learning environment is supportive, caring and protective of them. Strake (2016), however, argues that international students are active participants and agents of change (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). Therefore, in this study, I intend to include the voices of international students to find out how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. This is because international students' voices are of paramount importance and may have an implication on the how teaching and learning takes place in a given context.

Several HIV and AIDS programmes have been developed by different South African institutions in order to promote and improve the lives of their students' and workers who are affected and infected by HIV and AIDS. This implies that universities should be developed as enabling learning environments for them to be safe, free of HIV and AIDS, secure, caring and supportive for their students to learn and develop. The study by Osborne (2013) shows that a university is a learning environment that supports and promotes a range of teachers' pedagogies, students' learning, and development. Authors describe two types of learning environment, a constraining learning environment and an enabling learning environment (Ellström, Ekholm, & Ellström, 2008). A constraining learning environment is an environment that do not meet the psychosocial and emotional needs of its students and does not enable student to student interaction, student to lecturer interactions and teaching and learning activities (Nurumal, Rogayah, & Hafizah, 2009).

On the other hand, Barge (2012) stipulates that an enabling learning environment is regarded as a positive learning environment that meets the needs of the students through promoting psychological safety, positive image, feelings of belongingness, purposeful behaviours and a sense of personal competence. Hence, a school/university should be seen as an enabling learning place, a place that is safe and should be a source of hope for learners /students infected with HIV and AIDS. The purpose of this study is to propose an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. It also aims to explore how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in a selected

university in KwaZulu-Natal, using three qualitative methods of data generation: photovoice (a participatory visual methodology), a self-reflective essay and focus group discussions.

1. 3. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The study attempts to propose an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS, based on the findings of a study that used a participatory visual method. However, my intention to conduct research in this area is drawn from three dimensions, which are my personal, professional and contextual dimension. Drawing on my personal, as an international student who has been living and studying at an Education campus of a university in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa for five years, and based on my professional experiences during my Masters in Education (MEd, thereafter) study in the year 2014 and 2015, in which I conducted a study on the international postgraduate students' experiences of learning, I found that international students' learning experiences in the university was complex. This implies that international students experienced the university as both enabling and constraining to their learning. However, from the findings of this study, there seem to be more constraining factors as highlighted by the students than enabling in their learning environment.

Meanwhile, the constraining factors were found within the university environment and beyond the university environment. In the university environment, factors such as the perceived exclusion by local students due to language barriers and accents, group dynamics shaping classroom relationships and the lack of support from the university environment were highlighted. Beyond the university environment, in the neighbouring community, factors were found such as xenophobia and differing immigration policies in the government agency and institutions involved in providing study visas and permits. In the wider community, for example, socio-economic issues like financial issues, accommodation fee, lack of funding or scholarships and medical aid fees were also identified as constraints. Therefore, these constraining factors identified above, according to the study, posed a significant threat to international students as they affected their learning experiences and personal development in their host university negatively (Nwokedi, 2015).

This clearly suggest that the constraining factors experienced by the international students in their environment inhibited their learning and development. Additionally, international students also saw themselves as a vulnerable group of people in their host environment due to

their experiences of the xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals in local areas, which aroused tension, fear, the feeling of isolation; anxiety, discrimination, stigmatisation and alienation from each other while within and outside the university environment. Due to this reason, this group of students were prompted to create and form an organisation known as the International Students' Association (ISA, thereafter) in order to make the environment enabling for themselves and also to be fully and actively engaged in their own students' affairs within their host university. However, exercising agency in their host country by international students can only be possible if they are given the opportunity to do so. This implies that international students need to adapt and adopt to the cultural practices and lifestyles of their host, and are expected to learn, their host local language and culture in order to interact and fit into the host society. In addition, international students are expected to relate as well as to interact with their host community in order to become active agents, resilient and competent.

Professionally, as a tutor and a part-time lecturer, my daily experiences have consisted of interacting and relating with students, lecturers and administrative staffs concerning many issues which have to do with being a foreigner as I am fondly referred to by the local's community. For instance, in the module I teach, I experienced what it means to teach in a foreign land as my students often want me to interact with them in their local dialect as well as have issues with my accents. They sometimes find it difficult to understand me which will prompt me to explain further in layman's terms. On the other hand, during the staff meetings, briefings and social events, we the part-time lecturers are always being excluded from participating despite we are also working for the university. The consequences of living through these experiences affected my passion for teaching at the university. However, the experiences as a part-time lecturer and tutor also brought another dimension to proposing ways in which an enabling learning environment could be created for international students in the university. Therefore, prompted by the above assertions, this study seeks to explore in-depth and propose through its findings an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS at a selected South African university.

Consequently, this study also suggests that international students might need adequate care and support from all stakeholders in the university environment to enhance their learning and personal development. Whilst most South African universities have created safe spaces for their students to learn, have tried to be fully inclusive and to address their educational needs in assisting and supporting students (DHET, 2013), there remains a gap in the policy. It does not

identify the issues international students face such as xenophobia, discrimination, HIV and AIDS, lack of funding and scholarship, accommodation issues, and difficulty in acquiring study visas. Meanwhile, speaking from an international student perspective and drawing from the discipline of educational psychology, which speaks to how people learn and develop in schools (in the university), I believe that the university should be an enabling environment for its students. If not, then how can the students excel in it? In addition, I believe that the university should be a place that enables people and their students to excel.

Nevertheless, much of the literature that exists on international students globally, nationally and contextually (Nyland, Forbes-Mewett, Margison, Ramia, Sawir, & Smith, 2009; Aloyo & Wentzel, 2011; Gopal, 2013; Bista, 2015; O'Reilly, Hickey, & Ryan, 2013) has highlighted the experiences and challenges faced by international students in their host environment but not on how an enabling learning environment can be created for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. They have also used conventional methods like interviews, and not unconventional methods, for example, participatory visual methods like photovoice, to conduct their research with international students. For instance, in Ireland, the study by O'Reilly et al. (2013,) which explored higher education professionals' perspectives on international students' experiences of life and learning, identified that international students experienced psychological and sociocultural difficulties. In Australia, Nyland et al. (2009) claim that international students are subjected to very poor working conditions of employment. Lee's (2010) study in the United States of America (the USA, thereafter) identifies that international students suffer discrimination and unequal treatment. In contrast, Bista's (2015) study shows that international students experience personal development, acquire knowledge and developed intellectual skills. This is supported by Pence and MacGillivray (2008), as they note that international students experience increased confidence and change in their professional life.

Nationally, Gopal (2013) reveals that international students in South Africa experience various forms of xenophobia. Vandeyar (2010) also identifies that black international students experience harassment and discrimination. Meanwhile, Aloyo and Wentzel (2011) also indicate in their study that international students in South African Higher Educational institutions encounter issues such as xenophobia, language issues, accents, low self-esteem, financial issues and loneliness. Much of the research done on international students has focused more on their experiences and challenges, therefore, subjecting them as deficits (Donald,

Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010). In contrast, MacGregor (2014) finds that international students in South Africa develop critical thinking skills and become computer literate.

Since most studies highlighted above have shown the experiences and the challenges of international students in their host environment, they infer that the university could create various strategies to make its environment enabling, safe, caring and supportive for their students, including international students in the context of HIV and AIDS (Ambe-Uva, 2007; UNESCO, 2011; Cho & Yu, 2015). Although different universities in South Africa have developed policies guiding their international students and in creating a safe place for the students to learn (Nwokedi, 2015), these universities should be and remain places that enable students to excel. Based on this, this research attempts to bridge the paucity in literature concerning how the university could create an enabling environment for its international students in the context of HIV and AIDS, through using a participatory visual method, photovoice (Mitchell, 2011; De Lange & Geldenhuys, 2012; Khanare, 2012), a self-reflective essay and a focus group discussion method (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) to conduct the study with international students as their voices still remains unknown, silent and unheard. Thus this study searches in-depth for the international students' voices in a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.4. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite HIV and AIDS being everybody's business (UNESCO, 2011), there remains a gap in the South African university policy concerning how an enabling learning environment could be created for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Meanwhile, the study also examined how international student's psycho-social, physical, emotional, financial and academic well-being could be enhanced in their host environment. Succinctly, this study aims to explore and understand ways in which the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. This implies that the participation and engagement of international students in addressing their challenges and also issues related to HIV and AIDS in their host environment are significant for this study. In addition, international students, being a heterogeneous group of students, come to their host country with diverse identities, knowledge, ideas, attitude, perceptions and voices. They also experience numerous challenges like language barriers, exclusion within and outside the campus environment, isolation, emotional and accommodation issues, financial constraints and

exploitation. These affect their growth, development and learning in their host environment. Creating an enabling environment for international students is paramount, as it will help to promote their development and learning in their host country and also enable them to achieve their academic goals, making research of this nature to grow extensively.

Meanwhile, South African universities are expected to be an enabling, safe, caring and supportive environment for their students, which includes international students, in the context of HIV and AIDS. This concurs with the report by the Higher Education on HIV and AIDS policy (HEAIDS, 2010), which suggests that universities in South Africa have a leading role to play by being accountable to their students and by creating an enabling atmosphere to address the HIV and AIDS prevalence in their respective campuses. Despite the policies and strategies introduced in universities to reduce the spread of HIV and AIDS amongst its staff and students, the prevalence of this disease is still on the rise. Therefore, a collaborative and collective effort from the university and neighbouring communities is needed with the international students, in order to develop long-life practices and produce relevant knowledge on how HIV and AIDS issues could be negotiated, understood and reduced in the university environment thereby creating an enabling learning environment for international students, as well as the local students.

Such a strategy needs to be socially inclusive, based on the ideas, perspectives, experiences, views, and understandings that the international students bring with them, which will help to create strategies that the university could use in enabling an environment that is safe and free from HIV and AIDS and its impacts. This is because HIV and AIDS is not only a health issue but also a social issue that cut across gender, lifestyle, views, religion, class and it needs a different conception to tackle it, given the point made by Ola, Olalekan, and Oluwagbemiga (2013), that universities do not represent a safe environment for students. This view is supported by Kolawole (2010), who notes that a university environment makes the students become more vulnerable than they were before coming to the university.

Drawing from the constraints experienced by the international students indicated above, this study proposes an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS, which is seen as paramount to their development and learning. While previous studies on international students have been on their challenges, educational experiences, academic support, and psychological needs, this study attempts to bridge the gap in literature by identifying ways the university can create an enabling learning environment for international

students in the context of HIV and AIDS and also explore why international students need an enabling learning environment. It is therefore imperative to see international students as agents and active individuals, and this might bring to light the different strategies by which the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students, in order to enhance their academic goals and help them to develop holistically and also transform their lives and their host society.

1.5. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the study is thus to propose an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. It aims first to explore and understand how the university can create such enabling learning. To achieve this aim, three objectives were developed:

- To explore international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.
- To examine why international students, need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.
- To explore how the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency in creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.

1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main key research question for this study is:

- How can the university create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS?

The three sub-questions derived from the key research questions are:

- What are international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- Why do international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- How the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS?

1.7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study would enable participants to develop critical and analytical skills and also learn a new innovative research method, thus helping them achieve their academic goals. This study would also bring about transformation in the university context and encourage the university management, local students and international students to work collectively to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS in the campus and also create an all-inclusive and an enabling university environment for all students. Furthermore, the finding of this study would provide an understanding of the significance of international students and the roles they play in their host environment. In addition, this study would help in improving international students' learning experiences and their holistic development. It would also contribute to existing and ongoing debates on ways the university could create an enabling environment and a safe space to support their international and local students in the context of HIV and AIDS. The findings might also assist the university in adopting mechanisms in improving their policy to involve everybody (academics, management and the local and international students) in creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, it would assist the government and different stakeholders to improve and create new policies to support their international students. Lastly, the study would also contribute to the existing literature on using participatory visual methods such as photovoice to teach and learn as well as to do research with university students.

1.8. CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

In this section, I present the following key operational concepts as I clarify how they were used in the study.

1.8.1 Enabling learning environment (ELE, thereafter)

The concept 'enabling learning environment' is multifaceted. This implies that it does not have a single meaning or a universal definition. However, Barge (2012) describes an enabling learning environment as a context that meets the demand of students by granting them psychological and physical safety, helping them to build a positive image and to have a sense of belongingness and of personal competence. Ryan and Viete (2009) concur with Barge and describe it as a space that encourages students to have a sense of belonging, becomes creative and develop self-confidence. Meanwhile, Luna-Scott (2015) contends that students who learn in an enabling learning environment experience an elevated level of trust and shared

responsibility. This is because the environment assists them to maintain and sustain their academic excellence, according to Melhuish, Phan, Sylva, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart (2008). Kashdan and Yuen (2007) concur that the environment helps to increase the students' self-esteem, grades and communication skills and also increasing their learning motivations (Liu, Peng, Wu & Liu, 2009). Therefore, for this research, the enabling learning environment is regarded as an environment that is supportive, creative, sustainable, caring, engaging and promoting. These factors enable international students to learn and develop optimally and holistically.

1.8.2 International students

The concept 'international student' does not have a universal definition. International students are described as students who sojourned to another country to obtain international education and certificates. Violet and Jones (2012) define international students as a group of heterogeneous groups of people who share a common element, which is their status in their host country. Andrade (2006) also asserts that international students are enrolled in higher education institutions and are occupying temporary student visas. Kwaramba (2012) describes international students as people who carry out part or all their educational experiences in a country that is not their home country. Therefore, in the context of this study which was conducted in a province in South Africa, the term 'international students' was used interchangeably with 'foreign students. In addition, they are referred to as students doing their postgraduate and undergraduate studies in a country that is not their home country.

1.8.3 Participatory visual method (PVM, thereafter)

Participatory visual methodology is another methodological approach employed in social research by qualitative researchers to generate visual and textual data. This method includes artefacts as a form of expression, method of investigation, illustration and distribution (Taylor & Medina, 2013). Olivier, Wood, and De Lange (2008) indicate that PVM is a method that promotes critical learning and communication in the classroom (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). It also enhances people's understanding, enables people to be attentive and experience reality in different ways and makes things that seem ordinary become extraordinary. In addition, Sullivan (2013) argues that PVM is a fun way of conducting research and it creates a sense of enjoyment to people who use it. Therefore, innovative researchers have increasingly engaged the use of

different PVM approaches such as photovoice, collage, drawing, painting, digital story, relational maps and sculpting in research (Rouse, 2013, Richards, 2011; Wang, 2009; Mitchell & De Lange, 2012). For this study, a PVM method, photovoice, was employed as a method to generate data that enabled the participants to engage in critical thinking and reflect on their lived experiences. This method allowed me to explore and gain a deeper understanding of how the participants define and see their learning environment (Mitchell, 2011).

1.8.4 HIV and AIDS contexts

There are different context of HIV and AIDS. Valdiserri, Janssen, Buehler and Fleming (2000) concur and argue that HIV and AIDS treatment and testing share similar elements, but they differ according to context. This implies that some contexts are more affected by HIV and AIDS and has more HIV and AIDS prevalence ratio than others. The study was conducted in a selected university in the KwaZulu-Natal province. This province has the highest HIV and AIDS prevalence ratio (Statistics SA, 2011; HEAIDS, 2010, 2012; Avert, 2013). Avert (2013) affirms that in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, 40% of people between the ages of 15 to 49 years old are currently living with HIV and AIDS. Another study by HEAIDS (2010, p.105) on the HIV prevalence statistics and behavioural response profiles of students and staff in 21 public universities in South Africa identified that among the academic and administrative staff, in all the universities within the nine provinces, the KwaZulu-Natal province had the highest HIV prevalence ratio by institutional category, followed by the Eastern Cape (HEAIDS, 2010). The Eastern Cape had the highest prevalence ratio among students, at 6,4%, followed by KwaZulu-Natal at 6,1%, while the lowest overall prevalence among all groups was found in the Western Cape, ranging from 0,2% for academic staff, to 1,2% for service staff (HEAIDS, 2010). Therefore, the context of HIV and AIDS in this study looks at the effects of HIV and AIDS in the university and its environment and on the students' learning and development in the context of the study.

1.8.5 University

The concept 'university' is also regarded as an institution of higher learning for research and professional development that includes a community of scholars or people (Alemu, 2018). This word is used interchangeably with the concept of 'higher education institution' or 'school'. Kolawole (2010) explains that 'university' is a complex environment that could be both

constraining and enabling. This implies that the university being a learning environment could hinder or promote students' learning and development. In addition, the university is described as an organisation that adds value and enhances people's lives (Kamran-Morey, 2013). Kannabiran (2016) also claims that a university is a space for basic engagement and free streaming level-headed discussion, and Paphitis and Kelland (2016) define the university as an institute of higher learning that develops people to become civic-minded and as agents of social change in wider society. Strydom (2016) contends that the university is a social and intellectual institution.

On the other hand, the university is also referred to as a place that promotes critical thinking, enhances students' learning and engages students in active participation (Cantoni & Yuchtman, 2014). Groff (2012) also argues that the university is an environment that cares, supports and promotes students' learning and development. However, the university is expected to perform several distinct roles, including acting as a place of safety (Khanare, 2015). Boulton (2009) affirms that the university's role is to develop their students' innovative and critical thinking skills, enable them to become agents of justice and mobility and help them to contribute positively to the transformation of their society. Therefore, for this study, the concept university will be regarded in this study as a learning space, context or environment that is expected to promote, sustain and encourage students' learning and development.

1.8.6 Agency

The term 'agency' is used differently by different scholars depending on its relevance to their study. Therefore, in this study, the concept 'agency' is referred to the capacity and ability of the international students to act independently, to make decisions and express them in their behaviours (Bell, Lori & Redman, 2016). Clarke et al. (2016) assert that the term 'agency' differs in the sociological and psychological thoughts despite sharing the same notions of an agent and action. Furthermore, Clarke et al. (2016, p. 5) state that "from the sociological lens agency is conceptualised as a function of social structures within which individuals are embedded, whereas from a psychological lens, agency is a self-regulatory capacity of an individual." This study uses a psychological lens in using the concept 'agency' as a tool in understanding the capabilities of the international students as 'agents' and looking at how the university can create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. In addition, an agency in the context of this study is linked to the increased

motivation, adaptation, adoption, self-confidence and excellent academic achievements that international students possess despite their challenges in their host environment. This implies that the international students are agents of change in this environment and also people who express their agency collectively, personally and through other agency (Bandura, 2006) in order to bring a change or inform a decision. The idea of agency supports the holistic development of the international students in their host environment through the lens of positive psychology, which challenges the assumptions that they are deficits, victims or a vulnerable group of students (Montgomery, 2010) but as assets, active citizens and agents of change (Gu, Schweissfurth & Day, 2010; Zhou, Jinda-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008).

1.9. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.9.1 Agentic capability theory

This section describes the theoretical framework that was used to guide and frame the study. The theoretical framework is the agentic capability theory of Bandura (2006; 2009; 2012) which was situated in the discipline of educational psychology and which indicated that “the social cognitive theory adopts an agentic perspective toward human development, adaptation, and change” (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). According to Cauce and Gordon (2011), Albert Bandura’s concern for human agency arose from his early work on self-efficacy. “For Bandura, human agency is purposive, constructive, and planful and it involves anticipating the effects of our actions, estimating our capabilities, regulating affect, and initiating effort” (Cauce & Gordon, 2011, p. 2). This study used the agentic capability theory to explore the international students’ as an agency and as a group of people who do not exist in a vacuum but within a social structure (environment) (Krishnan, 2010). Cole (2015) asserts that agency and structures influence one another. This implies that international students’ knowledge and experiences as an agency can be influenced positively or negatively by the structures in the micro and macro environment, like the university policies, lecturers, peer, accommodation issues, legal policies, HIV and AIDS, economics and political policies, churches, immigration policies, etc. On the other hand, international students can also influence these social structures by having the ability to make informed decisions and express them in their behaviour. This, however, shows a bidirectional relationship between the agency and the social structures in their environment (university).

1.9.2 Conceptual framework

The concept enabling learning environment was used as the conceptual framework for this study. Although, the word does not have a homogeneous definition. However, it is a learning environment that could be regarded as safe, caring, supportive, inclusive, engaging and encouraging. Evidence has shown that it is a learning environment that is richly resourced, caring, supportive, inclusive as well as increases student's confidence (Barge, 2012; Groff, 2012; Iten, 2015).

1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design and research methodology are two distinct concepts that have been misused by emerging researchers. However, the research design is described generally as an approach chosen by a researcher to incorporate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way (Labaree, 2009). Whilst the research methodology is regarded as a specific procedure or technique employed by a researcher to identify, explain, envisage and analyse information on a topic (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a). The research design, as well as the research methodology, are very important to any research study because they are needed to facilitate the smooth sailing of the research process (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011); to yield rich data (Labaree, 2009); and lastly, it is needed to provide researchers with essential training in selecting materials, scientific tools, methods, and techniques relevant for the research problem (Rajeskar, Philominathan & Chinnathambi, 2013).

1.10.1 Paradigm

A paradigm gives direction to what is to be researched in a field of study. Shuttleworth (2008) claims that a paradigm is a framework or a dominant way of thinking and doing things that involve shared expectations and rules. This study will be guided by an interpretive paradigm. According to Cohen et al. (2011), the aim of the interpretive paradigm is to understand people's understandings of their environment and their experiences. The interpretive paradigm's objectives are to describe, understand and examine human behaviours, interaction and experiences within and around the social and cultural context in which they occur (Kim, 2003). This study, therefore, used an interpretive approach in order to describe, understand and explore how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS; the international students' understanding of an

enabling learning environment; why they need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and lastly how the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency in creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. This was done by drawing from the international students' perspectives, knowledge and experiences as experts of their own world (Khanare, 2012). This is in line with Cohen et al. (2011), who assert that, in the interpretive research paradigm, individuals are studied with their many opinions, characteristics, behaviours, attitudes, perspectives and experiences.

1.10.2 Qualitative research

The research methodology is referred to as procedures applied by researchers to go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena (Rajeseeka, Philominathan & Chinnathambi, 2013). Christiansen, Bertram and Land (2010) also define it as the study of methods by which knowledge is gained and aims to give the work plan of research. This study was situated within the qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach is related to the quality of whatever is researched. In other words, the qualitative approach involves examining and reflecting on the less tangible aspects of a research subject, e.g. values, attitudes, experiences and perceptions (Rajeseeka et al., 2013). According to Maree (2007, p. 51), qualitative research is used in understanding the process, the social and cultural contexts which underlie various behavioural patterns and mostly concerns with the "why" questions of research. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2011) state that qualitative research is not about numbers but about generating in depth rich verbal data. A qualitative research approach was used by me in this study to gain a deeper understanding and explore how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. This was done by exploring the international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment and why they need it, in the context of HIV and AIDS. It also examines how the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. I used a participatory visual method known as photovoice, a self-reflective essay and focus group discussion method to draw from the students' perspective. This was done using evidences from the participants' perspectives, views, and their voices as experts in their field and as co-researchers.

1.10.3 Research design

The case study was chosen as the research design to conduct this study. A case study is defined by Rule and John (2011, p.4) “as a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context to generate knowledge”. Shuttleworth (2008) similarly asserts that a case study is used to capture the in-depth nature of a situation. Case study generates an understanding of and insights into an instance by providing a thick, rich description of the case and illuminating its relation to its broader contexts (Rule & John, 2011). While there are different types of case study used in qualitative research, in this study I employed the instrumental case study. Therefore, the focus of the research design was on international students and the use of case study in this research was to describe in depth how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. This was also done by exploring the international students’ understanding of an enabling learning environment and why they need an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS; and lastly how the use of photovoice could enable international students’ agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.

1.10.4 Research context and sampling

The location in which this study took place was a selected university in the Durban metropolis of the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa. Twelve international students were purposively and conveniently selected as the sample size of this study. The purposive sampling and a convenience sampling method were chosen by me to get rich and accurate data. I used convenience sampling to specifically select the location and participants that were easily accessible to me and were also experienced in the knowledge of the study I was researching on (Christiansen et al., 2010). However, Cohen et al. (2011, p. 157) argue that in many cases purposive sampling is used with convenience sampling to access “knowledgeable people” who have in-depth knowledge about a particular issue through their experiences. In other words, I chose the specific university and 12 international students from different countries, races and gender who were available and studying at the selected university in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa and were in their postgraduate and undergraduate level of study. In addition, the students were selected because they are studying at the campus where the study was conducted for more than two years.

The issue of subjectivity in this study was ensured by me as an international student, firstly by acknowledging that there would be the issue of bias that might affect my data but by positioning myself as a research instrument and a participant-observer during data generation sessions with my participants, in order to record the subjectivity of their world and experiences in the real-life context. This view is supported by Maree (2007), who argues that qualitative studies accept researcher subjectivity as something that cannot be eliminated and see the researcher as a research instrument in the data gathering process. In addition, qualitative research is not about the number of participants but about the in-depth information that would be gotten from the participants. The reason I chose the 12 international students was the assumption that they would provide me with rich and in-depth information about the phenomenon under investigation, which is creating an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS.

1.10.5 Methods of data generation

A research method consists of a set of specific procedures and instruments used in gathering and analysing data (Wahyuni, 2012). Qualitative research is flexible and allows the use of different data generation methods, for example, the observation method, interview method, reflective journal, participatory visual methodology, focus group discussion, focus group interview, life history, document analysis, visual media etc. (Cohen et al., 2011). In the study, I employed three data generation methods, namely the participatory visual methodology known as photovoice (Wood, de Lange & Mkumbo, 2013; Cohen et al., 2011; Mitchell, 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997), the self-reflective essay and a focus group discussion method. The participatory visual methodology (hereafter, PVM) was done with my participants, which enabled them to participate, engaged and collaborate in the research processes. It was also used to stimulate and trigger discussion among my participants during the focus group discussion. I worked closely with my participants to produce powerful stories during the photovoice session (Sar, 2016). In addition, the self-reflective essay was also used to complement the PVM (photovoice) to generate data, while the focus group discussion method was used to complement the photovoice discussion sessions by the participant.

1.10.5.1 Photovoice method

The photovoice method is a participatory visual methodology of research that “enables people to control the photographic process to express, reflect and communicate their everyday life and

experiences” (Wang, 2009, p.4). It is also regarded as a powerful photographic technique that promotes critical dialogue and produces knowledge (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001, p. 560). Using photovoice can stimulate discussion among participants (Mitchell, 2011) and make students become active (Wang, 2009). However, it might be time-consuming (Estrella, 2012).

The photovoice method was used in this study as a research method that would enable my participants to see themselves as co-researchers, photographers, people who are generating data, interpreting the data and doing something with the data to help improve critical consciousness and solve problems (Wang, 2009). During the process of photovoice, the exchange of ideas among the participants is enhanced (Harkness & Stallworth, 2013) and the participants gain worthwhile skills that enable them to reflect on their lived experiences (Khanare, 2012). Accordingly, Wang (1999) contends that the participants are supported during the photovoice process to see and analyse issues, to view and to be able to differentiate what is obvious and not obvious and use it to train other people. Using photovoice has its pro and cons in research. For example, people might have trouble presenting complex or abstract ideas using their photographs (Bagnoli, 2009) and it can be expensive (Richards, 2011), while it is fun to engage in and enable people to voice out their issue using visuals ((Richards, 2011). Therefore, in this study, I drew on the guidelines of engaging in visual research by Mitchell (2008), De Lange, Mitchell, Moletsane, Stuart and Buthelezi (2006), and by Sides, Annis, Rachel, and Dornian (2005) in doing the photovoice process.

- *Photovoice process*

As a researcher who became familiar with using photovoice to conduct research during my Honours and MEd study, and also have acquired experience in photovoice training, I used these skills to conduct a workshop session with the participants in a suitable and conducive space that was chosen by them in the campus where the research was conducted. The workshop session was divided into three sessions, each session lasted for an hour. The first session was photovoice uses, how to use a camera and ethics considered while engaging in visual research especially in using photographs. In this session, my participants were oriented to the photovoice method, the ethics of photovoice and on how to use the cameras. The second session involved the photo shooting session that lasted for one hour. In this regard, each of the participants had a camera and was instructed to take eight photographs of their choice, using prompts like “What represents your understanding of an enabling learning environment and that how can the university create an enabling learning environment for you in the context of HIV and AIDS?”

Eight photographs were requested from each of the participants which makes a total of nine photographs, so as to get accurate and rich descriptive data from the explanations of the photographs, based on the participants' knowledge, perspectives and experiences of learning in the context of HIV and AIDS. On returning with their photographs, I opened a folder on my laptop for each of the participants and uploaded their photographs into it.

The third session was the photo-interpretation session, which was done in the participants' respective homes due to time factor. I requested that the participants interpret their photographs using a PowerPoint slide with content and caption design and send it by email to me. This was a very important process because it elicited the participants' meanings and intentions behind each photograph, while they were guided during the interpretation of their photograph using prompting questions like "What is in the picture, why have you chosen the picture and how do you feel about the pictures? This indicated the use of the SHOWeD mnemonics (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Employing photovoice method in this study stimulated and triggered dialogue/discussion among the international students during the focus group discussion sessions, on how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. The session also explored the understanding of international students in an enabling learning environment and how the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency in creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Meanwhile, using photovoice allowed the participants to write, express and talk about their knowledge and experiences using photographs (artefacts).

1.10.5.2 Self-reflective essay

This was another data generation method employed in this study to generate data. Shields (2010) asserts that the aim of self-reflective essays is to lead participants into more profound ways to deal with learning, utilising reflection on their sentiments, what they watched and their observations as they relate it to their own personal encounters. Shields (2010) further posits that self-reflective essays are the result of a cognizant arrangement to ponder on certain aspects of learning. Rocha (2008) affirms that a self-reflective essay is a genre in which people take time to reflect personally on events, places, people or ideas that affect them. Meanwhile, self-reflective essays advance students' understanding of how occasions in the world impact their lives. Therefore, in this study, a self-reflective essay was used as a method to answer research

question 4 which focuses on how the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. These self-reflective essays were written by the participants at the end of the photovoice session at their homes after the photovoice session. I requested that the participants do a self-written reflective essay on the effects of engaging in the photovoice process and on their experiences of doing the photovoice process. The participants were given prompts such as "What have you learnt today in participating in this photovoice process?" This guided them. The self-reflective essay complemented the photovoice method on the issues that were being researched.

1.10.5.3 Focus group discussions

Different studies on qualitative research have identified the importance of using focus group discussions to generate data. This data generation method was used to explore people's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Holloway and Wheeler (2002) agree that this method is a cheaper and quicker way of obtaining valuable data and that all participants including the researcher have an opportunity to ask questions. Besides, this method of data generation will produce more information than individual interviews. However, in using this method the researcher might be faced with a problem of managing debates and controlling the process with the participants (Cohen et al., 2011). Despite this, Rule and John (2011) assert that this method is valuable in picking up a feeling of the scope of differences amongst participants, of whose perspectives predominate or are minimal in the group and helps to initiate dialogue for the comprehension of participants in the gathering. In this study, a focus group discussion was employed to provide more debate and to generate rich descriptive data from the participants' perspectives in answering the third key research question, on why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.

This method was adopted for this study because it enabled the participants to engage in discussions through open-ended questions, to reflect, argue and produce rich and in-depth information. There were three focus group sessions, each with four participants that were held in a safe convenient place chosen by the participants in the campus where the study was conducted. Each of the focus group sessions lasted for 90 minutes, with the consent of the participants. I also used an audio tape recorder and a field note to capture the information elicited from the participants. Using these three methods contributed to the credibility of the study. Moreover, the data generated from these three methods also helped to enhance triangulation.

1.10.6 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis includes the categorising, reporting for and describing the data. This implies understanding the data regarding how the participants explain their situations, noting patterns, theme, categories, and regularities (Cohen et al., 2011). The textual, visual and verbal data obtained from the field note, self-reflective essays, the photovoice interpretation and verbatim transcription of focus group discussion which was audio recorded was analysed thematically (Tesch, 1990). The themes that emerged from the data presented information from participants that speaks to their perspectives, knowledge, and experiences of how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS; on their understanding of an enabling learning environment; why they need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS; and lastly on how the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. After transcribing the data, the participants were given an opportunity to look at the transcripts and were told that that access to the thesis and published work would be made available to them.

1.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS ISSUES

Trustworthiness is used in qualitative studies where measurement is less important than the description (Mack, 2010). Consequently, Christiansen et al. (2010) assert that the trustworthiness of a research study becomes a central point concerning issues of validity and reliability. In any qualitative research project, four issues of trustworthiness demand attention: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The research aim is to explore and understand how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. So, in enhancing and ensuring trustworthiness in this research study, the four issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research were addressed, namely:

- **Credibility:** This is described by Christiansen et al. (2010) as when the findings of the research study show the realities and lived experiences of the participants. I addressed credibility in this study by familiarizing myself with the research context. I also employed three techniques such as using an audio recorder and field notes in recording what my participants were saying and observing them during the photovoice and focus group discussion session. Secondly, I enlisted the help of a competent field worker who

assisted me in transcribing the data from the audio recorder after the sessions. Lastly, I took the transcripts of the data back to the 12 participants to check for accuracy and to check if I had added anything to their responses or omitted any word.

- **Dependability:** This issue was addressed in this study by providing an adequate audit trail to explain how I generated my data, how I analysed data and the research procedures I followed in conducting the research study. Guba and Lincoln (1994), with Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011), assert that dependability in qualitative research requires assessing the quality of combining the data generation, data analysis, and theory generation processes.
- **Confirmability:** This is a measure of how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011). I addressed the issue of confirmability in this study by making sure that I had sufficient evidence to back my data interpretations and that I did not make unsubstantiated claims in my findings. Also, I used three instruments to generate data to enable triangulation of data.
- **Transferability:** According to Christiansen et al. (2010), transferability is the degrees to which the findings of this research study can be applied or transferred beyond the bounds of this project. I enhanced transferability in this study by using the literature that was reviewed in this study and the theoretical framework to recontextualise (Moore, 2007) the data analysis and interpretations of the findings.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission to conduct this research was sought and obtained from the gatekeeper of the campus and the university ethics committee, respectively, where the study was conducted; the participants were issued a consent letter that described what the study entailed and with the option of participating or withdrawing at any stage of the research (Christiansen et al., 2010). During the photovoice sessions and focus group discussion, I ensured that the rights of the participants were not violated and there was no physical harm or damage caused throughout the research process (Cohen et al., 2011). I also made sure that the research study was beneficial to the participants (Christiansen et al., 2010). Lastly, anonymity and confidentiality of the research context and participants were guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms (Maree, 2007).

I requested the participants to choose names that would be indicated on top of their photographs.

Furthermore, the right of choosing their own names by themselves was done because it allowed the participants to become experts of their own learning when engaging in the photovoice method (Mitchell, 2011). Participants were also trained on the ethical issues in photovoice, based on the avoidance of taking photographs of people, signs or symbols with names. Participants were advised should the need arise to take pictures of signs, symbol or people to collect subjects' signatories by issuing them a second consent letter called "permission to take your photographs" (see Appendix Seven) (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001, p. 565) to ensure that there was permission to take and publish the photographs of their subjects. In visual ethics, I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of the pictures, therefore, to prevent something going wrong, measures were employed by me to blur the photographs (Mitchell, 2011).

1.13 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This research is situated within the discipline of educational psychology, which focuses on how people learn and develop in an environment. The study draws on the beliefs and ideas of positive psychology theory, which claims that individuals are assets, active and resilient, who are able to solve their challenges through their agency. Based on this view, this study, therefore, identifies that international students are proficient in offering ideas and knowledge into how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study only used international students from one of the five campuses of the selected university in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. Subsequently, the results of the study present the students' voices only.

In addition, using photovoice, self-reflective essay and focus group discussion method enabled the participants to articulate and express themselves in diverse ways regarding how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS, their understanding of an enabling learning environment, why they need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. However, using photovoice method helped me to explore how its use could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Nevertheless, as research in the educational psychology discipline, that highlights on the importance of international students' voices about an enabling learning environment using photographs makes a great

contribution to the literature on enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS, international students' learning, participatory visual research and to discipline and practice of psychology.

1.14 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

The study is arranged in seven chapters:

Chapter 1 was employed to introduce the research.

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework adopted to frame the study. The chapter starts by providing a succinct discussion on the agentic capability theory, how it relates to the international students' wellbeing and its relevance to international student's agency within an enabling learning environment. Lastly, the chapter presents the conceptual framework used to guide the study which is the 'enabling learning environment'.

Chapter 3 presents the literature review, which offers an outline of a comprehensive review of literature on the university as an enabling learning environment, university responses to HIV and AIDS, the internationalisation process guiding international student's mobility, the significance and benefits of international students in their host environment.

Chapter 4 explains the research design and methodology used, including the research approach and methods used in generating data. It also gives a comprehensive explanation of the research settings/context, how the participants were selected and how the data was analysed. Lastly, the chapter addresses the issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study by describing the participants' photographs and interpretation, self-reflective essays and focus group discussion.

Chapter 6 discusses and synthesises the findings of the study from Chapter 5. The findings of this study are outlined, interpreted and discussed and recontextualised using the theory and literature.

Chapter 7 concludes the study by offering a summary of findings in relation to the perspectives, knowledge, and experiences of international students on how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. The limitations and implication of the study are put forward. In addition, the input that the study makes is theorised, based on the ideas and knowledge of international students on how the university could create

an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS with its methodological contributions. The chapter concludes with limitation, summary, and recommendations for future research directions.

1.15 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the research by proposing an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. It has explained the methodology of photovoice (a participatory visual methodology), self-reflective essay and focus group discussion. This first chapter has offered an orientation to the study and explained the rationale and research problems that led to the purpose, aims and research questions of the study. The major aspects of this chapter also include the theoretical framework used to frame the study, the research design and methodology, ethical issues and the trustworthiness of the study. Next, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework that guides the study, the agentic capability theory of Bandura, which explains the influence of the environment on people's learning, development and behaviour.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK INFORMING AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the theoretical and conceptual framework used to frame the study. Meanwhile, the theoretical framework is the agentic capability theory of Bandura (2006a, 2006b, 2012) that appears as an ideal framework to justify and give a clear insight into understanding and exploring how universities could create an enabling learning environment for their international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. It is also used to explore international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS; why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and lastly it was used to address how photovoice enabled international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.

The chapter begins by giving a brief discussion on the meaning, significance and components of a theoretical framework in research. Secondly, it discusses the theoretical framework which is the agentic capability theory of Bandura (2006a; 2012) adopted as the lens for this study by showing its historical origin, assumptions, attributes, application as well as its relevance. The chapter also discusses the limitation of the theory as well as how these limitations are addressed. Thereafter, the second part of the chapter provides a critical discussion on the conceptual framework of the study, which is an 'enabling learning environment' and explores the key concepts used in an enabling learning environment. In addition, it also discusses the factors that contribute and constrains an enabling learning environment; the need for optimising an enabling learning environment; as well as the relevance of an enabling learning environment to the current study. The chapter shows how the agentic capability theory relates to an enabling learning environment. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a succinct summary.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term ‘theoretical framework’ is made up of two concepts ‘theory’ and ‘framework’. Therefore, it is important, to begin with, a definition of what a theory means and what a framework means, to have a clear understanding of what a theoretical framework is. The concept ‘theory’ has been defined in diverse ways. Tavallaei and Abu Talib (2010) contend that the definition of a theory depends on the field of study, based on science and on the time at which it was acknowledged to be a crucial tool of knowledge. This implies that theory is essential in research. Osanloo and Grant (2014) argue that theory is one of the most important aspects of the research process for a doctoral study. This view is supported by Khanare (2015), who indicates that theory is used as a lens to explore phenomena, while Casanave and Li (2015) argue that a theory is made up of related concepts and show how the concepts are related. Based on the above definitions, this shows that theories “are used to explain and predict phenomena and help to answer the “what”, “how” or “why” a particular phenomenon occurred” (Tavallaei & Abu Talib, 2010, p. 189). Further, Reyes and Netcoh (2015) highlight that theories provide the basis for theoretical frameworks in empirical academic research.

Moreover, The Business Online Dictionary (n.d) defines ‘framework’ as an outline or skeleton of interwoven objects that support a particular method for a detailed aim and serves as an example that can be adjusted as needed through enhancing or removing some things. Clendon (2015) states that a framework is described as a theoretical base, a map and a philosophy used in showing the direction to the development of a theory. Therefore, it is important to note that the concept theory and theoretical framework are terms used interchangeably by scholars.

Based on the clear distinction of the notions ‘theory’ and ‘framework’ made above, it is ideal to indicate that a theoretical framework gives insight into the research process. According to Osanloo and Grant (2014, p. 13), it is the “blueprint for the entire dissertation inquiry because it serves as the guide on which to build and support the research work and it provides the structure to define how you will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically and analytically approach the dissertation as a whole”. In line with this view, Bezuidenhout (2014, p. 55) defines “a theoretical framework as a collection of thoughts and theories that relate to the phenomenon that we choose to investigate”. De Vos and Strydom (2011), with Rule and John (2011), also suggest that a theoretical framework is a set of theories used in explaining a phenomenon or the world. Additionally, Ocholla and Le Roux (2011, p. 1) emphasise that “a theoretical framework of a study is the structure that promotes the theory of a research study and serves as a lens that researchers used in examining a specific aspect of their subject field”.

From the above explanations, it implies that a theoretical framework is a structure that sustains a theory of research. Therefore, the next section discusses the significance of a theoretical framework.

There has though been no clear consensus on the role and significance of theory in qualitative research, according to Tavallaei and Abu Talib (2010). This shows that the role and significance of a theory might be contested in educational research. However, Jacard and Jacoby (2010) disagree and note that the role and significance of theory in social research is not a contested issue. Osanloo and Grant (2014) postulate that the structure and vision of a study are vague without a theoretical framework. This clearly indicates that a theoretical framework plays a vital role in research. In social research, using a theoretical framework enables the researcher's work to be strong and structured with an organised flow from one chapter to the next. In addition, Abraham (2008) claims that theory guides research, practice, curriculum development and evaluation, and assists in developing effective educational policies and methods. Rockingson-Szapjiw (2009) also emphasises that the theoretical framework informs the research question and methodology and helps to justify the research problem.

More importantly, Molefe (2014) highlights the distinct roles in which a theoretical framework plays in an educational research to improve the quality of the research. For example, the theoretical framework links the researcher to the current sources, presents ideas that directs the research, assists the research to select suitable questions for the study, directs the researcher concerning the appropriate data generation method and supports the researcher to envisage the result and to understand and examine the outcome of the study, based on the current literature (Molefe, 2014). Furthermore, the theoretical framework is seen as the lens through which the researcher views the world and serves as a guide to the study (Osanloo & Grant, 2014). Klette (2011) argues that theories provide a safeguard against unscientific approaches to issues or a theme. Cantrell (2016) also posits that a theoretical framework provides a reason for envisaging the relationships between the variables in the research and contextualises the research outcome. Green (2014) similarly states that it helps to frame the research in a logical way. The next section, therefore, discusses the basic components of a theoretical framework.

Recently, scholars (Choate et al., 2012; Bourton, 2007; Osanloo & Grant, 2014; Reiter-Theil, Mertz, Schurmann, Giless & Meyer-Zehnder, 2011) have shown that every framework has different basic components that support and enable it to function properly in research. These

basic components have been described in diverse ways by different scholars. For example, Choate et al. (2012) state that the basic components of a theoretical framework are the concepts, generalisation, domain, empirical fact, hypothesis, integration, law and model, while Osanloo and Grant (2014) identify them as principles, concepts, constructs and tenets. On the other hand, Reiter-Theil et al. (2011) assert that the basic components of the theoretical framework are evidence, competence, and discourse. Bourton (2007) also claims that there are three basic components of a theoretical framework, which are the independent (or causal) variable, the intervening (modifying) variable and the dependent (outcome) variable.

Evidence shows that, in social science research, the theoretical framework is used as a base in conducting the research. Therefore, the nature of social science research empowers the researcher to use different theories, concepts or views from diverse theories to support the analysis of a specific phenomenon (Vithal & Jansen, 2004). This indicates that research is theory driven. Thus, selecting an appropriate theoretical framework for this study is an essential process that needs an in-depth understanding of the problems, purpose, importance and the key research questions used to guide the study. In addition, it also enables the theoretical framework to guide the research design (in this case, instrumental case-study) and data analysis (thematic).

Hence, for this study, several social science theories were deliberated on and one theory was chosen, which is the agentic capability theory. This was used as a guide to understand how the university can create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa. In addition, my interest is in the international students' agency within an enabling learning environment and the agentic capability theory was identified as suitable for supporting how they understand an enabling environment. Using my experiences as an international student studying in a foreign country, I believe the best way to have a clear understanding of how the university can create an enabling learning environment for the international students would be for the international students to actively participate in the study. Therefore, the concept of active participation is rooted in the agentic capability theory, showing its usefulness to this research.

2.2.1 The agentic capability theory

2.2.1.1 Historical origins of the agentic capability theory

This study is positioned in the discipline of educational psychology, which involves exploring and analysing the agentic capability theory of Bandura (2001; Weibell, 2011; Boeree, 2006; Cauce & Gordon, 2011; Julie-Rengert, 2011; Huitt, 2011; Bandura, 2006; Cole, 2015). Agentic capability theory was developed by Albert Bandura in 1986. It examines several behavioural factors that affect human development, adaptation and change in the environment (Bandura, 2006; Boerre, 2006; Bandura, 2012). However, this theory can also be regarded as a psychosocial theory, because it has been re-developed to what has now been adopted as the agentic capability theory (social cognitive theory). According to Bandura (1977), Pajares (2004) and Grusec (1992), the agentic capability theory was formerly known as the ‘social learning theory’ developed in 1977 and was later transformed into the ‘social cognitive theory’ in the mid-1980s (Pajares, 2004; Bandura, 2001; Weibell, 2011; Bandura, 1999; Grusec, 1992; Pajares, 2004).

Albert Bandura, who is the proponent of this theory, is regarded as the greatest living psychologist and one of the most prominent psychologist ever known. He was born on the 4th December 1925 to a Ukrainian mother and a Polish father in a very small town called Mundare located at the northern part of Alberta in Canada (Boeree, 2006; Bandura, 2006). He is the youngest of the six children and the only male child (Bandura, 2006). Meanwhile, the name ‘Bandura’ is suggested to mean a Ukrainian sixty (60) stringed musical instruments which also signifies a lifelong love of classical music (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003).

Bandura’s earliest work on social learning theory which is known as the ‘bobo doll studies’ indicates that individuals or children learn new behaviours by observing people around them while behaving in several ways (models) and these behaviours are learnt by the individual or children from their environment through the process of observational learning (McLeod, 2011). According to social learning theory, the child learns from what he/she observed from the environment and imitate the behaviour while the people (parents, family, peers, teachers etc.) around the child/individual respond to the behaviour learnt by the child through punishment or reinforcement (McLeod, 2011). This clearly shows that there is an interaction between the factors in the human thoughts and the factors in the environment. Therefore, Figure 2.1 below

shows the diagrammatic representation of how the environmental factors influencing people's learning, which results in a change in behaviour in the social learning theory.

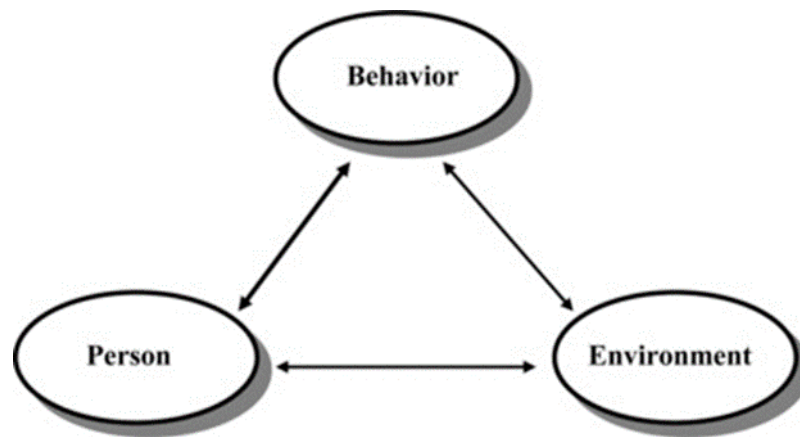


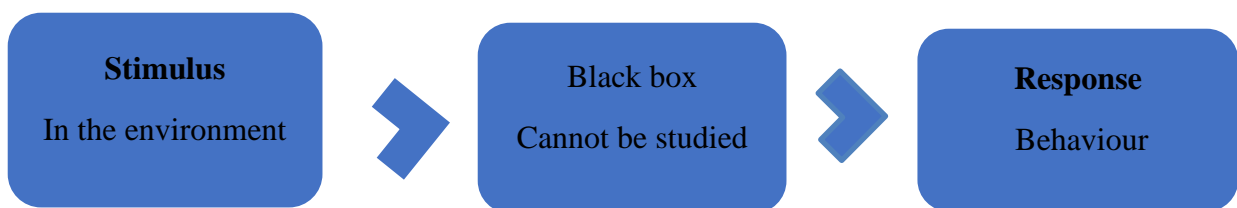
Figure 1.1 Bandura's model of reciprocal interaction (adapted from Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007, p. 9)

Bandura (2004) claims that social learning theory is used to show how human behaviour is influenced by different reciprocal determinants (human factors and environmental factors). A recent study by Fehrenbach (2013) states that social learning theory is used to create a link between behaviourist and cognitive learning theories because of what it contains, which are attention, memory and motivation. In contrast to this claim, Grusec (1992) identifies four components of the social learning theory as attention, retention, symbolic representation and motivational variables, and argues that these four components/ elements of the social learning theory plays a vital role on how individuals acquire knowledge about an event or make a choice in utilising the knowledge to influence behaviour. The ISALT Team (2014) in their study also revealed that social learning theory is governed by four key elements namely: attention, retention, reproduction and motivation. However, Cubas, Costa, Marluccoli, Nichiata and Enembreck (2015) identify four key elements of social learning theory: firstly; the *meaning*, which signifies the need to give meaning to what is learned; secondly, the *practice*, which triggers the experience of learning by doing what is learned; thirdly, the *community*, which supports learning by promoting a sense of belonging, and lastly *identity*, which presents attributes linked to the learning process for the transformation of personal identity (Cubas et al., 2015, p. 624).

Bandura (2001) later realised in the social learning theory that human behaviour was shaped and controlled mechanically and automatically by stimulants in the environment and that the theory failed to explain properly how all kinds of behaviours that draw on thoughts and feelings

were developed. This likened the human mind and behaviour to the mind of a biological computer and brought about a paradigm shift within psychological theorising, in which the social learning theory was transformed into the social cognitive theory in 1986 (Bandura, 1986; 2006), enabling the theory to give a clear description of how people learn from their social experiences (McLeod, 2016). McLeod (2016; 2011) distinguishes social learning theory and social cognitive theory. According to him, social learning theory or behaviourist theory only studies observable and external behaviour while social cognitive learning theory is a scientific model used in studying human internal behaviour (McLeod, 2016; 2011). Hence, figure 2.2. depicts the shift from the social learning model to the social cognitive model (agentic capability theory). This also shows the distinction between the two theories.

The social learning models



The agentic capability theory

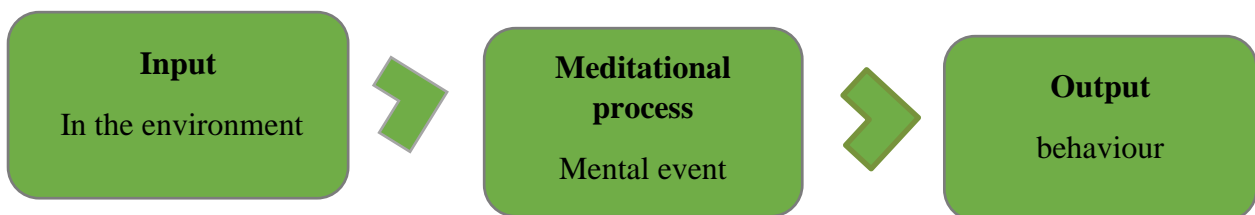


Figure 2.2 The shift in Bandura’s social learning model to the agentic capability theory (social cognitive model) (adapted from McLeod, 2016, p. 2).

2.2.2. The assumptions of the agentic capability theory

Bandura is known as the father of cognitive theory. His social cognitive theory originated from taking an agentic viewpoint (Bandura, 2001) and came to be known as the agentic capability theory. According to Bandura (2006, p. 164) “the social cognitive theory adopted an agentic perspective toward human development, adaptation, and change”. This theory is in contrast with the social learning theory which explains that people learn through direct experience or

observation. The social cognitive theory sees human as agents and managers of their own behaviour (ISALT Team, 2014).

Bandura's concern for human agency arose from his early social cognitive theory work on self-efficacy (Cauce & Gordon, 2011). The concept 'self-efficacy' is regarded as a major tenet of Bandura's agentic theory, which explains people's beliefs in having the ability to perform a task effectively. Bandura (2006; 2012) defines self-efficacy as an individual belief in becoming successful in a particular circumstance or in achieving a goal. It also plays a key role in the self-regulation process by influencing students' motivation and learning (ISALT Team, 2014). However, Bandura (2001; 2004; 2006) places more emphasis on the individual power of making their own choices or decisions in social cognitive theory. This indicates that the theory is based on an agentic view of human behaviours which can be intentional (deliberate), cognitive (consciously, mentally) or supported by agentic influences rather than unconscious internal impulse, reward and punishment (Tuchten, 2012). Julie-Rengert (2011) concurs and claims that this theory embraces the agentic perspectives of the capability of humans to effect change in their behaviours, to achieve change and accomplish goals in life.

In the agentic capability theory, the bidirectional influence results in a change in human behaviours within their environment in which humans are viewed as self-organising, proactive, self-reflecting and self-regulating, instead of as individuals whose behaviours are shaped and guided by the forces in their environment or driven by hidden desires (motivations) (Julie-Rengert, 2011; Tuchten, 2012; Bandura 2012). This implies that the individual capacity to apply forethought is evident in their will to become proactive and as people who aim to achieve their desired goals by being motivated and guided by the goals and shortcomings that help them achieve success (Bandura, 2006).

Furthermore, evidence (Ryan, Lynch, Vansteenkiste, & Deci, 2011) has shown that the social cognitive theory made it possible for healing and counselling efforts to be directed at a personal contextual and behavioural level. Based on this, Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) argue that the social cognitive theory interprets human functioning as a series of reciprocal interactions between personal influences, for example, thought, beliefs, environmental features and behaviours. Lenono (2007, p. 15) explains that the reciprocal interaction is called 'triadic reciprocal determinism' by Bandura because it focuses on the connection between the cognitive factor and the environment. In this regard, Bandura (2004) points out that human operation is

a product of the effectual interaction between the personal, behavioural and environmental influences that are known as triadic reciprocal determinism (Nabavi, 2012). Therefore, the triadic reciprocal determinism model depicts the interaction or connection between personal factors (cognition, affect, biological events), human behaviour and environmental influences (Bandura, 2001; 2006). Bandura (2004; 2012) argues that human motivation entails different elements that are consciously driven rather than a response to environmental stimulants. He sees human behaviour as influenced by personal and environmental factors such as cognition, emotions, affects, biological components, self-empowerment, ability, learning skills, learning resources, facilities, government policies and laws, police stations, churches etc. Hence, to Bandura (2012), the environment is flexible and adapts to change.

The environment

The environment is a vital factor in human development and learning. However, in the agentic capability theory, the environment where an individual learns and develops is divided into three types, namely the imposed, selected and constructed environment. According to Bandura (2006; 2012), the imposed environment influences the individual intentionally or unintentionally, which makes him/her understand it or react to it. However, humans are proactive beings who have the freedom to make a choice to either act or not to act upon all the things they have learnt. Furthermore, the selected environment is an environment that only comes into being when selected and activated by an individual who has chosen it. In addition, the selected environment also influences the way the individual lives his/her life. In contrast, the constructed environment is described as an environment created by individuals to support themselves in developing better control of their lives (Bandura, 2006).

Agency

The term 'agency' is defined differently by different scholars depending on its relevance to their study. More importantly, the notion 'agency' is seen as a vital component of the agentic capability theory and can be explained as when something is done deliberately. According to Bandura (2001, p. 6), the concept agency is described as an "act done intentionally". Alkire (2002) also elaborates that human agency is seen as an individual capacity to do what he/she values as well as have a reason to value it. Similarly, Walker (2006) adds that agency is a person's ability/skill to chase the goals they value and that are significant for the kind of life the person desires to live. Therefore, in this study, the concept 'agency' is referred to the capacity and ability of the international students to act independently, to make decisions and

express them in their behaviours and achieve their academic goals (Bell, Lori & Redman, 2016). Meanwhile, Clarke et al. (2016) assert that the term ‘agency’ differs in sociological and psychological thoughts, despite sharing the same notion of an agent and action. Furthermore, Clarke et al. (2016, p. 5) state that “from the sociological lens, agency is conceptualised as a function of social structures within which individuals are embedded, while from a psychological lens, agency is a self-regulatory capacity of an individual. Therefore, this study will be drawing from the psychological lens using the concept ‘agency’ as a tool in understanding the capabilities of the international students as ‘agents’ and their ability to achieve their academic goals within the context of HIV and AIDS as well as how they influence the university’s achievement of such an environment.

In this study, agency is further linked to capability and increased motivation, adaptation, adoption, self-confidence and excellence in academic achievements of international students, despite their challenges in their host environments. This sees the international students as human agents are agents of change in their host environment. From Bandura’s perspective “human agency is purposive, constructive, and planful and involves anticipating the effects of our actions, estimating our capabilities, regulating affect, and initiating effort” (Cauce & Gordon, 2011, p. 2). Giddens (1984) also identifies human agency as a vital component that defines people’s ability to act. The iSALT Team (2014) suggests that it is the concept that shows that individuals make a deliberate decision in order to invest in learning and have a change in their behaviour. Giddens (1984) further views humans as purposive agents (people who are aware of their actions and consequences of their action).

Having knowledge includes being able to know when to act and not to act and the consequences of the actions. Therefore, humans are perceived as thinking beings. Similarly, Khanare (2015) points out that human agency does not only consists of the knowledge on how to behave and the outcome of our behaviours but also deals with the knowledge of not behaving and the related outcome of not behaving. In line with this view, the agentic capability theory argues that individuals do not only contribute to the events in their lives, but they are a product of the events (Bandura, 2006). This implies that human agency takes place within the self and environment. The next section discusses the attributes of the agentic capability theory.

Capability

This is referred to as the ability or capacity to do things or achieve one's desired goals. However, The Oxford Online Dictionary (n.d) defines capability as the power or ability to do something. Sen (1992) asserts that the term 'capability' could be referred to as the freedom for people to achieve their wellbeing. In addition, it can be explained as what a person is required to be and do rather than how much income they can achieve (Sen, 1992). Walker (2006) sees capability as the act of being healthy and doing something, having access to good accommodation and clean water, being well educated, safe, secured, respected and actively engaged in discussion with their peers. Robeyns (2016) argues that capability is having real freedom or opportunity to achieve a functioning, which in this case is being able to attain their desired goals against all odds. In contrast, Johnstone (2007) describes capability as a form of authority needed by people to realise or achieve their potential. Walker (2010) concurs with Johnstone and highlights that the ability for an individual to function properly indicates that he or she has the capability. In the case of the study, international students' capabilities lie in their ability to achieve their desired academic goals while engaging and participating in their learning using different resources such as academic scholarships and grants, LAN, research commons, computers, WIFI, teaching and learning facilities, internet, online and print journals/articles, lecturers and students ratio, job opportunities which are made available within their learning environment to enhance their learning and development. These various resources are regarded as capability inputs (Walker, 2010). In summary, Cole (2015) affirms that agency is the ability or power that allows people to think for themselves as well as act in ways that shape their experiences and life trajectories

2.2.1.3 Attributes of the agentic capability theory

In order to understand agency, Bandura (2006) identified four attributes or components of agency that takes place within the self: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness. These core properties of human agency are further explained as follows:

- **Intentionality:** According to Bandura (1999, 2001, 2006, 2012), intentionality is the aim or the goals an individual wants to achieve in their life. This includes their actions and approaches in achieving the desired goal.
- **Forethought:** This is the goal set by people to anticipate the result of the outcome which forms the motivation for their efforts (Huitt, 2011).

- Self-reactiveness: Bandura (2009) asserts that the agents (people) in this regard turn their plans into success through their actions that require self-management of thought processes and motivation to stick with a chosen course despite the challenges and setbacks they experience that can undermine their efforts.
- Self-reflectiveness: This is the last core properties of human agency which signifies that most of our aims are not achievable without other agents. Giddens (1984) argues that self-reflection is a crucial element of human agency. This is where the person/individual examines his/herself, become aware of him/herself, and reflects on their personal efficacy, thoughts and actions (Bandura, 2006; Huitt, 2011; Julie-Rengert, 2011; Weibell, 2011). However, the table in figure 2.3 below shows the core components of human agency.

Table 1. An Overview of the Agency Components Based on Bandura's "Agentic Perspective" (Bandura, 2001).

| Agency Component | Description |
|------------------|--|
| Forethought | Reflection to consider what is known, the believed consequences of action or non-action. Forethought provides direction and coherence. |
| Intentionality | Choosing to act to achieve a certain outcome. The chosen act may be a result of acting in an accommodative way, primarily fulfilling expectations of others, or in a self-influential way fulfilling the desire of one self. |
| Reactiveness | Shaping the appropriate course of action and regulating execution. |
| Self-reflection | Judging the correctness of the action by comparing the outcome with the intention and the reaction from others as a response to the outcome or the action. |

Figure 2.3 An overview of the Bandura's core attributes of agency (adapted from Paul, et al., 2017, p. 313)

Bandura (2012) believes that people are filled with some capabilities that describe them as human. Paradoxically, these core attributes of human agency identified above by Bandura, when combined, function internally within the individual and are interrelated in the context of HIV and AIDS. For example, international students are regarded as vulnerable and are pathologised as victims due to the diverse challenges they experience in their host environment such as xenophobia, violence, financial constraint, accommodation issues, lack of social belonging, language difficulties, academic stress, alienation, low self-esteem etc., which influences their learning and development negatively (Rajpal, 2012; MacGregor, 2014; Olwafemi, 2012; Menzies & Baron, 2014). Despite these challenges, international students might act as critical and active agents based on their experiences, resiliency and intrapersonal

skills that could motivate them to achieve their academic goals. In addition, the efforts developed by the international students coupled with the resources (fellow international students, peers, supervisors, lecturers, library, ICT) within their learning environment might enable them to assess their efforts while trying to achieve the standards they have established and to reflect on the amount of effort they have exerted in their studies in order to achieve their desired goals, which might enable them to achieve results above their desired goal. Bandura (2006) argues that these core properties constitute a cycle of adjustment that people make as they learn and develop, achieve and adjust their personal goals.

In addition, Bandura's (2006; 2009; 2012) agentic capability theory is further explained through three key modes, namely personal, proxy and collective, to show how people/individuals exercise their influences through different forms of the human agency found in the efficacy beliefs. These three modes of human agency are needed in the environment for people to operate with on a daily basis; they are distinguished and explained as follow:

Personal or intrapersonal agency: This is identified as the primary mode of human agency, which is exercised directly by the individual (Bandura, 2006). In this mode of agency, there is bidirectionality of influence that occurs between the person and the environment. This clearly depicts that individuals are influenced directly or indirectly in their environment, which affects their behaviour. Khanare (2015) claims that personal agency involves the ability of the person/individual which is shaped by his/her beliefs in performing a specific task effectively. Bandura (2006) also highlights that people exercise personal agency in their environment by influencing the way they function and what takes place in their environment. This implies that people control the circumstances that affect their lives directly or indirectly.

Proxy agency: This is the second mode of human agency that occurs in the environment. It is also known as the socially mediated agency, which is exercised indirectly through other agents. According to Bandura (2012), people influence other people who have resources, knowledge and the means to operate on their behalf to protect the result they need. Khanare (2015) argues that proxy agency involves the interaction and interrelationship between the person and other agency within the microenvironment (school), which results in a change in behaviour, learning from one another, sharing of ideas, building interpersonal relationships and help to modify their activities. This implies that individuals do not live in isolation or in autonomy; they are

independent of one another and some of their aims could only be achieved through independent effort (Bandura, 2006).

Collective agency: This mode of agency is exercised through groups. Khanare (2015) asserts that people work collaboratively as a group by sharing and trusting in the same faith and support the advancement of the group's objectives. In exerting collective agency, individuals come together (collaboratively/cooperatively) conveying their ideas, knowledge, skills and resources to act in order to bring about change and shape their future (Bandura, 2006). This is supported by Ebersohn and Ferreira (2012), who suggest that exercising collective agency enables individuals to combine their knowledge, abilities and resources to invent and reinvent values for themselves. This mode of human agency consists of attributes like interactive, co-ordinative and synergistic dynamics that create emergent group-level properties in the environment (Bandura, 2006). The type of interaction and the environment in which the interaction is taking place can enhance or suppress these factors. Therefore, the above constructs related to agency clearly signify that people can influence their actions and achieve their target goals or success, despite the challenges they experience within their environment.

2.2.1.4 Nature of reality in the agentic capability theory

The agentic capability theory believes that reality is in the human mind, which is termed to be generative, creative, proactive as well as reflective and not just reactive (Bandura, 1996; 2006; 2012). In other words, Bandura (2006) argues that human functioning is socially interdependent, richly contextualised and conditionally orchestrated with the dynamics of various societal subthemes and their complex interplay. On the other hand, reality is also viewed as a product of the sociocultural influences that operate through the psychological mechanisms to produce behavioural effects (Bandura, 2006). This implies that the ability of people to wield their power or rule over their nature and life is regarded as the core aim of humanness (Bandura, 1999). Furthermore, this theory views reality as socially constructed, with human beings being the agents of their lived experiences and not targets of their experiences, as if their behaviour is shaped and controlled automatically and mechanically by environmental stimulus (Bandura, 2006). This suggests that people are active individuals within their environment as they exercise their human agency to change and shape their life, destiny as well as society (Bandura, 1999). In addition, the agentic capability theory asserts that human beings can act intentionally by turning visualised future into reality through

proximally directed intentions that guide and keep them moving forward (Bandura, 2006). The theory indicates that people have advanced symbolising capacity that enables them to surpass the influence of their immediate environment and exhibit unique powers to shape their life circumstances and the sequence of their lives (Bandura, 1999; 2012). This theory also views reality as consciousness, which is the very substance of mental life that not only makes life personally manageable but worth living (Bandura, 1999).

2.2.1.5 Agentic capability theory and knowledge construction

The agentic capability theory indicates that knowledge is constructed by people in diverse ways or strategies and through the use of different resources such as the library, computers, internet, social media, online articles, books, etc. (Bandura, 2007). In other words, the agentic capability theory highlights that people are agents of their own learning and not recipients of information (Bandura, 1996; 2007). However, human knowledge can be influenced negatively or positively by diverse social and environmental factors (Bandura, 1999; 2007). Furthermore, the theory argues that learning using diverse resources enables people to exercise greater control over their learning (Bandura, 1999). Significantly, the theory indicates that knowledge constructed by people is independent of time and place (Bandura, 2007). Meanwhile, the theory suggests that individuals develop different learning abilities through observation of modelled attitudes, values and styles of behaviours (Bandura, 2007; 2012). This implies that modelling is a worldwide human capacity (Bandura, 2007).

Given the power of modelling and observing, people they need all the various forms of agency (personal, proxy and collective) to live and make it wherever they live by behaving cooperatively in some aspects of their lives and privately in others (Bandura, 2007). The theory also asserts that cultures are internally diverse systems, dynamic and not monolithic, due to the mass migration of people and the high mobility of people and professionals that change cultural landscapes (Bandura, 2007). Moreover, the theory shows that people strive for self-efficacy by accomplishing a task or produce a good outcome which in turn boosts their resilience and helps them develop capabilities/skills to become successful and develop self-esteem or confidence (Bandura, 1997).

2.2.1.6. Agentic capability as a dynamic transactional process

Learning is a dynamic and transactional process that involves multiple sources of influence that work together to shape or change people's development over time, with a core emphasis

on the interplay between the person and his/her environment (Sameroff, 2009). My interest in this study lies in promoting an enabling learning environment for international students. The agentic capability theory of Bandura (2007; 2008; 2012) aims to explain how individuals think and respond to their social environment. Bandura (2006) argues that people do not act upon all learning and that humans are agents and managers of their own behaviours. However, the theory suggests that agency could be exercised in groups or collectively and that people do not live in isolation or autonomy but that most of the result they seek could be derived from a collective effort (Bandura, 2009; Weibell, 2011). Thus, a collective goal is not only the shared ideas, values, knowledge, experiences, and skills of the diverse members but is based on the interactional coordinative and synergistic dynamics of their transactions (Weibell, 2011). This view refers to the bidirectional influence process which represents the reciprocity of the environment and the interaction and interdependency of the individuals, which in this case is the international students with the environment (Cole, 2015). Based on the above view, Greenlee, Winter, and Diehl (2018) note that students' skills, attitudes, behaviours, social and emotional development, and the ability to control their attention, are influenced and will be influenced by their learning environment and influence and shape their learning and development. The next section discusses the application of the agentic capability theory in other fields of studies.

2.2.1.7 The applicability of the agentic capability theory

In terms of the applicability of the agentic capability theory, it has been applied in numerous studies and with diverse groups of people, including children, youths, women, adults and professionals. It has also been applied in various educational research areas like mathematics, science education, gender studies, nursing education, sociology etc. However, there is a paucity of literature on how this theory has been applied with research on international students especially within the context of HIV and AIDS and in South Africa. A well-defined example of a study that applied the agentic capability theory is that conducted by Saadat and Lashani (2013), which investigated the effectiveness of gestalt therapy on self-efficacy of divorced women and found that gestalt therapy increased the divorced women's self-efficacy. The study by Mashford-Scott and Church (2011), which investigated how teachers promote children's agency in early childhood education using video-recorded observations, showed that teachers and children co-determined the effectiveness of teachers' interventions or approaches to resolving disputes. Paul et al. (2017) also used the agentic capability theory to explore young

women's opportunities to practice reproductive agency in the context of collective social expectations in India. The findings of the study revealed how understandings of agency across generations changed to enable young women to assert their reproductive intentions and desires and encouraged effective means of reproductive control. Dzubinski, Diehl, and Taylor (2019) also used this theory to design a model to describe how women enact leadership despite gendered organisational patterns that could impede women's performance of leadership roles.

Another study by Kurose (2013) used the agentic capability theory to explore the complex relationship existing among motivation, behaviour and performance in the workplace and how this can provide insight in how to improve students' success in higher education. Royle (2019) applies the theory to explore the impact of problem-based learning approaches on learners and on university teachers. Chiu (2017) used the agentic capability theory to examine preservice teachers' perceived changes in their teaching efficacy and theories of mathematics teaching by designing a mathematics teaching method course consisting of repeated field teaching. The study found that preservice teachers' efficacy increased after the second field teaching in pedagogy content coordination, in fluency in their teaching process and in their effective solutions to students' difficulties and problem-solving.

Subsequently, the theory also enabled Chiu (2017) to identify a change in the preservice teachers teaching strategies from a teacher-centred theoretical and procedural approaches to a student-centred practical. Sawitri, Hadiyanto, and Hadi (2015) used the theory to explain pro-environmental behaviours, defining the personal agency as peoples' capacity to intentionally choose, perform and control their actions to realise a result (Sawitri et al., 2015). They showed how people with a high environmental self-efficacy judgement generated more results and set more challenging goals as well as become more involved in pro-environmental behaviour than individuals with a lower perception of their efficacy. In this study, through the use of photovoice (see Chapter 4), international students' voices and perspectives are identified as agency and their ideas, cultures, ideologies, perspectives, views, experiences and knowledge are seen as able to create an enabling learning environment for students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

2.2.1.8 The relevance of the agentic capability theory to the current study

The purpose of this study is to propose an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. The aim is to explore, employing the agentic

capability theory as its lens, how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and enhancing its application for people who have been termed or pathologised as passive, vulnerable and victims. Adopting the agentic capability theory as the framework for this study might enable me to understand the various attributes of agency in relation to understanding how international students learn, grow and develop in their learning environment. Bandura (2006) argues that people do not live their lives in isolation or autonomy but relate and interact with one another for their lives to have a meaningful goal. Therefore, this theory will be used to explore and understand international students as active agents and as a group of people who exist not in a vacuum but within a social structure (environment) (Krishnan, 2010; Khanare, 2012). The theory asserts that there is a bidirectional influence process that takes place within the learning environment due to the interrelationship and interdependency between the environment and the individual. The agency (international students) and the structures (environment) influence one another. This signifies that human functioning within the environment is totally interdependent and whatever happens within the environment influences the individual either positively or negatively.

Significantly, the agentic capability theory predicts that various factors within the environment influences the learning, behaviours, attitudes and development of the international students as they interact, interconnect, reciprocate, commit, interrelate and interdepend with one another (international students) and with other people (local peers, lecturers, community members) within and outside their learning environment. In the case of this study, international students are regarded as individuals in their learning environment whose learning, attitudes and behaviour can be influenced positively or negatively by the factors within their micro and macro environment. For example, international students' behaviours as agency can positively influence their environment and enable them to develop intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, self-awareness, resilience, motivated, self-esteem, self-respect, personal beliefs and ideas, and self-confidence. On the other hand, studying in an enabling learning environment could also help contribute to international students' intrapersonal factors such as the development of intelligence, diverse learning styles, personality, attitudes, identity, which might positively affect their abilities and the conditions in which their development and learning could take place. These factors can also enable international students to make informed decisions through their behaviour in their environment.

Several inhibiting factors, such as the universities' exclusionary policies, accommodation issues, legal policies, funding, finance, HIV and AIDS policies, economics and political policies, lack of resources (human, material and non-material), poor healthy lifestyle, immigration policies, the lack of support from lecturers and peers, institutionalised xenophobia, discrimination, unemployment, alienation, and people's attitudes, behaviours, and opinions, could influence the development and learning of the international students negatively. Bandura (2012) that factors such as conformity, obedience, leadership, persuasions, peer pressure and disobedience could inhibit individuals' learning, attitude, behaviour and development negatively within their learning environment. Despite these various inhibiting factors indicated above, the international students might have some different hidden skills and potential that could enable them to interrelate with their peers, become active, reach out and become an exploring individual who has a hidden inner drive to learn.

This study has emphasised the relevance of using agentic capability theory to explore and gain an in-depth understanding of how an enabling learning environment could be created for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS as well as explore international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment, examine the reason international students need an enabling learning environment and discuss how photovoice could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. The work of this theory should enable the diverse experiences and knowledge of these heterogeneous group of students (international students) to be brought into perspective.

2.2.1.9 Limitations of the agentic capability theory

Different scholars (Flamand, 2017; Mulhollem, 2011; LaMorte, 2016; Nabavi, 2012) have criticised the agentic capability theory in diverse ways. Thus, its relevance to this study which cannot be taken for granted. LaMorte (2016) challenges a key assumption of the agentic theory, as changes in the environment might not automatically lead to changes in an individual. The theory focuses more on the processes of learning, therefore disregarding the biological and hormonal predispositions that may influence behaviours, regardless of experience and expectations. Flamand (2017) also asserts that the theory lacks a unifying structure and disregards biological differences and hormonal responses. Moreover, Nabavi (2012) argues that the theory neglects some major areas of human life, like maturation and changes over their life span and gives less attention to motivation, emotion and conflict. It has also been identified

that the theory placed more emphasis on what happened to individuals than what individuals do in the environment. Mulhollem (2011) views that Bandura's theory fails to explain how human agents can automatically control themselves internally.

Despite these limitations, as the researcher, I positioned myself in a qualitative study, which enables the flexibility of using different research methods that is also unique to each context. In this regard, the way this theory will be applied would be within the principles of qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2011), which informs my study. Therefore, the next section discusses the conceptual framework used in framing the study.

2.3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

2.3.1. Understanding the conceptual framework

A conceptual framework can be defined as a representation of substantive theory that accompanies a framework (Kitchel & Ball, 2014). Jabareen (2009) further clarifies a conceptual framework as a network or a plan of linked concepts. Osanloo and Grant (2014, p. 17) describe it as the researcher's comprehension of how the research problem will be explored, the direction the study will take and the interactions between the different variables in the study. In addition, Osanloo and Grant (2014) state that a conceptual framework gives a coherent shape of concepts linked together, which assists in providing a visual display of how ideas in research relate with one another within the theoretical framework. This implies that conceptual frameworks are flexible in nature, have the capacity for modification and enable researchers to understand the phenomena (Jabareen, 2009). Kitchel and Ball (2014) argue that a conceptual framework can be referred to as a visual diagram or description showing the relationship existing between two or among variables (dependent and independent). Shoemaker, Tankard, and Lasorsa (2004) concur and explain that a conceptual framework clearly focuses on being a certain kind of a visual representation of theory itself.

2.3.2. Enabling learning environment

This section discusses the use of 'enabling learning environment' as the conceptual framework to frame the study. In other words, it begins by giving a clear definition of a learning environment, gives a clear explanation of an enabling learning environment and also discusses

the factors that enable or constrains a learning environment, the need for optimising an enabling learning environment and the relevance of an enabling learning environment. It lastly shows how the agentic capability theory is merged into an enabling learning environment.

2.3.2.1 Defining a learning environment

- *What do we know as a learning environment?*

The concept of ‘learning’ does not take place in a vacuum or in isolation (Khanare, 2012). This implies that learning could take place anywhere. For example, learning can take place or can occur within or outside the school environment and in an online environment such as Facebook. Similarly, Gikas and Grant (2015) assert that people learn in a variety of places, such as the workplace or other specific environments. Learning can take place wherever a student is and is not tied to a space inside a brick and mortar building or even confined to a space inside an online course management system (Gikas & Grant, 2015). In essence, this indicates that learning occurs whatever the context one is situated in.

Ruismaki Salomaa and Ruokonene (2015) state that 21st Century schools need to change their environments to support the deep-rooted learning that provides the students with the skills and capacities needed for the century. This shows that the word ‘learning environment’ can be seen from different viewpoints. On the one hand, Firestone (2015) argues that a learning environment is a physical, psychological and instructional atmosphere in which learning takes place. This implies that a learning environment does not only mean the physical structures and space (classroom and buildings) but goes beyond these physical structures such as visual spaces and technological facilities (ICT) etc. This view is shared by Waldern (2015), who states that a learning environment is a place of learning. However, these places vary widely. For example, classroom/learning setting arrangements, imagery, groupings, lighting, air quality and temperature, room size, number of students, the use of audio-visual materials and spaces, décor, and all other things influence learning (Waldern, 2015).

On the other hand, Aksovaara and Maunonen-Eskelinen (2014) also describe a learning environment as a learning context that is made up of the physical environment, psychological or emotional elements and social interactions. According to Aksovaara and Maunonen-Eskelinen (2014), the physical environment consists of the physical structures like buildings, furniture, ICT equipment; the psychological environment is referred to as the cognitive or

emotional environment, which involves the skills and information needed and the emotions and motivational factors; lastly, the social learning environment is regarded as the social structure, network, and systems with people in the learning environment and their interaction.

However, a learning environment can also be described as an environment that consists of the pedagogy, the relationship/interaction between the teachers, students and peers and the atmosphere (physical space) (McHatton et al., 2014). This is supported by Warger and Dobbin (2009, p. 3) who similarly claim that the notion “learning environment is an environment surrounded by learning materials, techniques, pedagogy, connection to social and global contexts, human conduct, cultural dimension, the vital role of emotion in learning which requires us to examine and sometimes rethink the roles of teachers and students because the ways in which they make use of spaces and bring wider societal influences into play animates the educational enterprise”. Meanwhile, Oselumese, Omoike and Andrew (2016) note that a learning environment is a vital area that should be maintained and supported in order to enhance students’ academic performance. They further argue that it is a variable that influences students’ learning because it consists of the classroom, school location, school facility, school climate and technology (Oselumese et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009, p. 2) defines a learning environment “as a support system that organise the conditions in which humans learn best and systems that accommodate the unique learning needs for effective learning”. It can also be referred to as an environment or space in which people can use diverse resources that enable them to comprehend several things and grow significant solutions to diverse issues (Ruismaki et al., 2015). In addition, they can also be the structures, apparatus, and communities that motivate students and teachers to achieve the knowledge and abilities needed by them in a modern context (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009). Therefore, a learning environment is expected to be safe, inclusive and a place where people think, feel and behave in diverse ways (O’Kane & Andrews, 2014). This is to say that a learning environment is a place or community where people have access to various resources, a place they can use to be able to understand different things and where they can develop meaningful solutions to different problems.

2.3.2.2 Understanding an enabling learning environment

A review of multidisciplinary literature on enabling learning environment shows the lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the phenomenon and its complexities (Barge, 2012; Groff, 2012; Themane & Osher, 2014). Meanwhile, the term ‘enabling’ does not have a homogenised definition. According to the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary (n.d.), it could be referred to as competence, power, means, ability, and authority to authorise, allow or permit something or someone to do things. The Cambridge Online Dictionary (n.d) also claims that it means when someone is given the opportunity to do something. Therefore, an enabling learning environment is viewed as a learning environment that is stimulating, richly resourced and in which learning is made entertaining (Groff, 2012). Iten (2015) describes an enabling learning environment as an advanced and transformative learning environment. This view is supported by Barge (2012), who stipulates that an enabling learning environment is a positive learning environment that meets the needs of the students, ensuring their psychological safety, building positive images, feelings of belongingness and purposeful behaviour, and having a sense of personal competence. Ryan and Viete (2009) concur with Barge and add that it is an environment where students have a feeling of belonging and are able to communicate effectively, creatively, and with confidence, as well as a place where they are being valued as knowledgeable people.

Significantly, Page and Davis (2016) contend that an enabling learning environment is an environment that maximizes inclusivity and active learning. This indicates that an enabling learning environment encourages the integration of students into their learning environment. In addition, it is an environment that is closely linked with the student’s sense of belonging and their meaningful interaction with others (Iten, 2015). Furthermore, Brindley, Blaschke, and Walti (2009) indicate that it is a rich environment that provides an opportunity for people to interact and interconnect, develop high order thinking skills, reflect, co-create knowledge and engage in transformative learning. Iten (2015) argues that it is vital to create an enabling learning environment in schools to help the students achieve their academic goals and develop a sense of belonging.

Evidence has shown that students’ understanding of the school as an enabling learning environment is multifaceted (Waldman, 2016; Themane & Osher, 2014; Iten, 2015; Luna-Scott, 2015; Brown, 2006). A body of literature shows that students who study in an enabling learning environment indicate that they are valued as individuals with knowledge and skills,

are ideas-driven and are free to communicate and contribute to the growth of their community/environment (Brown, 2006; Luna-Scott, 2015). In addition, learning in an enabling learning environment encourages students to gain an elevated level of trust and share responsibility (Luna-Scott, 2015).

2.3.2.3 Key concepts used in an enabling learning environment

This section discusses the different key concepts that are constantly used to define and describe an enabling learning environment. These concepts are identified as safety, engagement, support and connectedness (Waldman, 2016; Cassum & Gul, 2017; Cho & Yu, 2015; Warger & Dobbin, 2009). They are discussed below as follow:

- Safety

The concept of ‘safety’ is perceived differently by different people. Themane and Osher (2014, p. 2) describe being safe as “including both actual and perceived risk”. Thompson and Wheeler (2010) refer to a safe school as consisting of the physical and emotional safety of the students, these referring to the environment, freedom of expression and confidentiality. This is supported by Xaba (2006, p. 567) who states that “a safe school is a school that is physically and psycho-socially safe”. Meanwhile, Mabasa (2015) explains that to feel safe is to be protected from any kind of danger or harm as well as to be secured. Therefore, this suggests that a safe school is an enabling learning environment and the word safe can be used interchangeably with secured.

Themane and Osher (2014) indicate that safety in schools consists of students’ feeling that they are at ease and can concentrate, analytical, be creative, be reflective, be reactive, to be in charge, and to take a proper academic risk. Waldman (2016) also describes safety as the feeling of being physically and mentally safe by students before they can succeed academically. Khanare (2015) and Nene (2016) stipulate that an enabling learning environment is seen as a place of safety, while Barge (2012) adds that it can be referred to as an environment that provides psychological and physical safety. Meanwhile, an enabling learning environment is described as a safe or secured learning environment “where teaching and learning takes place and where the students, teachers as well as the non-teaching staff are able to work on a comfortable, warm and welcoming environment that is free of harassment, violence, intimidation, victimisation, and humiliation and where everybody is mentally, emotionally and physically safe” (Mabasa, 2014, p. 166). Significantly, Xaba (2006) argues that safety and security in schools requires a

total learning environment which consists of the students, classroom, school campus, community and staff, Effective teaching and learning can only take place in a safe and secure environment.

Apparently, Osher and Kendziora (2010) explain that there are three types of safety which are physical, emotional and intellectual safety. According to Osher and Kendziora (2010), physical safety consists of all the characteristics of physical wellbeing such as access to healthy food for sustenance, as well as protection from physical harm or threats in the environment. On the other hand, emotional safety comprises of the feeling of belonging and connection, as well as to being free of humiliation, stigmatisation, embarrassment, harassment, victimisation and other types of intimidation while intellectual safety involves feeling at ease and relaxed, contented, to take risk academically and to be able to communicate freely (Osher & Kendziora, 2010). This suggests a safe school is an enabling learning environment that enables the student to learn, grow and develop holistically.

- Engagement

An enabling learning environment is regarded as an environment that actively engages or involves its students in their learning. In other words, this kind of environment promotes student's engagement and participation in their learning or studies. This is concurred by Waldman (2016) who argues that it is an environment that enhances and increases its student academic engagement and participation. Kannabiran (2016) also argues that engagement could be described as a context or place that provides essential academic and social engagement and free streaming level-headed discussion. Davies, Jindal-Snape, Digby, Hay and Howe (2013) contend that it is a place where engagement in growth and in social, emotional and thinking skills occurs. Cassum and Gul (2017) concur and also state that it is where students are engaged actively to enhance and promote their creative and critical thinking skills. On the one hand, Waldman (2016) is of the view that it is a place that engages students by helping them develop their critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, to work collaboratively, have good communication skills and develop academic stance. However, it could also be regarded as an environment that engages students in transformative learning (Brindley et al., 2009). Therefore, engaging students helps them focus on increasing their academic achievements or goals, have positive behaviour and a sense of belonging in order for them to remain in school (Taylor &

Parson, 2011). On the other hand, Ashwin and McVitty (2015) assert that student's engagement is one of the aspects of high-quality teaching in higher education.

- Support

The word 'support' means to give assistance to someone (South African Pocket Oxford Dictionary, 2002, p. 914). Meanwhile, recent studies have shown that an environment that supports students socially, emotionally, academically and financially in order to achieve their learning goals is regarded as an enabling learning environment. This view is supported by Waldman (2016), who suggests that a learning environment is enabling if it supports its students' educational goals. However, Arambewela and Hall (2013) with Cho and Yu (2015) claim that an enabling learning environment is an environment that socially and psychologically supports their students' learning, development and growth. On the other hand, Osborne (2013) claims that it is an environment that supports and promotes the students' learning and developments as well as teaching. Waldman (2016) further explains that an enabling learning environment could be regarded as a place where students are supported in their learning, growth and development as well as where different people such as lecturers, peers, community members and management staff connects to their learning experience.

- Connectedness

An enabling learning environment is referred to as a school or university that enables its students to feel socially connected to their learning by indulging in healthy behaviours and achieving their academic goals (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). It can also be viewed as an environment that offers an opportunity to its students to socially connect and build global networks (Panditt, 2007; Warger & Dobbin, 2009). However, Brindley et al. (2009) claim that it is an environment that cares and provide opportunities for its students to interconnect by organising social events to promote communication and inclusivity. Waldman (2016) argues that university could promote connectedness by creating avenues for social integrations and interactions between the students, their peers, lecturers, supervisors, community and school management. Meanwhile, the study conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009, p. 7) also reveals that connectedness is enhanced in schools/universities through the creation of a healthy and safe school environment, a supportive environment, a caring and supportive interpersonal relationships, providing opportunities for students to participate in decision making, and the sharing of positive norms, goals and values".

Therefore, the next section explains the factors that contribute to an enabling learning environment.

2.3.3 Factors that contribute to an enabling learning environment

The determinants of an enabling learning environment are complex and diverse. This suggests that there are several factors within the learning environment that could contribute to it becoming an enabling learning environment. These factors are categorised into three different types such as intrapersonal contributing factors; interpersonal contributing factors; and the environmental contributing factor. These factors might help the students to achieve their learning goals and promote their academic performances.

2.3.3.1 Individual/intrapersonal contributing factors

It is important to note that, there are different intrapersonal or individual factors that help to contribute towards creating an enabling learning environment. These factors are very vital to the enhancement of students' learning, growth and development in their learning environment as well as promoting or contributing to the creation of an enabling learning environment.

For instance, the study conducted by Wilk, Clark, Maltby, Smith, Tucker and Gilliland (2018) identified diverse factors such as age, sex, values, ethnicity, race, tribe and economic status as intrapersonal contributing factors that contributed to building an enabling learning environment for learners in schools. This is also supported by Iso-Ahola (1995) who also identified factors such as self-motivation, cognitive capacity, coping skills, affective orientation and mental training skills as personal factors that helped the student in performing well in their studies and in creating an enabling learning environment. Whilst, Beadnell, Wilsdon, Wells, Morison, Gillmore and Hoppe (2007) note factors like cognition, personality traits and skills as intrapersonal factors that contributed to the adolescents' decisions of creating an enabling learning environment. Furthermore, Themane and Osher (2014) discovered that individual factors like resiliency and self-motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) contributed to making schools an enabling learning environment.

Meanwhile, Hanrahan (1998) study also identified that intrapersonal factors such as students' beliefs, resiliency, self-motivation led to their deep involvement in learning, for example, self-directed learning or independent learning, as well as developing self-esteem/confidence, self-reflection, student autonomy and personality traits. In the study by Singh (2013) on the

influence of leaders' intrapersonal competencies on employee job satisfaction, it was revealed that different individual factors like self-awareness, self-expression, self-control, adaptability, and optimism helped in contributing to an enabling working environment for the workers. He further indicated that these personal factors enabled the workers to work and become successful at work (Singh, 2013). However, based on the above literature, the individual or intrapersonal factors such as individual skills, self-awareness, resiliency, motivation, self-esteem, self-respect, self-reflectivity, experiences, personal beliefs and ideas, self-confidence, values, identity, age, sex, race, ethnicity, independent learning, as well as opinions will enable the students to perform better physically, mentally and academically. It will also enhance and shape their learning and environment.

2.3.3.2 Interpersonal contributing factors

These factors are identified as student's family interactions, peer relationships and social attachment (Beale et al., 2007). This is supported by Iso-Ahola (1995) who revealed that it regarded as factors such as students social support and relationship with their fellow peers and lecturers as well as supervisors were interpersonal factors that enhanced the students' learning. Wilk et al. (2018) also identified that interpersonal factors like a good interactions and relationship between the students and their lecturers as well as local communities contributes to creating an enabling learning environment. In contrast, Gae (2016) in her study on primary school learners' perspectives on factors that impact their learning and wellbeing at school identified that interpersonal factors such as engaging learners in extracurricular; cultural and educational activities helped towards contributing an enabling learning environment for them and impacted on their wellbeing.

Nevertheless, Zandvliet, den Brok, Mainhard and van Tartwijk (2014) also identified interpersonal factors to be the development of a good teacher-student relationship, student-teacher interaction, the relationship among peers, the relationship between teachers and their professional colleagues as well as supportive interactions. However, these interpersonal factors enabled the students to maintain a balance in their psychology and promoted their learning engagement and participation (Iso-Ahola, 1995). This is supported by Zandvliet et al. (2014) who note that these interpersonal factors contribute to students' learning; attainment of students' outcomes and development; promotes social justice and are necessary conditions for

developing students living and studying in a context of poverty, HIV and AIDS and unequal access to learning opportunities.

2.3.3.3 Environmental contributing factors

Notwithstanding, recent studies have shown that students learn in diverse ways and that the environment can either hinder or enhance students' learning (Lippman, 2010; Hannah, 2013). To Osher, Kidron, Decanda, Kendiziora and Weissberg (2016) students' abilities to learn and excel academically are influenced by the school environment. This is supported by Bucholz and Sheffler (2009) as they indicate that the environment can either reduce or grow the students. Similarly, Waldern (2015) asserts that the environment directly or indirectly influences the students' learning. Lippman (2010) contends with Waldern and argues that the environment shapes the students whilst the students influence the environment.

Drawing from the above discussions, it is pertinent to note that a learning environment can be innovative, smart, inclusive, safe, conducive, supportive, caring, and exclusive depending on the impact of the factors within the environment. This clearly suggests that several factors within the environment contribute to making the learning environment enabling (positive). This view is supported by Ellstrom, Ekholm, and Ellstrom (2008) who in their study indicated that a learning environment can be enabling through looking at a range of factors such as technological, social, cultural and political within its environment that could positively impact on the students' development and learning.

However, there are several environmental factors that can contribute to an enabling learning environment and these factors are identified as the social, cultural, technological and political changes in the environment; as well as the improvement in communication and information technology (internet and social media) (Motsatsi, 2012; Page & Davies, 2016). The study by Lipmann (2010) also found that environmental factors such as resources and the physical space could also contribute to an enabling learning environment for its students. On the other hand, Ruismaki et al. (2015) note in their study that psychological, pedagogical and social contexts in which learning takes place are environmental factors that contribute towards an enabling learning environment. Wilk et al. (2018) in their study revealed that environmental factors like the availability of equipment, facilities, resources, programmes, and policies, as well as having trained and qualified teachers contribute to an enabling learning environment. Amirul et al. (2013) also identify in their study that appropriate, adequate and well-functioning teaching

equipment and learning facilities; flexible furniture, good technology, air quality, and multifunctional learning space as environmental factors that could contribute to an enabling learning environment.

Therefore, Ruismaki et al. (2015) further assert that these environmental factors positively influence the ways in which teaching and learning take place, the wellbeing of the students, the physical environments of the school and the way the institution is been managed. This is concurred by Motsatsi (2012) who claims that the environmental factors positively influence the students; academics; researchers and the community of learners. The next section discusses the factors that constrain an enabling learning environment.

2.3.4. Factors that constrain an enabling learning environment

This section discusses the different factors that constrain or inhibit an enabling learning environment. The factors presented below negatively influences students' learning, growth and development in an enabling learning environment.

2.3.4.1 Stigma and discrimination

The factor 'stigma and discrimination' are seen as barriers that hinder people to gain access to education and medical health (Nayar, Stangl, De Zaldondo & Brady, 2014) and can be caused by poverty or social exclusion. However, Parker et al. (2012) claim that stigmatisation and discrimination could result or emanate from different types of environments such as schools, communities, migration opportunities, families, employment as well as HIV and AIDS programmes. However, Nayar et al. (2014) argue that social process of stigmatisation and discrimination could have a devastating effect in the environment in which students live, learn and grow. Nurumal, Rogayah, and Hafizah (2009) contend that stigma and discrimination influence the environment by making it not to meet up with the psychosocial and emotional needs of its students. Hence, these psychological and emotional needs are identified as the needs to interact with others, for social belonging and to feel accepted which is impeded by stigma and discrimination.

However, Firestone (2015) and Hannah (2013) in their studies identified that due to stigma and discrimination, students experience anxiety and depression as well as social isolation in their learning environment. On the other hand, Milkie and Warner (2011) opine that the feeling of stigma and discrimination negatively impacts the students' emotional and behavioural

wellbeing. Iten (2015) and Gae (2016) indicate that the feeling of stigma and discrimination within the school environment (classroom and physical) impacts negatively on the students' learning (attentiveness), and causes internalising problems (anxiety and sadness); with externalising problems (quarrels, bullying, fighting) among them. In addition, the students could begin to feel dissatisfied, lonely, and lacked a sense of belonging (Iten, 2015). The study by Price, Hill, Liang, and Perella (2019) also found that stigma and discrimination within an enabling learning environment caused students to experience mental health challenges.

2.3.4.2 Peer rejection/non-acceptance

Recent research has shown how critical the effects of peer rejection or non-acceptance among students makes them feel lonely, depressed, develop low self-esteem and anxiety in their learning environment (Platt, Kadosh, & Lau, 2013; Mikami, Boucher & Humphreys, 2005; Mercer & DeRosier, 2008). Although, Wolf and Fraser (2008) claim that an environment where students experience peer rejection is a risky environment. However, the study by Killen and Cooley (2014) with Rutland and Killen (2015) identified that peer rejection or non-acceptance experienced by students in their learning environment is caused by preconception or bias concerning the students group membership which might comprise of qualities such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nationality, native language group, gender, culture, or religion. Hence, Hay (2005) suggests that the cause of aggressive behaviour among students in schools is caused by peer rejection. Milkam et al. (2005) and Martín-Antón, Monjas, García Bacete and Jiménez-Lagares (2016) concur with Hay and argue that students who experience peer rejection in their learning environment experience depression and anxiety; drop out of school and engage in crime. On the other hand, the study by Nurumal, Rogayah, and Hafizah (2009) argue that peer rejection within the learning environment affects how the students interact with their peers, students to lecturers' interactions and their involvement in the teaching and learning activities. This is concurred by Iten (2015) with Trees and Jackson (2007) who state that peer rejection causes students to experience lack of interpersonal relationships as well as educational difficulties (Mulvey, Boswell & Zheng, 2017).

2.3.4.3. Lack of mentoring

Lack of school-based mentoring program can have a serious effect on the students' learning. According to Lindt and Blair (2017) schools that practice all-inclusive guidance and support, practices meet the needs (psychological, emotional and education) of their students. This implies that schools that do not have guidance and support structures constrain their students' learning. Based on the above claim. Judd (2017) posits that lack of mentoring in school causes students to have low academic growth rate, low graduation rate, low self-esteem, and lack of involvement in social activities. Balfanz (2016) concurs and argues that lack of mentoring in schools affects student's attendance, behaviours and academic programmes. While, Espinoza (2012) claims that it makes students be at risk academically, display chronic absenteeism as well as to lack academic goals.

However, the study by Coller and Kuo (2014) identified that having school-based mentoring program enabled students achieve more academic goals, gain academic support, have high school attendance rate, lower discipline problem as well as have a higher graduation rate (Hickman & Wright, 2011). Fruith and Wray-Lake (2012) allude that mentoring helps students to gain academic achievement, develop self-confidence and resilience. While, Little, Kearney, and Brither (2010) stipulate that it helps students to build stronger bonds, have a positive learning experience and to grow academically.

2.3.4.4 Non-supportive learning environment

A non-supportive learning environment is regarded as a learning environment where students feel devalued, less, excluded and disempowered (Breshears & Lubbe De Beer, 2017; Husebø, Storm, Våga, Rosenberg, & Akerjordet, 2018). O'Kane and Andrews (2014) also regard it as an environment that is not conducive for learning. This is supported by Ellstrom et al. (2008, p. 86) who suggest that there are different conditions and practices in a non-supportive learning environment which constrain both reproductive and developmental learning in students. Therefore, Breshears and Lubbe-De Beer (2017) allude that students convey negative experiences in an unsupportive learning environment.

Although, this type of learning environment could impact negatively on the students' learning and development. However, recent studies have shown that a non-supportive learning environment has several negative influences on students' learning and development (Husebo

et al. 2018; Breshears & Lubbe-De Beer, 2017). Firestone (2015); and Hannah (2013) also note that a non-supportive learning environment has a negative impact on the students' learning, growth, and development in diverse ways such as causing low student achievement and poor classroom behaviour. In addition, Hannah (2013) argues that this kind of environment makes the students become less successful. Waldern (2015) also claims that it induces negative feelings and attitudes on the students and inhibit their learning. While Husebo et al. (2018) stipulate that it leads student's attrition. Trees and Jackson (2007) also assert that it makes students be passive in learning and inactive. Motsatsi (2012) affirms that it causes students to attend schools irregularly, drop out of school and makes teacher be absent from work.

2.3.4.5 Organisational constraints

The existence of universities as organisations is to achieve their goals of effective teaching and learning through creating an enabling environment for its students and staff. However, universities like any other organisations experience some constraints which affect their students' and staff's learning and wellbeing. This organisational constraint is described by Pindek and Spector (2016) as different factors within the organisation or school that inhibits people's work performances. Jack Lam and Nicholas Pang (2003) identified these factors as external, internal and contextual factors within the school or organisation. Pindek, Howard, Krajcevska, and Spector (2019) also define organisational constraint as a working condition that does not support a person's performance of a job task or conditions in the workplace that makes work difficult. Liu, Spector and Shi (2007) claim that organisational constraint is caused based on the need for people to perform well due to the pressure from their supervisors and the desire to feel successful makes them experience strain and stress and also lead them to emotional reactions such as anger and frustrations.

Furthermore, Pindek and Spector (2016) highlight that organisational constraints could cause the employees to experience different factors such as frustration, stress, anxiety and dissatisfaction at work. Liu et al. (2007) concur and assert that organisational constraints are caused by anger, depression, anxiety as well as stress in the workplace. However, Jack Lam and Nicholas Pang (2003) claim that organisational constraints affect school organisational learning and reduce student's wellbeing (Pindek & Spector, 2016). Ellström et al. (2008) also affirm that organisational constraint promotes reproductive learning at the expense of developmental learning at the workplace.

2.3.4.6 Safety and security

The concept of safety and security is regarded as an important factor that can enable effective teaching and learning in schools (Xaba, 2006). This is supported by Mwoma, Begi and Murungi (2018) that safety and security in schools are important in augmenting students' learning. However, the lack of safety and security in schools is seen as a critical factor that could constrain an enabling learning environment. Mwoma et al. (2018) further note that meaningful teaching and learning cannot take place in an unsafe and insecure environment. Ozmen, Dur and Akgul (2010) with Masitsa (2012) state that the result of lack of safety and security in schools emanates from within and outside the school environment. Therefore, Themane and Osher (2014) state that lack of safety and security in schools contributes to long- and short-term risk which impacts negatively on the students' development and learning.

Xaba (2006) identifies that students who study in an unsafe and insecure learning environment experience issues such as rape, crime, victimisation and violence. This implies that these issues negatively impact on the students' academic, social, psychological and emotional growth and development of the students and teachers. Similarly, Mwoma et al. (2018) reveal factors like poor infrastructure, dirty environment as well as inadequate teaching and learning facilities that make schools become unsafe and insecure. They indicate that these factors lead to a lack of safety and security in schools and can cause risk conditions like bodily injury, accidents, death as well as emotional and psychological distress such as low self-esteem and poor academic performance and achievements. Ozmen et al. (2010) argue that insufficient and ineffective school policies and support services threaten to prevent schools from becoming an enabling learning environment. Chukwu (2008) maintains that schools should be a safe and secure environment in order to protect their learners from insecurity and to help them feel at ease to learn, and Mwoma et al. (2018) asserts that it is important for schools to always implement and observe safety and security standards so as to enhance their students' learning. Thus, the next section discusses the debate on the need to optimise an enabling learning environment.

2.3.5. Debate on the needs to optimise an enabling learning environment

Although this has been the focus of a few studies, it is pertinent to note that students need an enabling learning environment to develop, learn and grow. For example, the study by Motsatsi (2012) indicates that enhancing an enabling learning environment for students is vital in order to enhance their learning and promote sustainability. They further state that in such

environment students will receive quality teaching and learning, become active and learn how to solve problems on their own (Motsatsi, 2012). Gae (2016) asserts that optimising an enabling learning environment helps to improve students' physical and psychological wellbeing. This is supported by Amirul et al. (2013), who argue that it stimulates student's engagement in the learning process and influences their behaviour as well as assist in the development of students' skills and cognitive abilities. They also state that it makes students feel focused and encourage their interdependency in using different learning resources and technology DHET (2013) policy indicates that it helps to address the student's educational needs. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) affirm the need to optimise an enabling learning environment so as to support students' self-regulated learning in higher education and to have positive health and education outcomes (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Themane and Osher (2014) similarly assert the need for an enabling learning environment to make the students feel safe and supportive within and outside their school environment as well as to develop in a healthy manner.

2.3.6. The relevance of an enabling learning environment to the current study

Meanwhile, a growing body of literature has revealed that an enabling learning environment encourages an elevated level of trust and a sense of shared responsibility among students (Brindley et al., 2009; Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009; Pena-Lopez, 2009; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009; Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014). This implies that an enabling learning environment has a positive influence on students' learning and development. Therefore, students who learn in an enabling learning environment, whether in homes, outside events or at school or university, feel included, supported, safe, engaged and develop holistically.

Recent studies have shown that learning in an enabling environment has a huge positive influence on the students' learning and development. Drawing from the global context, Melhuish et al. (2008) report that an enabling learning environment assists learners to facilitate and maintain their academic achievement and to develop learning skills. Similarly, Kashdan and Yuen (2007) assert that learners studying in an enabling learning environment increased their self-esteem, academic grades and aspiration towards achieving their academic goals. While Strayer (2007) in his study also found that students who learn in an enabling environment became innovative and developed co-operative skills. In the study by Liu et al. (2009), it was also discovered that learning in an enabling learning environment enhances students' scientific

knowledge and understanding, increases their knowledge as well as improve their learning motivation (Wang & Reeves, 2007).

Furthermore, the study by Li and Lam (2013) in Hong Kong found that an enabling learning environment encourages cooperative learning among the students through stimulating critical thinking skills and helping them to clarify and exchange ideas, enabling them to develop social skills to interact with their peers and develop self-confidence. Moscaritolo (2009) also identifies that students' anxiety levels decrease when they learn in an enabling environment. So and Brush (2008) state that learning in an enabling learning environment encourages collaborative learning through course structures, emotional support and communication among students, and Liu, Cho and Schallert (2006) report that students' academic achievements and self-efficacy increase when they learn in an enabling learning environment.

Durlak, Dynnicki, Taylor, Weissberg and Schellinger (2011) report that students' social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour and academic performances increased while learning in an enabling learning environment. It also enabled learners to develop new skills and to build a sense of care and ownership (Sumsion & Wong, 2011). Such an environment, which promotes deep learning styles, provides students with problem-solving skills and opportunities to explore, inquire and experiment with issues (Dart et al., 2000). It also promotes independence and individual development, enhances creative skills, promotes collaborative learning, increased confidence, resilience and academic achievement, increases motivation and engagement in growth and in social, emotional and thinking skills and improves school attendance of students (Davies et al., 2013). Therefore, this section has revealed the relevance of creating an enabling learning environment for international students which is to encourage social inclusivity, students engagement as well as support learning and identified the roles played by the university and other enablers in creating a caring, supportive and inclusive environment for their students most especially international students. The next section shows how the agentic capability theory could be merged with an enabling learning environment.

2.3.6. Merging agentic capability theory with an enabling learning environment

The holistic development of the international students in an enabling learning environment could be based on their capabilities (individually and collectively) as active and change agents. Recent studies indicate that international students should be referred to as assets, as independent, active citizens and agents of change in their host environment (Gu et al., 2010;

Zhou, Jinda-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008) and not as deficits, as victims and vulnerable group of students (Montgomery, 2010). This suggests that for international students (individuals) to become active change agents and develop potential as well as the capability to develop and achieve their academic goals, they need an enabling learning environment that would promote their learning, protect, care, and support them. Studies have shown that learning in a constraining or non-supportive environment influences international students negatively and might make them vulnerable, passive and develop negative experience that will impair their academic performance.

However, Bandura (2006; 2012) argues that the environment and individual influence one another. Agentic capability theory shows how the environment shapes the way people behave and acts and reveals the bidirectional process of influence that exists between the environment and the international students. The theory reveals that international students being active agents have an influence on their learning environment by performing different roles such as assisting and motivating their peers in their studies and engaging with the local students. The study by Nwokedi (2015) found that international students do not develop and learn properly in a constraining environment due to factors such as stigma, discrimination, xenophobia, lack of mentorship, insecurity, crime and violence that constrains the enabling learning environment. Therefore, it is important to create and enhance the enabling learning environment for international students in order to enable their developments and learning in the context of HIV and AIDS. Bandura (2001; 2006; 2012) argues that to be agentic is to have the ability to make things happen in an enabling learning environment if given the opportunity.

International students could play significant roles individually, by proxy or collectively towards their development, learning, adaptation and self- renewal and awareness within an enabling learning environment (Bandura, 2009). In addition, as agents, they can change their environment to become enabling if given the opportunity. This requires acting against some factors that can influence their learning and development negatively, through changing their behaviour, reciprocating as a group or using other agents in their environment to influence these changes through mediation, motivation, and self-efficacy. They might also develop resilience skills, thereby navigating through these challenges to adapt, adjust and inform social changes in their host environment, making the environment become more conducive for their learning. Figure 2.4 applies agentic capability theory to show enabling learning can be created and enhanced for international students.

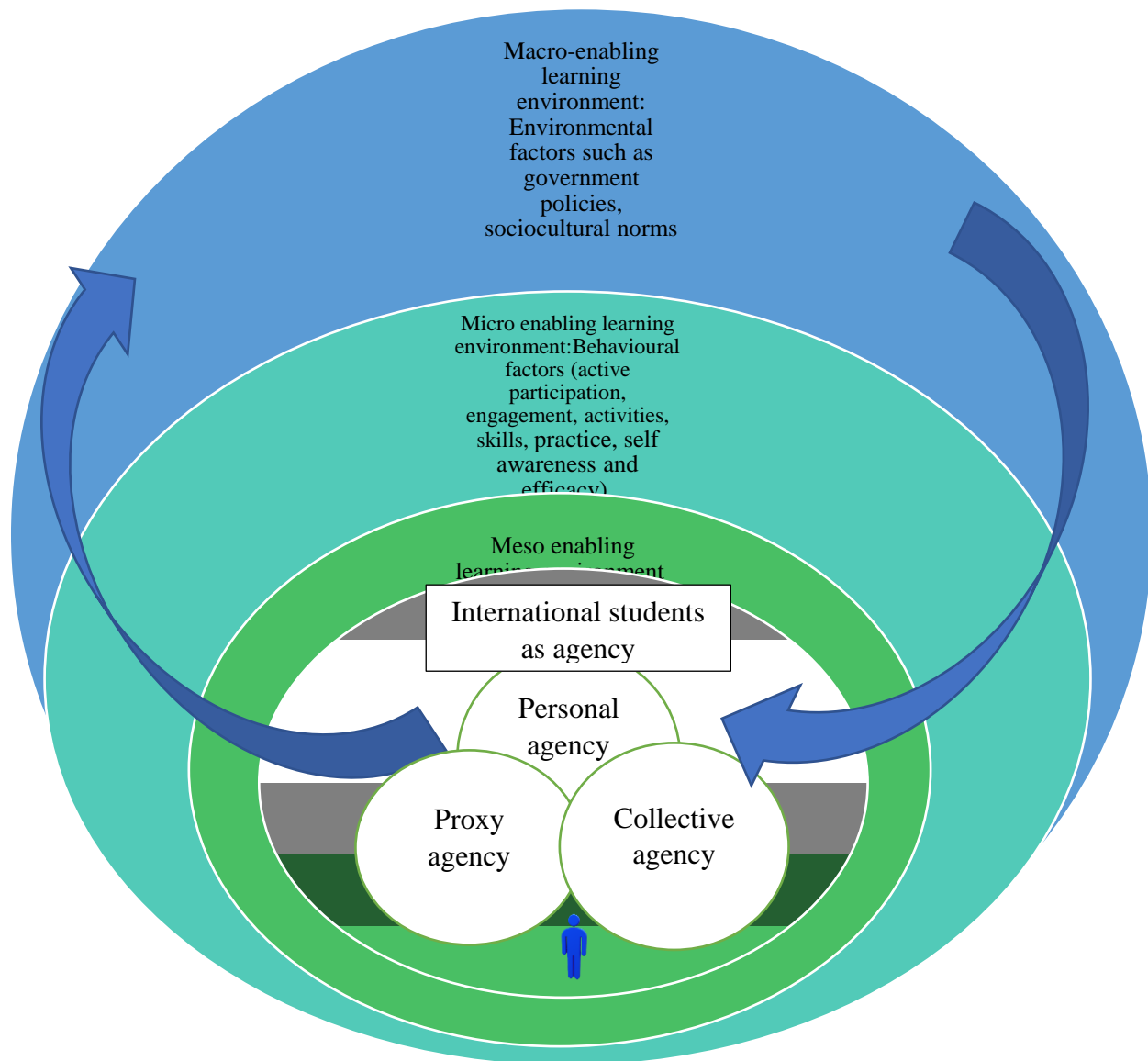


Figure 2.4 Merging agentic capability theory with the enabling learning environment (adapted from Glass, 2012, p. 230)

The primary focus of this study is to see how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. The diagram above outlines the conceptual framework used in the design of this study. Drawing from Nwokedi (2015) idea on the three types of environment namely the local community which represent the university environment; the neighbouring community which represented the processes international students undergo to get study visa and lastly the wider community which is related to the economic issues that have a greater influence on their learning such as lack of funding and scholarships, accommodation and rent. Based on the above, the conceptual framework was used to position the international students as active and change agents within three types of enabling learning environments: meso enabling learning environment which represents the

psychosocial challenges experienced by international students like xenophobia, low self-esteem, isolation, alienation, In the micro enabling learning environment factors such as language issues, lack of social integration and socio-cultural factors like the university policies, immigration policies and the process of acquiring visa or study permits. The macro enabling learning environment which is the last learning environment represents socio-economic issues such as financial constraints experienced by the international students which affected their learning negatively. In the diagram above, the two diamond arrows depict the bidirectional influence of reciprocal interaction that exists between the international students and the various enabling learning environment. It shows that their agency could be personal, proxy and collective. For example, their ability to team up as a group within their university campus, helping one another, motivating each other and giving guidance to their fellow students is essential, as it will enable them to adapt, adjust and become proactive in their learning environment as well as experts in their world.

Subsequently, international students' capabilities and potential as active and change agents are revealed and brought to fore within the enabling learning environment when they feel safe, cared for and supported in their learning and development. Their wellbeing and learning are also enhanced, and they are able to live a healthy lifestyle, become focused and achieve their academic goals. Learning in an enabling learning environment could assist them to develop their capacities and grow holistically so that they can be able to achieve their academic goals.

Furthermore, agentic capability theory means that the diverse skills and capabilities possessed by international students will enable them to engage and participate in dialogue and discussion about their concerns and enables them to make informed decisions about their lives, studies and experiences. In addition, their abilities also could enable them to become resilient and address issues within the enabling learning environments that affect their learning and development. Bandura (2006) argues that individual personalities are determined by how the behaviour, human and environment interact, interrelate and reciprocate to one another. Meanwhile, the international students could also navigate their challenges by developing intrapersonal and interpersonal skills such as critical skills, self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence and acquire academic skills as well as adaptive cognitive skills that will enable them to interact and relate with one another, peers and community. This suggests that their agency will assist international students to develop holistically and achieve their learning goals in their host environment.

2.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the theoretical and conceptual framework used to frame the study. The chapter began by discussing the meaning, significance, roles and components of a theoretical framework in research. In addition, it also highlighted and discussed the historical origin, the different assumptions, attributes, applicability and relevance of the agentic capability theory of Bandura (2006, 2008, 2012) as the framework adopted to guide this study. Furthermore, this chapter explores the limitation of the theory and how these limitations were addressed. However, the second section of this chapter discusses the conceptual framework which is the enabling learning environment and provided a distinct understanding of the key concepts used in defining an enabling learning environment. It also explains the diverse factors that contribute and constrain an enabling learning environment. This chapter also discusses the debate on the needs to optimise an enabling learning environment, the relevance of an enabling learning environment as well as on how the agentic capability theory could be merged with the enabling learning environment. The next chapter highlights related literature reviewed to conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ON CREATING AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS

... the environment comprises of those conditions that advance or ruin, fortify or constrain the qualities of a living being (Dewey, 2012; 2016).

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the review of selected literature from local and international scholars relevant to the study. Therefore, to contextualise my study in this chapter, this chapter begins by exploring and understanding the status of the university in the 21st century and by discussing the role and significance of the university. It also examines the HIV and AIDS policy guiding the universities and explores the university as an enabling learning context in the 21st century. Lastly, this chapter also explores the policy of internationalisation guiding international students' mobility and the studies on international students' experiences in their host environment, their roles and their significance as an agency in their host university. At the end of this chapter, a succinct summary that highlights the significance of the study is presented.

3.2. THE STATUS OF THE UNIVERSITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

This section gives a description of the emergence and origin of the university; it also discusses the meaning, roles and functions of the university and explores the university as an enabling learning space in the 21st century. In addition, it discusses the HIV and AIDS policy guiding the universities in South Africa, the benefits and challenges of the HIV and AIDS policy in the university; the effects of HIV and AIDS in universities and lastly the university support programmes to reduce the effect of HIV and AIDS.

3.2.1. The definition and advent of the university

We can acknowledge that the environment consists of factors that can enable or constrain people, as the opening quote by Dewey (2012) suggests. People learn and develop in different contexts such as homes, online while relating with one another physically or through social

media, during outdoor events, and within and outside the school environment. These different environments they live and operate in, such as the home, school, university or online environment, all influence people's learning. Since an environment can be described as a location, space or context in which people dwell or live in temporary or permanently, it can also be seen as a place where people learn. The university can itself be regarded as an environment and thus as a learning environment.

- What is a university?

The word 'university' does not have a universal metaphor or a homogenous definition. This is because it means different things to different people. According to Kamran-Morey (2013) the word university has been a contested issue among scholars and can be defined in four diverse ways; etymological, historical, legislative and commercial. Etymologically, the concept 'university' is derived from an ancient Latin word 'Universitas' which means 'the whole community or a corporation of teachers or scholars' (Dent, 2013). In the medieval ages, the Latin word Universitas was also used for legal purposes that denote society, company, community, or a corporation that is regarded collectively (Ruegg, 2014). Contrary to this claim, Kamran-Morey (2013) argues that etymologically, the term university emanated as a union that protects and train people whilst historically, it is a surrogate parent whose main purpose is to discipline and civilise its students.

Kannabiran (2016) claims that a university is a space for basic engagement and free streaming level-headed discussion, while Garret (2013) defines the university as an institute of higher learning and Strydom (2016) contends that the university is a social and an intellectual institution.

However, the definition by Castree, Kitchin and Rogers (2013, p. 1091) also describes the university "... as an institution combining research and higher education, and with the power to award degrees for undergraduate and also postgraduate study". Castree et al. (2013) and Wallace (2015) also describe it as an institution of higher education with the authority to confer degrees that are granted university status. Furthermore, Wallace (2015) argues that a university could also be regarded as separate colleges that are subject to university regulations and have a high degree of autonomy in relation to the management of their funds, property and admissions procedures. Drawing from these definitions, this suggests that the university is supposed to be a learning environment that should be inclusive, caring, supportive, promoting, enhancing and shaping the learning and development of the people (staff, students) in it.

In Europe, the university as a learning environment originated during the 11th and 12th centuries in the medieval Latin Christian settings in Bologna Italy (World Book Inc., 2014; Scott, 2006; Atkinson & Blanpied, 2008). Dent (2013) however claims that the first universities originated through collegiate societies of learning in the 14th century. The World Book Inc. (2014) also claims that the first university in the world was established from the studio generalia in Bologna and acted as a vital center for legal studies during the late Roman empire in order to provide education for their priests and monks. It was attended by students from all parts of Europe. Similarly, Castree et al. (2013) claim that the first universities were created in the early medieval period and were often extensions of cathedral schools. On the other hand, Helbron (2003) argues that the university is an institution of higher learning that first appeared in late medieval Europe in the form of a stadium. Castree et al. (2013) however note that what we have now as the modern university was centered around the idea of academic freedom and the teaching of a wide range of disciplines that emerged in early 19th-century Germany.

From the African perspective, Sherman (1990) asserts that the first universities in Africa were created around the 9th and 10th centuries in Northern Africa and are known as Al Qwarawiyyin in Fez, Morocco, and Al Azhar in Egypt. According to Sherrman (1990), Al Qwarawiyyin is currently part of the traditional Islamic system in Morocco while Al Azhar still maintains its distinctive religious character and flourishes as an Islamic higher educational system in Egypt.

Literature (Carruthers, 2008; Strydom, 2016) has shown that the first South African university was established in Cape Town in the year 1873, as the University of Cape of Good Hope, by the Royal Society of South Africa, which modelled it on the University of London and later changed its name to the University of South Africa by creating its headquarters in Pretoria in the year 1918. Guest (2016) reports that university education in KwaZulu-Natal began in the early 19th Century due to public demand for university facilities in the then Colony of Natal (Guest, 2016). The University College Natal was established between 1909 and 1910 in Pietermaritzburg and was extended to Durban, also in the Natal province, in 1920 because of its initial affiliation to the University of the Cape of Good Hope and in becoming a constituent college of the University of South Africa in 1918 before growing to become the independent University of Natal in March 1949 (Bhana & Vahed, 2011; Guest, 2016). The next section discusses the role of the university in the 21st Century.

3.2.2. The position of the university in the 21st Century

- What roles do universities play in the 21st Century?

Kamran-Morley (2013) argues that universities have come under serious scrutiny concerning what they are and their roles as a higher education institution in the 21st Century. However, Osher, Kendziora, Spier and Garibaldi (2014) argue that universities in the 21st Century play a crucial role in helping their students develop and learn. Literature shows that most universities in the 21st Century are experiencing reforms that are shifting their key role from teaching and learning to solve societal problems/issues. Paloma-Sanchez and Elena (2006) assert that the transformation process that higher institutions in Europe and other parts of the world are experiencing has enabled them to increase their quality in educational research, become more flexible, transparent and competitive, to respond to change quickly and become more comparable.

The role and function of the universities during the 19th and 20th centuries was quite different and focused solely on the production and dissemination of knowledge, as well as engaging in research (Cantoni & Yuchtman, 2014; Atkinson & Blanpied, 2008; Castells, 2009; Hogan & Trotter, 2013). Cantoni and Yuchtman (2014) further indicate that they were not inclusive spaces. In contrast, Osborne (2013); Gomez, Bordons, Fernandez and Morillo (2009) and Norton, Sonnemenn & Cherastidtham (2013) argue that the role of universities in the 21st century is mainly to address social issues such as HIV and AIDS, racism, gender, violence, climate change, poverty, crime, sexual violence and other inequalities in the society. This suggests that universities in the 21st Century are regarded as a space that is inclusive, supportive and encourages people to work together in order to enhance and shape their learning and development holistically. Osborne (2013) argues that universities in the 21st Century are learning environments that support and promote a range of teaching pedagogies, student learning and development. Gomez et al. (2009) also contend that 21st Century universities contribute to social cohesion, the production, transmission, and dissemination of new knowledge, promotion of cultural values, scientific innovation and improve the competitiveness of the local industry.

Gomez et al. (2009) assert that universities in the 21st century also play a decisive role in the current advancement of science in most countries. Boulton (2009, p. 4) concurs with Gomez et al. and reports that 21st-century universities are seen as a vital national asset valuable in tackling many significant policies and as a source of new knowledge and advanced thinking; suppliers of experienced /expert workers who are sound and trustworthy; sponsoring inventions; enticing

and drawing global abilities and business investments; drivers of social justice and progress; promoters of social and cultural drive and a source of health and well-being. However, the study by Sohn and Kenny (2007) in Korea contends that the role of universities in the 21st century is to contribute to the economic development of their country through the preparation of high-quality graduates.

Norton, Sonnemenn and Cherastidtham (2013) further argue that the 21st Century university performs vital roles of personally, critically and holistically developing their students to become independent learners and transformers of their society. Boulton (2009) concurs with them and posits that universities are expected to deal with the universality of knowledge; they are concerned with humans in all their manifestations – biological, mental, emotional, objective and subjective – and their social, cultural and economic organisations and interactions with each other, with the physical world within which human beings find themselves and the physical world that we have created for ourselves. Boulton and Lucas (2008) point out that:

...universities are involved in the all-inclusiveness of knowledge; they are worried about people in all of their manifestations such as natural, mental, passionate, objective and subjective and their social, cultural and financial associations and connections with each other; they are worried about the physical world inside which people find themselves. They try to comprehend, what we cannot comprehend; they try to clarify unpredictability; they try to find what is concealed from us. They attempt to set up what is basic to every one of us and what differentiates us from one another or each group from another (Boulton & Lucas, 2008, p. 10).

Brennan, King and Lebeau (2004, p. 17) also highlight that “the role of the university is to provide protected space, intellectual, temporal, physical and political – to allow people, individually and collectively, to think the unthinkable, to push the limits of the possible, to reflect and re-assess”. Therefore, the university should be a safe environment set apart from the interest, orthodoxies and pressures of the day (Brennan et al., 2004).

It has been revealed that universities in sub-Saharan African countries play major roles in reducing poverty and in enhancing community support, rather than economic competitiveness, entrepreneurship and innovation (Cloete & Maasen, 2015). Bogoro (2015), in Nigeria, however, claims that universities play a distinct role in creating an environment sympathetic to and supportive of innovation, and developing internationally-competitive research and

graduates. They are also centres of creativity that attract research-intensive companies and investment into a region and help catalyse innovation in indigenous businesses (Bogoro, 2015).

In the South African context, current studies have shown that the post-apartheid South African higher education system has experienced transformation in their roles to redress the imbalances of the past caused by apartheid (DHET, 2013). This redress was made by changing all the universities' roles and policies to accommodate Black staff and students who were neglected during the apartheid era into the university system (Archer, 2017). Castells (2009) further argues that the primary function of the university is information processing; production of a quality labour force; production and consolidation of values (ethical and personal values) and the formation of flexible personalities (training students to be role models).

In the paper presented by Castells (2009, p. 1) during a seminar at the University of Cape Town, he gave a logical and encompassing view of the role and functions of the universities as follow:

...the university is seen as the main players of scientific and technological transformation. They also have the ability /power to educate the workforce suitable for the new state of production and management. They also create good opportunities for economic growth, social equality and help to develop new culture by being the basis of cultural innovation and cultural renewal (Castells, 2009, p. 1).

Archer (2017) further contends that universities in South Africa perform the roles of research and teaching and in the redressing of opportunities and privileges for black people. Langa also (2013) asserts that universities play a significant role in the South African micro and macro environment. The studies explored above have thus identified the university as an enabling learning space in the 21st Century; therefore, this will be further discussed in the next section.

3.2.3. The university as an enabling learning environment in the 21st century

This section situates the university as an enabling learning environment and examines factors in the university environment that enable learning.

Transforming into a space that supports lifelong learning and equipping students with the 21st-century skills and capacities has been a huge challenge confronting schools most especially universities in the 21st Century (Ruismaki, Salomaa, & Ruokonen, 2015). Kolawole (2010) asserts that the university is a complex environment. This implies that the university as a complex environment may be both enabling and constraining to its students' learning and

development. However, Groff (2012) stipulates that universities should be an enabling learning environment that cares, support and enhance their students' learning. This is because the university is situated within a social, emotional and physical environment (Themane & Osher, 2014). Cassum and Gul (2017) also claim that the university needs to know that creating an enabling learning environment is important in promoting students' learning. This clearly implies that making the university to be an enabling learning environment will help its students and the people in it to develop mentally, emotionally, physically and socially.

The South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2013) indicates that universities are learning environments that are caring, supportive and also enables knowledge advancement. Groff (2012) similarly affirms that universities must be an enabling learning environment because they are responsible for the cognitive development of their students. In a similar vein, Norton et al. (2013) point out that the university is regarded as an environment where critical development processes are carried out. Groff (2012) further claims that universities play a significant role as an enabling learning space because they help their students to develop some of the most important skills for the future such as global awareness, creativity, collaborative problem solving and self-directed learning.

A body of literature has indicated that creating an enabling learning environment that enhances the social, emotional and academic development of its students is difficult (Osher et al., 2007). However, Masitsa (2011) believes that creating an enabling learning environment is possible for enhancing students' mental and academic development and for effective teaching and learning to occur. Themane and Osher's (2014) study in South Africa on schools as an enabling environment also points out that schools are an important space for students' development. They argue further that students could succeed in a school, develop healthily and thrive, only if the schools are enabling, safe and supportive (Themane & Osher, 2014). This suggests that for a school to be seen as an enabling learning environment, it must be safe, secured, inclusive and supportive for its students most especially for those students who have been termed vulnerable, such as international students, due to the various challenges they are experiencing in their host countries such as xenophobia (Rajpal, 2012); accommodation (MacGregor, 2014); depression (Moore & Popadiuk, 2011); culture shock (Tarry, 2011); financial constraints (Wang & Sodanine, 2011); isolation, low self-esteem (Aloyo & Wentzel, 2011), racial discrimination (Furnham, 2010); loneliness (Brown & Holloway, 2008), exclusion (Dzansi & Mogashoa, 2013), lack of social support (Wang & Sodanine, 2011), language barriers

(Campbell & Li, 2008; Menzies & Baron, 2014); alienation and victimisation (Vandeyar, 2012).

Yet Themane and Osher (2014) argue that universities could be an enabling environment by ensuring that their students are safe, supported, cared, respected and secured from emotional and physical harm as well as having the love of the school and neighbouring community, fellow students and academic staff. Osher, Dwyer and Jackson (2004) concur with Themane and Osher and indicate that a good school creates an enabling learning environment for its students to feel physically and emotionally safe, attached to and taken care of by their teachers and the school. They further indicate that the students are confronted with opportunities that make them busy with learning and a place that their peers and other staff members of their schools perform effectively with their social and emotional skills (Osher et al., 2004). Osher, Dwyer, Jimerson and Brown (2012) also note that an enabling school is safe, supportive and effectively reduces violence within and outside its environment.

Furthermore, a body of evidence has revealed that students who study in an enabling school find it easier to feel at ease, concentrate, be analytical, creative and reflective, communicate with others well and take a reasonable academic risk. Davies et al. (2013) with Cassum and Gul (2017) argue that when students are actively engaged in an enabling university environment, it enhances and promotes their creative and critical thinking skills. Herman, Reinke, Parkin, Traylor and Agarwal (2009) also note that an effective and supportive school environment helps to prevent depression among students. In addition, Osher et al. (2012) argue that students who learn in an enabling school environment develop high academic and behavioural standards and make their achievements a collective and individual phenomenon.

There are several factors that contribute to making the university an enabling learning environment. Cassum and Gul (2017) reveal that it is the role of the lecturers and institutions to establish an environment that is enabling its students to learn. Across the international context, Davies et al. (2013) identify several factors, such as the flexibility in the use of space and time; availability of appropriate materials; working outside the classroom/school; 'playful' or 'games-based' approaches with a degree of students' independence; civil relationships between the learners and teachers; chance for collaboration among peers; collaboration with external organisations; knowledge of students' needs; and a flexible preparation which contributes towards making the university enabling. Cassum and Gul (2017) in Pakistan explored the practices of critical thinking among faculty lecturers in the nursing, medicine and

education disciplines and found diverse factors in the physical, psychological and intellectual environment that helped make the university an enabling learning environment, for example:

...the class layout, seating arrangement, light, ventilation, availability of teaching resources and aids (physical); students -teacher relationship, respect for one another, students' freedom of expression (psychological) and lastly the nature of teacher interaction and student engagement which promotes dialogue that creates a didactic, interactive or collaborative class, the use of teaching pedagogies, and the conceptual quality of the lecture session (Cassum & Gul, 2017, p. 107).

Osher et al. (2012) also identified that students' academic and psychosocial skills, teachers' knowledge and skills, teachers' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, teachers' relationship with students, physical structure, human resources, and students' members were factors that support schools as an enabling learning environment. Davies et al. (2013) concurred with Osher et al. and argue that teacher skills and attitudes; teachers' willingness to act as a role model; teachers' awareness of learners' needs; flexible approaches to curriculum and lesson structure; types of classroom interaction with pupils, together with the use of ICT and assessment were factors that also enables learning in schools. Therefore, the next chapter discusses the approaches applied by the university in creating an enabling learning environment for its students.

3.2.4. Diverse strategies used by universities to create an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Kirkley and Kirkley (2005) suggest that to create an enabling learning environment, universities first and foremost need to consider factors such as the needs and goals of learning; learning objectives, the physical and virtual space; lesson tasks and interactions; assessment methods; the students and their characteristics; domain area; community of learners and practice; and technological skills. In summary, Cassum and Gul (2017) argue that schools need to focus on factors in the physical, psychological and intellectual environment.

To reiterate, there are different learning environments and several ways in which universities can create an enabling learning environment for their students. According to Osher et al. (2012), schools need to support their students appropriately and address barriers to their learning by developing academic emphasis and students support services such as improving their instructional leadership and effective pedagogy; employing trained and experienced teachers to focus mostly on teaching and learning. While on the aspect of students' support,

schools need to link students to adults, provide prosocial student interaction in an inclusive community, teach and encourage the growth and use of cooperative learning, engage positive behavioural help and give the students real chances to learn (Osher et al., 2012). Similarly, Cassum and Gul (2017) identify that the presence of free space; moveable furniture; soundproof walls to limit noise transmission; different teaching and learning resources (projectors, flip charts, quality wide board, storage cabinet for dusters and board markers), and teachers' skills and knowledge are ways/strategies in which schools can create an enabling learning environment for students.

Fox (2015) stipulates that there are three ways in which schools could create an enabling environment for students, which are:

Firstly, by differentiation, which is engaging students with various kinds of information on websites, videos, books, magazines, and periodical will give them rich non-tech ways to progress in their academics and assessing them in a unique way which is by presentation, portfolios and oral exams. Secondly by grading the students rightly on their formative and summative assessment tasks and lastly by forming meaningful connection and interaction with the students enabled them to build their confidence and purpose (Fox, 2015, p. 5).

Furthermore, Scager, Akkerman, Pilot and Wubbels (2013) identify that student autonomy and complexity and teachers' expectations are factors used in creating an enabling learning environment in universities. Svanemyr, Amin, Robles and Greene (2015) in the USA identify several factors that are used to create an enabling learning environment for adolescents, in relation to their sexual reproductive health. They identify these: as providing economic empowerment and poverty reduction intervention programmes; creating safe spaces; raising awareness on sexual and reproductive health and providing partner-oriented programmes; peer focused programmes; mentoring and positive role-modeling; mobilising and engaging adults and stakeholders in the community, and promoting laws as well as policies that promote the human right of the adolescents in relation to their sexual reproductive health. Enjelvin (2009), on teaching French to a non-sighted undergraduate student, adopted differentiation strategies such as learning support assistants; non-human and material resources; assessment of course work; providing feedback to create a supportive, enabling, and inclusive teaching/learning environment and maintaining academic standards as ways to create an enabling learning environment. The next section examines universities and their HIV and AIDS policies.

3.3 EDUCATION AND HIV AND AIDS

This section begins by discussing the strategies employed by universities/higher educational institutions in addressing HIV and AIDS prevalence and examines the institutional responses to HIV and AIDS prevalence in universities. It also explores the effects of HIV and AIDS in the universities.

3.3.1. Efforts in addressing HIV and AIDS prevalence in universities

Helleve, Fisher, Onya, Mukoma and Klepp (2009) observe that school-based programmes are one of the HIV and AIDS preventions methods that focuses on the youths. This view is supported by Van Wyk, Pieterse and Otaala (2006), who argue that the role of HIV and AIDS programmes in the universities is to give a voice that will influence policy and train the wider community. Xu et al. (2011) claim that understanding the prevalence of HIV and AIDS and high-risk behaviours among students are important in order to determine how to design interventions programmes among this population. Thus, countries and universities all over the world have developed and implemented HIV and AIDS policies and prevention programmes to reduce its effect/impact on the universities/higher institution campuses and in society at large.

Globally, a large body of evidence has identified that HIV and AIDS prevalence among university students is high due to several factors. For example, the study by Xu et al. (2011) in China identified that the low perception of risk, the low utilisation of free HIV education services and materials, low condom usage and irregular drug use contribute to the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS among Chinese male students. These scholars suggested that widespread school and family-based HIV and AIDS prevention strategies, such as incorporating voluntary counselling and testing (hereafter, VCT), providing free condoms, peer education and discouraging the use of illegal drugs should be encouraged through utilising China mainstream media (Xu et al., 2011). Pettifor et al. (2014) in the USA identify behavioural intervention programmes like promoting condom use, delaying sexual debut, reducing substance abuse and stopping partner change as successful in preventing HIV and AIDS schools. McIntosh (2012) reveals that HIV prevention programmes for American Indians were based on the traditional methods, personal beliefs, science-based beliefs and tribal context.

In Botswana, Potts et al. (2008) attributed the HIV and AIDS prevalence to poverty, limited health facilities, illiteracy, war and gender inequity. In Nigeria, Osonwa, Eko, Abechi and

Offiong (2013, p. 61) argue that HIV prevalence among university students is caused by the “unavailability of condoms, low-risk perception of being infected with STDs and HIV, partner’s refusal, myths and misconception about condoms, religious barrier, beliefs which encourage promiscuity and extramarital affairs”. In correspondence, Ola, Olalekan, and Oluwagbemiga (2013) identify several factors that make students vulnerable to HIV and AIDS: structural factors (limited access to a health facility); social factors (poverty); and cultural factors (men having multiple partners due to culture). Mwaura (2009) and Potts et al. (2008) also find that intervention programmes such as condom use, HIV testing, abstinence, blood screening, prevention of maternal to child transmission, male circumcision and reducing multiple sex partners are effective in reducing the prevalence of HIV and AIDS amongst school children.

Evidence from Oppong and Oti-Boadi (2013), who explored HIV and AIDS knowledge among undergraduate university students in Ghana, was that students had an inconsistent knowledge on the causes of HIV and AIDS but were knowledgeable on the several ways of preventing HIV and AIDS, which they identified as using condoms, abstaining from casual sex, avoiding sharing of sharp objects and being faithful to one partner. Mberia and Mukulu (2011) report that most Kenya universities make condoms more accessible, widely support their use and help students conquer the social and individual challenges that hinder them while using condoms, to make HIV and AIDS prevention feasible in universities. In Malawi, Ntata, Muula, Siziya, and Kayambazinthu (2008) report that students are exposed to HIV risk behaviours despite their knowledge of it. Katahoire and Kirumira (2008) similarly report that, despite intensified HIV and AIDS awareness in the universities, students still engage in unprotected sex. Onyenoro et al. (2014) advise that higher institutions need to adopt a youth-friendly approach for their HIV counselling and testing (hereafter, HCT) and awareness.

3.3.2. Institutional responses to HIV and AIDS prevalence in South Africa universities.

In the context of HIV and AIDS, the post-apartheid South African higher educational institutions in November 2008 adopted a policy framework that guides them in developing various HIV and AIDS institutional policies (HEAIDS, 2012). According to HEAIDS (2012), the policy framework was developed and implemented by several South African higher education sectors to mitigate the effects/impact of HIV and AIDS in their institutions. Bateman

(2009) affirms that the policy framework on HIV and AIDS is a guide for campuses to develop, practicalise and strengthen their institutional policies, and establish a connection with the legislation and the national strategic plan on HIV and AIDS and STIs.

HEAIDS (2012) further indicates that the objective of the South African HIV and AIDS policy and strategic framework is to ensure:

a comprehensive and effective use of teaching and learning, research, community engagement, knowledge generation and innovation that will effectively respond and drive the HIV and AIDS pandemic; secondly, to promote the wellbeing of the people, group and institutions in the university community by strengthen their capacity towards responding to the pandemic; and lastly to create an enabling environment which will ensure a comprehensive and effective response to HIV and AIDS within the Higher Education sector, free of stigma and discrimination (HEAIDS, 2012, p. 22).

Kolawole (2010) indicates that university students are highly vulnerable to HIV and AIDS due to their irregular use of condoms, having multiple sex partners, not knowing their status and their partners own status, engaging in transactional sex, alcohol and drug abuse. Suleiman (2007) also identifies socio-cultural conditions like poverty, low literacy capacity, the urbanisation process, inadequate health care facilities, the location of the university, and certain contesting issues in HIV and AIDS as contributing to the continued prevalence of HIV and AIDS. Thus, Van Wyk et al. (2006) report that South African universities have developed different HIV and AIDS policies and prevention programmes which they have implemented and used in preventing HIV and AIDS on their respective campuses. This is supported by Reddy and Frantz (2011), who report that verbal and non-verbal communication has been used by South African governmental and non-government organisations as a prevention method to educate the South African public on HIV. Furthermore, Van Wyk et al. (2006) report that the intervention programmes introduced by South African universities in preventing the HIV and AIDS pandemic among their students comprise HIV and AIDS prevention policies, education and awareness such as VCT, giving cheap antiretroviral therapy (hereafter, ART), peer education programmes, integration of HIV and AIDS problems in education, research activities and the promotion of abstinence, faithfulness to one partner, and condom use.

HEAIDS (2010; 2012) report also revealed that by providing a consistent and proactive campus support and guidance for students, unlimited VCT centres on campus, adequate campus security, integrating HIV and AIDS into the disciplinary curricula, engaging on more HIV and

AID research and a caring and supportive health service staff in the campus health clinics all help in reducing the prevalence of HIV and AIDS on the campuses. Reddy and Frantz (2011) concur and state that campus health care services need to be more effective in notifying students about the spread of HIV and AIDS. Orkin, Boyes, Cluver and Zhang (2014) suggest a better school-based intervention programme that will prevent in worsening stigmatisation and have a more direct and strong effect on students' educational outcomes.

Furthermore, Ndabarora and Mchunu's (2014) study on factors that influence the use of HIV and AIDS prevention methods among students living at a university campus in UKZN suggest that the intervention programmes should emphasise eliminating known obstacles by offering positive HIV testing locations that would guarantee confidentiality, employ same-day HIV testing methods, advertise HIV and AIDS prevention services, deliver the right knowledge of the transmission of HIV and AIDS, focus on behavioural change, and include HIV and AIDS preventive measures in the academic curriculum so as to offer complete and correct information on HIV and AIDS.

Badenhorst, van Staden and Coetsee (2008) report that the HIV and AIDS preventive methods were utilised properly by students and that the students understood them. In contrast, Ndabarora and Mchunu (2014) report that most HIV intervention/prevention methods used in schools are not effectively utilised by students. Reddy and Frantz (2011) contend that a good knowledge of HIV and AIDS and changes in students' behaviour and attitude towards its prevalence are a major way to reduce prevalence. Badenhorst et al. (2008) disagree with Reddy and Frantz and stipulate that the students' behaviours and attitude towards HIV and AIDS place them at a high risk of getting infected with the HIV virus because of the freedom they have staying in the school residences. Jukes, Simmon, and Bundy (2008) argue that the expansion of a carefully designed evidence-based HIV prevention programme for youths will promote thoughtful sexual behaviour and change attitudes towards people living with HIV and AIDS.

South Africa has 26 universities and these have their distinct ways of responding to the HIV and AIDS pandemic on their campuses. Van Wyk et al. (2006) identify diverse ways, such as on-campus VCT, AIDS policy, peer education, workplace programmes, HIV and AIDS coordinating bodies and the HIV and AIDS research centres, as the different efforts and ways South African universities use to address the HIV and AIDS prevalence on their campuses.

From the above-reviewed literature in this section, it is important to note that there is a dearth in literature in South Africa that identifies a compulsory HIV and AIDS course as a separate

module or subject in any of the South African universities curricula and this is a great challenge because most of the students in particular international students come from diverse cultural, ideological and social backgrounds, which makes their level of understanding and knowledge of HIV and AIDS differ. In addition, HEAIDS's (2012) study in South African universities also indicated that the HIV and AIDS prevalence ratio in high educational institutions in South Africa is still unknown, this clearly implying a dearth of literature pertaining to this issue. However, the next section examines the effect of HIV and AIDS on university campuses.

3.3.3 The impact of HIV and AIDS on universities

A growing body of research has concentrated on the impact of HIV and AIDS in universities, showing the significant impact of this disease on the lives of the students and staff members (Sherr, 2008; Guo, Li & Sherr, 2012), although the effects of HIV and AIDS in the educational sector vary according to the diverse social, cultural, economic, political, geographical and educational influences (Pufall et al., 2014). Ola et al. (2013) believe that the effects of HIV and AIDS are multifaceted and have a huge negative influence on education.

Globally, research has indicated several negative effects of HIV and AIDS on the university environment. Guo et al. (2012) identify several individuals and contextual factors that impact on students. According to Guo et al. (2012), children affected by HIV and AIDS are disadvantaged in terms of their school performances and behaviour, low school enrolment, low school completion and educational attainment, poor living arrangements (staying with relatives or in orphanages), household poverty and on the type of orphanhood. Risley and Drake (2007), writing on the impact of HIV and AIDS on education in the Greater Mekong sub-region assert that HIV and AIDS's impact on education is significantly evidenced in three interrelated categories, namely, the demand for education (socio-economic impacts affecting students), the supply of education (decrease in teacher attendance and decrease in trained and qualified teachers) and lastly the quality of education (decrease in teachers' capability and management capacity).

More importantly, Ola et al. (2013) in Nigeria note that the effect of HIV and AIDS on the lecturers' and students' development is grievous because it affects the distribution of education, the need for education, the value of education and the method of controlling education. Makeletso-Ntaote (2012) reports, on Lesotho primary school children, that their basic or material needs were unmet, and their psychosocial problems increased due to their inability to

access healthcare services due to poverty. In addition, Makeletso-Ntaote (2012) argues that these issues place their resilience, self-worth and psychological health in danger. In a similar study in Zimbabwe, Le Roux-Rutledge et al. (2015) find that HIV and AIDS negatively affect boys more than girls as it deprives them materially and causes them to have limited teacher and adult support in their lives and a heavy burden of household duties.

Pufall et al. (2014) report that HIV-affected children are more likely to fail in school than children who are not affected. Katahoire and Kirumira (2008) explored the impact of HIV and AIDS on higher educational institution in Uganda and found that HIV and AIDS negatively impacted on students' studies and performance by making them perform poorly in their academic work, drop out of school due to the death of their sponsor, engage in transactional sex and high alcohol consumption, engage in indiscriminate/multiple sex partners, lose concentration in their studies, and withdraw from social relations. In addition, they also identified that HIV and AIDS affect the universities by causing a crippling effect in their units, which increases the staff workload, causes loss of morale and reduced efficiency, and makes it difficult for them to replace highly trained staff, which resulted in the recruitment of less qualified staff (Katahoire & Kirumira, 2008).

The effects of HIV and AIDS in South Africa higher education institutions cannot be overemphasised as they affect the function and operation of the higher educational institutions. The Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA thereafter, 2008) contends that universities experience the effect of HIV and AIDS in distinct levels, such as the financial level and social level. According to SARUA (2008), the effect of HIV and AIDS at the financial level comprises of an increase in the direct cost and reduced productivity due to absenteeism of the staff, and the threatened source of students' income due to financial constraints. At the social level. Issues like the reduction in educational investment by people, reduction of enrolments in some critical professions, employment of inexperienced staff, poor academic performance and the lack of concentration by students in residences make universities a high-risk environment for HIV transmission due to sexual experimentation (SARUA, 2008). HEAIDS (2010; 2012) identifies several negative effects of HIV and AIDS on support staff, on students, and on the institution/universities, such as ill-health, death, poor performance in exams, non-attendance or other expanded anxiety, or vulnerability on some aspect of students, lecturers, administrative staff and authorities. These also constitute a danger to the accomplishment of teaching and learning in universities.

Thus, internationally, the impact of HIV and AIDS in higher education institutions influenced the limit of universities to convey their proclaimed core business functions and operations such as teaching and learning, research and development, and community engagement (Pennap, Chaanda & Ezirike, 2011; HEAIDS, 2010, 2012). Orkin et al. (2014) also report that students' educational outcomes are affected by HIV and AIDS-related illnesses that cause school dropout, child-headed homes, children acting as caregivers, nonattendance to school, a deficit in grade progression and lack of concentration in their studies. The literature reviewed in this section has clearly shown that HIV and AIDS has a huge negative impact on the university environments, and it affects the students' development, academic performances and capabilities. The next section explores the international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

3.4 EMBRACING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS

3.4.1 Understanding internationalisation policies guiding international students' mobility: An overview

This section firstly explores the origin and meaning of the policies guiding international students' mobility in universities. It also explores the reasons in which universities develop internationalisation policies, the significance of implementing such policies in universities and challenges affecting the implementation of the internationalisation policies in universities.

3.4.1.1 Internationalisation: Origin and meaning

Internationalisation of higher education is a very significant issue in the advancement of higher educational institutions/universities and not a new universal phenomenon (Nwokedi, 2015). Evidence from the research reveals that the emergence of internationalisation in higher education dates to the twentieth century which was based on the UK and USA foreign policy and national security issues (Seehole & Knight, 2013). In contrast, Healey (2008) argues that internationalisation of universities began in the fifteenth and sixteenth century in religious seminaries, where scholars and students from across the feudal western world were taught in different languages (German, English, and Latin) that has now resulted in scientific innovation and promotion of international scholarship. Nwokedi (2015) claims that it was during the end of the cold war in 1991 that the internationalisation developed in a strategic manner, which is now known as the internationalisation of higher education. Such policy deals with the

integration of international interests and events into the teaching and learning in higher education institutions/universities and guides the movement of students and staff from their home countries to their host countries. Seehole (2006) argues that it was traditionally regarded as the mobility of international students from remote countries to developed countries.

Therefore, the definition, challenges and characteristics of the internationalisation policy of higher education have remained unclear and unknown. This implies that people do not have the basic idea of why universities engage in it. Knight (2008) claims that deliberations on the definition and meaning of the internationalisation of higher educational institutions are not new. Lee (2008) argues that, even though internationalisation is a vital policy on higher education, its meaning for teaching and learning and its positive effects on students' learning experiences are still unknown. Consequently, 'internationalisation' does not have a homogeneous definition because there are diverse ideas on its meaning and characteristics.

Thus, Chan and Dimmock (2008) succinctly point out that internationalisation has been regarded as a complex notion with diverse interpretations and ideas. In this regard, Teichler (2009) defines internationalisation as the upsurge of activities across obstinate borders. Vincent-Lancerin (2009) contends with Teichler and highlights that internationalisation is regarded as any form of interrelationship across borders amidst national or amongst single universities located inside diverse national structures. Bennett and Kane (2009) also note that internationalisation consists of numerous groups of activities, managerial inclinations, funding, and organisational arrangements and strategic decisions in the internationalisation sphere. Dzimbo and Moloji (2013) state that internationalisation is a philosophical idea that is made up of several policies and programmes that universities and government employ to respond to globalisation.

Current literature has indicated that internationalisation in higher educational institutions is not static but dynamic, complex and multifaceted (Knight, 2008; Zolfaghari, Sabran & Zolfaghari 2009; Cross, Mhlanga & Ojo, 2011; Zeleza 2012). This implies that higher educational institutions change due to the international curriculum and context that influences and shapes them. Knight (2008) views internationalisation as an activity that incorporates international and intercultural elements into the teaching, learning, research and services of an institution. Nonetheless, Zeleza (2012) argues that internationalisation of higher education operates at four levels, namely curriculum, the teaching and learning, research and extracurricular levels. Zeleza (2012) further explains that:

Firstly, internationalisation is incorporated at the curriculum level through integrating global and virtual elements, degrees (joint or double), and to study foreign language; and the teaching and learning level involves the recruitment of international students and scholars and the effective use of students and academics who studied abroad. Meanwhile, the extracurricular level consists of international and intercultural events and networking with the local cultural and ethnic groups while at the research level is to support international exchange programmes, conferences and seminars; engaging in joint research project and publications (Zezeza, 2012, p. 9).

It is imperative to note that the internationalisation policies of higher educational institutions are determined by numerous ideologies and external factors. Despite this, its goal remains to support and inspire students to appreciate, articulate and understand the reality of interdependence among nations and prepare them to live and work in an intercultural context (Montgomery, 2009). The next section discusses the purpose of internationalisation in universities.

3.4.1.2. The rationale behind the internationalisation of universities

Such a rationale cannot be overemphasised, because higher educational institutions' engagement in internationalisation is based on several reasons (Knight, 2008; Zolfghari et al, 2009). From the international perspectives, the evidence is that higher education institutions engage in internationalisation for four specific reasons, such as academic, sociocultural, political and economic (Harris, 2008; Jiang, 2008; Stansaker, Frolich, Gornitzka & Maassen, 2008; Kreber, 2009; Zezeza, 2012). In contrast, Knight (2008) reports that the rationale that drives higher educational institutions towards internationalisation is found at the national level, based on factors like brain power, income building, commercial trade, socio-cultural development, and mutual understanding; and at the institutional level comprising factors like international profile and reputation, quality enhancement/international standards, student and staff development, income generation, strategic alliances, and research and knowledge production. Zimitat (2008) believes that the reason for internationalisation of higher education institutions is based on factors such as staff and student migration, student and staff development, as mechanisms for maintaining academic standards, quality assurance and research collaboration.

Adamu (2012) identifies that one of the core reasons African universities engage in internationalisation is to reinforce and increase their research and knowledge production. Subsequently, literature has shown that, despite universities in South Africa having a stronger internationalisation policy than other African countries (Dolby, 2011), their internationalisation policies still remain fragmented (Malaza, 2011) and driven by self-interest (Seehole, 2006). Nevertheless, Kotecha (2012) highlights that the reason for internationalisation in South Africa universities was to prepare students to live in a world that is linked in both cultural and economic terms as well as the need for increased economic development and competitiveness.

3.4.1.3 The significance of internationalisation in universities

The significance of internationalisation in high educational institutions is more evident in the opportunities it offers the institution, students and staff in it. Knobel (2011) states that internationalisation has a positive influence on students' learning environments. Meanwhile, the opportunities offered by internationalisation are reflected in the different approaches applied by the different higher education institutions involved. Globally, Henard, Diamond and Roseveare (2012) contend that one of the major reasons for internationalising higher education is to offer relevant education to students who will be citizens, entrepreneurs and scientists of tomorrow. Childress (2009) in the USA also indicates that internationalisation provides a road map to the incorporation of international activities to research and teaching in universities, a vehicle to develop, a tool for fundraising, a medium for interdisciplinary collaboration and a mechanism for explaining the meaning and goals of internationalisation, Maringe (2009) highlights that internationalisation enables universities to increase their institutional competitiveness; enhance their quality and market position; maintain institutional reputation; combine diverse cultures; and help in attracting more international students and more international staff (Knight, 2007). Healey (2008) argues that internationalisation enables universities to generate direct and indirect economic benefits and gain by exporting their culture and raising international awareness of their host country. Further, engaging in internationalisation by universities enables students to gain knowledge of international issues (Egron-Polack & Hudson, 2014).

Henard et al. (2012) point out that higher educational institutions' involvement in internationalisation could provoke strategic thinking, leading to innovations, offering

advantages in modernizing pedagogy, encouraging students and faculty collaboration, and stimulating innovative approaches to learning assessments. Knobel (2011) also claims that university engagement in internationalisation creates an atmosphere of greater cultural diversity that benefits the broader student population and helps to broaden democratic values, ethics, dialogue and mutual understanding. Significantly, Osfield and Terrell (2009) report that internationalisation heightens national and global security and economic gains, and enhances foreign policy. It also provides vital learning outcomes that are essential for life in this age, such as developing a better understanding of self, identifying different models of successful leadership, appreciating difference, developing intercultural knowledge, developing multiple perspectives on international issues and being less ethnocentric.

In Africa, a considerable body of evidence demonstrates that internationalisation has provided African higher educational institutions with abilities to use the power of science, technology and innovation to transform their societies (Knight & Schoole, 2013). It has also enhanced institutional capacity, promoted academic mobility, improved quality assurance mechanisms, strengthened research capacity and improved ICT facilities (Sahani, 2008; Adamu, 2012). Oyewole (2009) asserts that internationalisation has the capability of expanding the quality of university curricula, students, programmes, staff and facilities. Moreover, internationalisation tackles the issue of low research capacity of many African universities through research partnerships, collaboration and other capacity-building initiatives; it also has the potential to strengthen the curricula in many African universities, contributing to the improved quality of learning outcomes (Knight & Schoole, 2013). It can thus contribute to the design of high-quality programmes and the infusion of new relevant knowledge to make learning enabling (such as ICT) (Knight & Schoole, 2013).

From the South African perspective, Botha (2009) comments that engaging in internationalisation strengthens relations between governments in commerce, military and agricultural development. Neale-Shutte and Fourie (2006) argue that internationalisation in South African universities assists students to procure employment in the labour market and expand their abilities which can be transported across cultures, climates and contexts in South Africa. Botha (2009) further argues that internationalisation of universities produces income, helps in expanding research and the horizons of lecturers through international links, assists different student bodies with distinct cultures and also assist and supports students that are physically stationed outside the country's borders (distance education). The next chapter examines several issues pertaining to the internalisation of universities.

3.4.1.4 Issues affecting internationalisation in universities

Internationalisation of universities has been confronted with many challenges. Tange (2010) reports that, due to language issues and the diversity of cultures, universities in Denmark could not engage in the internationalisation process. Zolfghari et al. (2009) similarly identifies national issues like economic, social and cultural problems, and regional issues that rely on the development of the country as problems of internationalisation. Haigh (2008) points out that one of the major problems facing internationalisation is the universities' focus on financial objectives. In addition, Egron-Polack and Hudson (2014) reveal that the commodification and commercialisation of education poses a major challenge to the internationalisation of universities. This is supported by Knight (2007; 2008), who asserts that the key issues confronting internationalisation in higher educational institutions are the commercialisation and commodification of curricula, brain drain and the increase in foreign degree mills.

Singh (2010) argues that the obstacles African universities face in having an internationalisation policy are caused by the limited abilities of the nationals, the imbalances in the geopolitical organisations and inadequate funding. Neale-Shutte and Fourie (2006) also report that internationalisation in African higher educational institutions faces issues such as lack of teaching and learning resources, lack of academic, administrative and social activity funding, the low rate of international student enrolment into African universities because of stagnant economy and limited job opportunities, poor research, policies on language, poor quality of teaching and learning, unavailability of ICT because of cost and poor energy supply.

Consequently, studies to date has discovered that the internationalisation process in South Africa higher educational institutions/universities are confronted by such obstacles as the lack of a national policy framework (Malaza, 2011); lack of inclusive documentation on the research of international students' education and their mobility (Rouhani, 2007); free-market regulated ideologies that favour neoliberal knowledge economies (Dzvimbo & Moloji, 2013); and the lack of a complete and transparent policy, rules, regulations between the government and the department of higher education (International Education Association of South Africa, IEASA thereafter, 2005). This then requires these institutions to ensure that their internationalisation policy is well implemented, thereby creating an enabling environment; providing support to their students' needs and creating a positive future for international students. The next section explores international students and their experiences in their learning environments.

3.4.2 International students' experiences in the context of HIV and AIDS

This section examines the notion of 'international students' and their diverse experiences in their host/learning environment.

3.4.2.1 Defining an international student

- Who is an international student?

Several bodies of literature (Volet & Jones, 2012; Nwokedi, 2015; Kritz, 2012; Trahar & Hyland, 2011) indicate that the concept 'international students' do not have a monolithic definition. For example, the concept 'international students' could also be referred to as foreign students by other scholars. Nwokedi (2015) defines international students as a heterogeneous group of students studying in another country which is not their country of origin in order to acquire international knowledge, skills, experiences, and qualification. This is supported by Volet and Jones (2012), who assert that the status of heterogeneity of international students is the only common element that they possess in their host country. Indeed, Kritz (2012) shows that there are diverse ways international students are referred to and described by their different host countries. According to Kritz (2012), countries like USA, UK, and Australia define an international student as an individual who has moved to another country with the intention of attaining academic excellence, while countries like France, Italy, Japan, and Korea refers to them as foreign students who are considered as mobile students and not citizens but are long term residents of their host countries (Kritz, 2012). Trahar and Hyland (2011) agree with Kritz and claim that international students are not normal residents of the UK or other European countries but just people studying there on full time.

A study done in South Africa regarded international students as individuals in their youthful stage of life studying in a foreign educational institution (Mda, 2010). Kwaramba (2012) also suggests that an international student is a person who carries out all or part of her/his educational experiences in a country that is not their home country. Meanwhile, international students come from diverse countries bringing to their host countries different language skills, new ways of thinking, creative solutions to difficult problems and negotiation skills. This implies that international students' diversity makes them a heterogeneous group of people, which, according to Volet and Jones (2012) is a challenge for them. Other recent studies have also shown that the heterogeneity of international students makes them a unique group of people based on their diverse cultural, economic and linguistic background (Ryan & Viète, 2009, Nwokedi, 2015). Lee (2010) notes that international students have diverse skills and

offer cultural knowledge that can enhance learning and scholarship in the global world. Therefore, international students are regarded as agents of geographical and cultural knowledge and not as passive recipients of knowledge that flows from an idea of universal knowledge to the specific context from which the students emerge (Madge, Raghuram & Noxolo, 2009).

3.4.2.2 The diverse experiences of international students in their learning environment

A growing body of research has explored and reported on international students' experiences in their host universities. Some of these studies (Wang, Lin, Pang & Shen, 2007; Wang, et al., 2012; Zhang-Wu, 2018) have focused mainly on the various negative experiences of international students in their host environments, such as violence, racism, xenophobia, hardships, and challenges, while others have focused on international students' experiences as resilient, agentic, active participants and successful students. Alakaam (2016) reports that the mobility of international students affects their food choices and food practices, which could lead to a change in their eating behaviours and health. The study by Brown, Edwards, and Hartwell (2010), which explored the meanings attached to food by international postgraduate students in England, reveals that international students feel that eating their home food provide them with emotional and physical satisfaction and that familiar foods soothe their physical health as they consume healthier foods rather than the local food. These are both constraining and enabling experiences of international students. Thus, the next section examines the various constraining and enabling experiences of international students in their host environment.

3.4.2.1. Factors that inhibit international students' learning

Recent studies have revealed that international students experience a myriad of challenges in their host environment that affect their learning and personal development (Leask, 2009; Lee, 2010; Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune. 2011; Tarry, 2011; Maharaj, Perumal & Perumal, 2011; Majyambere, 2012; Rajpal, 2012). O'Reilly et al. (2013) identify diverse challenges faced by international students in an Irish university as sociocultural, psychological and academic difficulties. According to some of the scholars, international students experience different psychological, educational, social, cultural, financial and adjustment constraints as they pursue their academic goals in their host university. Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015) argue that these

constraints are attributed to the acculturation processes experienced by international students in changing or adapting to a new way of life.

- *Psychological and emotional factors*

Several studies on international students have revealed that international students experience different form of psychological and emotional issues such as stress, psychopath disorders and strain (psychological distress) that are caused by factors such as cultural shock, change, isolation, alienation, stress, stigmatisation, victimisation, and xenophobia which they experience in their host environment. Liu (2009) argues that the change in university and environment could also affect international students' state of mind and contribute to psychological and emotional issues. Similarly, Rosenthal, Russell, and Thomson (2008) claim that due to culture shock, international students developed anxiety and emotional stress. Tarry (2011) reports that Thai students studying at a British university experience culture shock and a change in attitude that affects their learning negatively. Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2011; 2016) also report that international students studying in Australian universities experience an increased incidence and severity of mental health problems. They further indicate that the mental health problems were caused by international students' experiences of adjusting to new and strange academic practices as well as a heightened individualism or individualisation, the wide range of knowledge needed, and the need to manage their daily living and delay professional careers (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2011; 2016). Poyrazli (2015) argues that international students develop psychological symptoms like anxiety and depression caused by academic and career stress, which make them underutilise counselling centres.

Liu (2009) in the USA reports several factors that contribute to the psychological issues of Chinese international students, which are due to the strict immigrant visa policies of their host, xenophobia, acculturative stress, language difficulties, financial issues, homesickness, lack of social support, racism, lack of social connectedness, and cross-cultural differences. These factors make students feel marginalised, uncomfortable and confused, isolated, discouraged, disappointed, frustrated, depressed, irritated, withdrawn, anxious, disorientated, discriminated against, inferior, lonely, powerless, alienated and overpressured (Liu, 2009). Han et al. (2013) examined the prevalence of depression and anxiety symptoms among Chinese students in Canada and report that the poor current health of the students, poor relationship with their advisors, lack of awareness of the availability of the campus mental health and counselling

services, as well as low exercise routine are the major cause of depression and anxiety amongst the Chinese students.

- ***Educational factors***

A scholarly body of literature reveals that international students are a heterogeneous group of students whose learning styles differ from the local students (Ruhanen & McLennan, 2012; Menzies & Baron, 2014; Barron, Baum & Conway, 2009). This group of students is confronted with academic issues that affect their educational experiences in their host university (Georgiou & Savvidou, 2014; Carson, 2008; Ryan & Viete, 2009; Wadsworth, Hetcht & Jung, 2008; Johnson, 2008). With these in mind, Ryan (2011) reports that due to numerous teaching and learning issues experienced by international students, universities and nations risk not gaining from them. Indeed, studies on international studies globally have identified several academic issues that affect international students' educational experiences. Wu et al. (2015) reveal that international students experience a lack of communication with professors, classmates and staff, and poor language acquisition. In a similar vein, Campbell and Li (2008) found that Asian students studying in a New Zealand university had academic issues caused by language difficulties, unfamiliar patterns of classroom interactions, lack of knowledge of academic norms and conventions and inadequate learning support. Menzies and Baron (2014) in their study on the international postgraduate student transition experiences revealed that language barriers affected the academic experiences of international students.

Similarly, Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) with Smith and Khawaja (2011) also report academic challenges faced by international students due to language difficulties, exposure to new pedagogies and powerlessness. Hughes (2013) also reports that international students experience challenges due to unfamiliarity and the strangeness of the information learning environment at their host university and also in relation to the academic practices that consist of using information resources, academic conventions like referencing and the avoidance of plagiarism. However, Wu et al. (2015) indicate that university administrators and staff's knowledge of such academic challenges might help the university to recognise the students' needs and offer more supportive campus services and resources. In Australia, Ruhanen and McLennan (2012) explored the learning experiences and preferences of postgraduate tourism students. They found that international postgraduate students' academic experiences were affected because of fewer interactive learning experiences, for example, work experience, field

trips, real-word activities, case studies, and group projects. O'Reilly et al. (2013) also indicate that practical problems, discrimination, and linguistic challenges affected international students' educational experiences during their learning in an Irish university.

- *Cultural factors*

Montgomery (2010) points out succinctly that international students are disadvantaged and isolated by their lack of contact with the culture of their host country. Wu et al. (2015) also state that international students need to confront their diverse ways of thinking and doing things, by adopting university resources to conquer the cultural challenges they experienced. Evivie (2009) reports that international students experience a lack of support in dealing with cultural differences in their host environment. Graycar (2010) also argues that international students experience a lack of intercultural interactions and Campbell and Li (2008) identify cultural communication barriers that affect students' learning experiences. Leask (2009) also argues that the lack of formal and informal syllabus for promoting interactions between international and home students limits international students' adaptation to the school culture.

Tarry (2011) and Wu et al. (2015) argue that international students experience culture shock. Irwin (2007) defines culture shock as a form of depression and anxiety experienced by a group of people when they travel or visit a new social or cultural environment. Having to adapt to the culture of their host university impacts on international students' academic performances. This implies that the inclusivity that is required of higher educational institutions plays a significant role in promoting equity and fairness. Caldwell and Hyams-Ssekasi (2016) note that international students are neglected in the universities' policies on diversity, making it difficult for students to cope/adjust in their host environment. Significantly, Hegarty (2014) argues that international students experience cultural differences related to food and customs that make them feel overwhelmed in their host environment. Maundeni, Malinga, Kgwatalala, and Kasule (2010) explored the cultural adjustment of international students at an African university and found that issues such as language difficulties, role strain, and the lack of a social support network made international students have difficulty in adjusting to their host culture. Therefore, they suggest that "universities need to create and implement comprehensive orientation programmes, expand support networks for international students, improve information dissemination about the available services on inside and outside the campus and also empower

students with knowledge and skills to cope with psychological challenges of adjustment” (Maudeni et al., 2010, pp. 82-83).

- *Social factors*

Literature internationally has highlighted the need for social support for international students in their host universities (Ramachandran, 2011; Cho & Yu, 2015; Bista, 2015). These studies also indicate that social support should emanate from the university environment in order to assist their international students to learn. Osher et al. (2016) concur with this view and argue that students’ abilities to learn and excel academically can be affected by the school environment when they are socially constrained. This indicates that the school environment is expected to reflect on the students’ quality of life, their lives and the effective support for improved teaching and learning (Osher et al., 2016). Themane and Osher (2014) also affirm that students need safe and supportive schools to succeed and to develop holistically in order to attain their academic goals. However, due to the lack of social support strategies, international students experience social isolation while participating in different group activities (Wu et al., 2015). Graycar (2010) also identifies that international students experience racial victimization and gender violence in their host environment. Campbell and Li (2008) assert that Asian international students have difficulties in making friends with domestic students and lack a sense of belonging due to language barriers (Gu et al., 2010).

Menzies and Baron (2014) also identify different forms of social support within and outside their environment for international students to develop holistically. Moores and Popaduk (2011) also state that they experience a lack of independent living due to the pressing social issues like xenophobia and discrimination they experience in their host environment. Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015) identify the xenophobia and discrimination faced by international students across higher education institutions in South Africa.

Studies by Majyambere (2012); Rajpal (2012) with Caldwell and Hyams-Ssekasi (2016) also reveal that international students’ difficulties in acquiring a study visa/permit affect their learning performances. Nwokedi (2015) reports that international students identify immigration policies and the difficulty of acquiring visas and permits as constraints to their efforts in participating in some events and in interacting with people. Nwokedi (2015) also identifies social exclusion by peers due to language barriers and group dynamics within and

outside their school environment. McMahon (2011) similarly indicates that Chinese students experience language barriers both within and outside the classroom that impact on their social life and academic performance. Mudhovozi (2012) and Vandeyar (2012) argue that language issues cause alienation, loneliness and lack of social belonging in international students' learning experiences.

- ***Financial factors***

International students experience various kinds of financial difficulties (Gu et al., 2010). In the USA, Evivie (2009) reports that African international students' greatest challenge is the financial constraints that cause homesickness, psychological stress, alienation and isolation, and a need to work that reduces the time for study and social activities. Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015) report that the reason international students experience financial constraints is that they struggle to make ends meet, lack funding and receive remittance requests from family members back home. In addition, they refrained from asking their families for financial assistance, leaving them with little or no financial assistance to gain employment (Gu et al., 2010; Barron et al., 2009). Hwang, Wang, and Sodanine (2011) in Taiwan also identify that a lack of financial assistance affects international students' learning achievements.

Further pressure on the finances of international students results from the strict visa laws by their host country, which restricts them from working or limits their hours of work (Caldwell & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2016). In South Africa, the excessive cost of accommodation (MacGregor, 2014; Nwokedi, 2015) is a major obstacle because, without money, they will not be able to acquire a comfortable place to reside. Some of the students studying in an expensive city where accommodation is scarce may find themselves living in an uncomfortable environment due to the lack of funds (Marginson et al., 2010). Oluwafemi (2012) reports from South Africa that extortionate international fees, discriminatory policies of some higher educational institutions, lack funding and scholarships (local and international) for undergraduate and postgraduate students from non-South African Development Community (SADC thereafter) are the major financial constraints experienced by international students. Similarly, Nwokedi (2015) in her study, which explores international postgraduate students' learning experiences in a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, identified key socio-economic issues such as the lack of funding or scholarships for them as they were mostly self-funded, the high cost of accommodation in the school residences and high medical aid bills that affect their learning

negatively. In contrast, the next section explores international students enabling experience in their host environment.

3.4.2.4 Factors that enable international students' learning

A growing body of literature has identified international students as students who can navigate their challenges by becoming assets, active students and agents of change in their host countries (Campbell & Li, 2008; Pence & MacGillivray, 2008; Montgomery, 2010; Arkoudis & Tran, 2010; Barnes, 2010; Bista, 2015; Lillyman & Benneth, 2014; Borg & Cefai, 2014). Globally, Gu et al. (2010) indicate that international students are active agents who can adapt, develop and attain academic excellence in their quest to change their identity. Pence and MacGillivray (2008) report that international students experience a personal and professional transformation like elevated levels of self-esteem, respect and appreciation for other people's cultures and differences. Furthermore, Gu et al. (2010) argue that international students function effectively within their host and home countries as they interact with diverse cultures and educational environments while experiencing improved knowledge, skills, self-awareness, and attitudes

More importantly, international students also receive a different kind of support from their lecturers/supervisors and fellow international students in their studies, which enables them to adjust and adapt to their host cultures. Borg and Cefai (2014) state that, in Malta, international students adjust to academic life because of the support and care they get from in the form of a global network that motivates each other greatly to succeed and assist each other as an international community, intellectually, socially and emotionally.

The opportunity to meet and engage with diverse students with distinct ideas and beliefs improves international students' academic goals, motivation, and engagement (Barnes, 2010). In addition, they recognise that their capability to interact well with people from different social and cultural contexts is a vital skill required to thrive in the global context (Montgomery, 2010). Accordingly, Glass (2012) affirms that international students feel positive in the campus environment because of the opportunity is given to them to be involved in leadership programmes, interact with people from their own culture; choose modules where the lecturers enable intergroup discussion and develop a higher level of knowledge and growth. Meanwhile, Brown and Holloway (2008) report that international students enjoy a sense of belonging in their host environment due to constant social gatherings and interesting opportunities that enable them to meet different people. Lillyman and Bennett (2014) argue that international

students derive their positive learning experiences from engaging in joint research and development through the support of the university, lecturers, local students, and their fellow international students and through the distribution of knowledge and cultural awareness.

Thus, Fishchbacher-Smith et al. (2015) in Glasgow, Scotland suggest that the university needs to create an enabling environment for international students so that they will be able to share their experiences and conquer isolation and also enhance their integration within the university environment. This implies that it is the university's responsibility to establish a caring and supportive environment so their students can develop and perform well academically, psychologically, socially and physically. Wu et al. (2015) also assert that the adjustment and adaptation of international students in their host environment are easy when they are supported by the university (local peers, supervisors/lecturers, and their fellow international students).

Furthermore, Bista (2015) reports that Asian international students develop diverse types of positive experiences such as acquiring knowledge in general education and in science and technology, vocational preparation and the development of personal and intellectual skills because of their interaction and relationship with lecturers, staff, and peers. Campbell and Li (2008) also state that international students experienced high-quality education, practical programmes, favourable learning environments if there are friendly, helpful, supportive and highly qualified lecturers and tutors' They further indicated that due to the good teacher-student relationships they develop in language and intercultural communication skills and grew personally and intellectually in the university (Campbell & Li, 2008).

Thus, Wu et al. (2015) argue that international students are inspired to develop different new problem-solving approaches and learning strategies that enable them to become independent thinkers through the challenges they experience. Moores and Popadiuk (2011) argue that the challenges of international students motivate them to succeed in their academics and enable them to develop a sense of belonging This implies that international students' experiences enable them to produce diverse insights and personal development to become independent thinkers (Campbell, 2010; Kelly 2010) and; change agents (Wu et al., 2015); gain confidence and became independent in their learning (Warring, 2010); shape their thinking and reasoning about people and things (Furnham, 2004); and enable them to change their ideas and thinking on how to communicate with people and their environment (Kelly, 2010).

However, Kumi-Yeboah (2014) also claims that international students' adjustment and adaptation to their host environment depends on their ability to develop self-awareness and

improve their self-confidence. They need to develop intrapersonal skills that give them the ability to develop the potential and resilience to achieve their academic goals. Moores and Popaduilk (2011) found that international students studying at a university in the US developed personally, had a change in perspective, observed academic growth and had a supportive living environment and support from the international environment. In addition, they were engaged in general cultural learning, had cultural guidance, recognized academic differences, involved themselves in extracurricular activities, and received academic and personal support from faculty and staff of the school (Moores & Popaduilk, 2011). Seow and Pan (2014) stated that extracurricular activities are a vital aspect of students' life and universities are expected to contribute vital resources to extracurricular activities.

Burton and Kirshbaum (2013) further highlight that involving international students in courses that will make them work and support each other collaboratively will enhance cooperative learning and help them to develop their academic and practical ways of progressing in their studies through peer coaching. Although language has been identified as one of the major challenges affecting international students in their host environment, Montgomery (2010) reports that international students develop language skills that enable them to live with their local peers and to learn the culture of their new environment. Xu (2012) study also reports that international students learn English, which contributes to their learning. Similarly, Karuppan and Barari (2011) argue that proficiency in English is the greatest enabler of a positive learning environment because it reduces discrimination, makes people friendly and caring and enhances knowledge. Maundeni et al. (2010) also report positive adjustment as a result of factors in the host environment such as the presence of supportive networks, the availability of services and academic facilities, political stability, and good orientation programmes.

International students experience their environment as enabling while studying in South Africa because they develop skills, receive a quality education, acquire computer skills and are able to gain critical thinking skills (MacGregor, (2014). Nwokedi (2015) identifies positive factors such as the ability to build relationships and a friendship network with fellow international students; having a good rapport with their supervisor/lecturers, and opportunities to work. These make international students' learning environment enabling for them. Zar (2009) also identified the social support from family members and from their fellow international students as enabling positive experiences. The next section examines the roles of international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

3.4.3. Roles played by international students in their learning environment

Tran and Gribble (2015) argue that international students are regarded as exploited labourers, desperate permanent residency seekers and a group of people competing with local people for jobs. Despite these negative connotations, the roles international students play in their host environment cannot be ignored and feature in their academic, economic, political, social and cultural discourses. Ramachandran (2011) reports that international students in the UK revealed to play a significant role as a catalyst in enhancing the image of their host university, increasing the number of international students on their host campus, being goodwill ambassadors of their host universities and using their services to enrich local students' knowledge. Carroll and Ryan (2007) also claim that they impact positively on new international students through developing peer mentoring programmes. Wilkins and Huisman (2011) also state that international students increase cultural understanding, encourage diversity in curricular design and learning experiences and contribute to research and teaching activities.

In Australia, Tran and Gribble (2015) identify that international education contributes to job creation and to the economic growth of their host country not only by school fees but also payments like accommodation, hospitality, and increased travel and tourism. In the USA, the study by Pandit (2007) also identified diverse roles play a key role in advancing America's research completeness in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; enhance the image of their host countries; help the universities to build international research and knowledge capacity by connecting and building international scholarly networks, and lastly enrich class discussions through sharing their experiences and stories from diverse cultures. Similarly, Universities UK (2014, p. 3) reports that "international students bring diversity to campus life and enhance the student experiences for local students; they encourage the delivery of certain subjects, mostly at postgraduate level; and they offer a valued source of income to universities and to their host economies through their spending within and outside the campus". Pandit (2007) also notes that having international students help to destroy stereotypes and enable discussions that are regarded as taboo.

Mda (2010) also reveals that international students import diverse skills and knowledge into South Africa and help local students gain global experience through their interactions with them. Therefore, the above literature demonstrates that international students play significant roles in enhancing their host environment if given the opportunity, and the next section discusses the significance of international students in their host environment.

3.4.4 The significance of international students in their learning environment

From a positive psychology point of view, international students are identified as a vital group of students in their host countries because they contribute to the economic, political, social and educational growth of their host country (Poyrazli, 2015). However, the significance of international students varies within context to context. Munch and Hoch (2013) with Kelly (2012) argue that international students have a significant economic impact in their host countries. Wu et al. (2015) concur and assert that they are important for academic prestige and financial benefits. “International students also facilitate domestic participation in education and generate significant spillover benefits including job creation and increased tourism” (Group of Eight Australia, 2014, p. 2). Furthermore, they are a key source of skilled migration and add immense value to the cultural and intellectual diversity to university campuses (Carroll & Ryan, 2007; Jourdini, 2012; Group of Eight Australia, 2014).

Another report shows that international students also contribute to the enhancement of the teaching and learning policies of their host country (Colvin & Jaffar 2007) and help to enhance domestic students’ learning (Carroll & Ryan, 2007). Wu et al. (2015) further state that international students in several higher educational institutions in the USA contribute to the cultural and educational diversity and internationalisation of their classrooms, campuses, and communities by enhancing mutual understanding and appreciation of the diversity found in the world and adding diverse perspectives to teaching and learning in the classroom. Evvie (2009) argues that they contribute tangibly and intangibly to the university community through serving as intellectual capital and as ambassadors of cultural goodwill between their host countries and their countries of origin. Similarly, Hegarthy (2014) argues that international students are vital in their host environment because they increase the revenue stream of their university, promote research and innovation and increase the institution’s image and personality.

African international students are regarded as having great potential in contributing to the economic development of Africa by improving infrastructure, technology, and the educational curriculum to meet the needs of their societies. Evidence also indicates that international students contribute to the tourism, workforce and intellectual capital of their host country. According to the study conducted by Smith and Khawaja (2011) on the acculturation experiences of international students, they are people who enrich their host countries through their diverse heritage and ideologies, increase the cultural awareness and appreciation of their host country and provide valuable assets to their universities in developing countries.

Such literature demonstrates the need for this study, which intends to contribute to the body of research on how universities could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study has revealed that there has been a dearth of literature on creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS globally, in Africa and in South Africa, despite numerous studies on international students in higher education. Nevertheless, from the body of evidence reviewed, most studies have been on school safety (Prinsloo, 2005; Masitsa, 2011; Themane & Osher, 2014) while others are on how to create an enabling learning environment for high schools or primary schools' students (Department of Education, 2008; Kuuskorpi & Gonzalez, 2011; UNESCO, 2011; Motsatsi, 2012), which excludes international students in universities in South Africa or the rest of Africa. In addition, most studies on enabling learning environments have been in classroom environments. This makes this research vital so that the voices of international students have been pathologised as victims and have remained silent, unheard and missing from the discourse pertaining to their education and ways in which an enabling learning environment can be created for them by the university in the context of HIV and AIDS.

However, different studies have revealed that HIV and AIDS have drastically changed the demand for quality education on educators, schools, and students, posing formidable challenges to education systems that are already overstretched and under-resourced. These new challenges – like the epidemic – are complex and require new ways of thinking and responding (Ola et al., 2013) in which international students might be in a position of assisting the university to reduce the effect of this virus in their host society. Little in the literature addresses international students' contributions in advancing the social, educational, economic, and political growth of their host nations, including in South African universities, or have used a participatory visual method within qualitative research (Mitchell, 2011; Khanare, 2012, 2015) to generate data. In this aspect, the study proposes an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and explores how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. It also explores international students' understandings of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS; examines why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and lastly explores how the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.

3. 5. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed the significant literature related to the study by exploring and discussing the status of the university in the 21st Century, the emergence and origin of the university and the roles the university plays in the 21st century. It has also examined the university as an enabling learning environment and the approaches used by the universities in creating an enabling learning environment for its students. In addition, current local and international literature was also reviewed; firstly, by examining the issues of HIV and AIDS in universities and the approaches adopted by universities to address the prevalence of HIV and AIDS and secondly, institutional responses to HIV and AIDS were discussed. In addition, the effects of HIV and AIDS in South Africa universities were also explored. Lastly, literature from diverse contexts was also explored by addressing international students' experiences in their diverse contexts. In this section, the policy of internationalisation guiding international student's mobility was explored and its rationale and challenges were discussed, whilst international students' roles and significance in their host environment were addressed globally, continentally and contextually. Therefore, the next chapter describes the research methodology and design adopted for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A PHOTOVOICE METHOD

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 reviewed and discussed scholarly literature used to underpin the study. In this chapter, the research design and methodology used in the study was explained. In other words, the chapter describes the research schedule and procedures followed in order to comprehend the approach of creating an enabling learning environment for international students in a South African university. It starts by probing and discussing the concept of research design' and 'research methodology'. In addition, it further discusses the research design adopted and its relevance to the study. Next, the justification of choosing the research methodology adopted for this study is discussed, with reasons for the choice of the interpretive paradigm and the instrumental case study as the research design for this study. This is flexible and allows the use of a participatory visual method, photovoice. Furthermore, the data generation process is explained showing how the participants were engaged during the study and how data was analysed too. The chapter also shows how trustworthiness was addressed, and the way ethics in research was observed, given the visual methods. The chapter ends with a brief synopsis.

4.2. DOING RESEARCH WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Researchers in the field of education believe that people/individuals or groups have the right to express their views and for their voices to be heard (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2016). While thus international students have the right for their voices to be heard regarding issues that affect them, a considerable body of literature has regarded them as high-risk students, victims of pathology, vulnerable group and as students who are isolated and disadvantaged by their lack of contact with the culture of their host country (Montgomery, 2010). Studies reveal that international students are excluded, stigmatised, alienated, discriminated and also experienced socio-cultural and psychological challenges (Wang, Lin, Pang & Shen, 2007; Wang et al., 2012; Zhang-Wu, 2018). Thus, international students fall into a category in their host country that of vulnerable people (Cohen et al., 2011), those who are unable to protect themselves, stigmatized, alienated, excluded or discriminated like travelers and HIV and AIDS victims.

However, engaging international students in this study is of great importance because I believe that despite being regarded as helpless /vulnerable people, they are a knowledgeable group and capable of expressing themselves, especially as it pertains to making informed decisions on issues affecting them. In addition, using an innovative method of inquiry with the international students will engage them and allow the research to be conducted with them and not on them (Khanare, 2015; De Lange, 2012). Mitchell, Walsh, and Moletsane (2006) confirm that any research that focuses on the participants' voices clearly shows that the participants are able to speak up concerning the issues they are experiencing and are also able to explain how these issues could be resolved. This shows that participatory methods provide a voice to the voiceless. De Lange et al. (2010) concur and state that every voice count.

Since my participants are diverse groups of people with different cultures, backgrounds, countries, tribes, languages, and customs and with diverse knowledge, values, ideas, views, and experiences, it is pertinent to note that this research acknowledges that there are no single truth or reality. Rather truths and realities are multiple in nature, as often in qualitative research. This resonates with the views of qualitative researchers like Rule and John (2011); Maree (2016); Patton (2015); Smith and Osborn (2015); Merriam and Tisdell (2015); as well as Bertram and Christiansen (2014), that realities and truths are multiple; and I have strongly aligned myself with these qualitative researchers in engaging with international students. I believe that the international students who participated in this study are a knowledgeable group of individuals, active participants, and resilient (Zhou et al., 2008). The decision to work with international students to address the key research questions informs the research design and methodology. Drawing from their voices, in this study, I aim to address these main research questions, *How can the university create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS?* with the following sub research questions:

1. *What are the international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment?*
2. *Why do international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS?*
3. *How the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS?*

Meanwhile, my decision to do research with international students in order to answer these research questions influenced my choice of research design and methodology.

4.3. INTERROGATING THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The words ‘research design and research methodology’ are two distinct concepts that have been greatly misused by emerging researchers. Hence, the study tends to make a clarification of the meaning of these words in order to clear the misperception associated with their usage. The concept of ‘research design’ does not have a homogeneous definition. This is because it has been used in diverse ways and it means different things to different scholars. On the one hand, Punch and Oancea (2014) describe ‘research design’ as a process that involves all the problems associated with the planning and conducting of research. Labaree (2009) explains that research design refers to as the approaches/ strategies chosen by a researcher to incorporate the diverse elements of the research in a consistent and rational way, in order to ensure that the research problems are well addressed. This suggests that a research design gives or outlines the plans/ strategies by which research is undertaken.

However, the term ‘research methodology’ refers to approaches or procedures used by researchers in conducting their research by explaining, describing and predicting the phenomenon (Rajeseaka et al., 2013). It is also seen as the way in which one intends to conduct their research (Wolhuter, 2015). Christiansen, Bertram, and Land (2010) view it as the study of methods in which knowledge is acquired and that provides us with the research work strategies. Nieuwenhuis (2016a) similarly claims that research methodology consists of strategies used by researchers to generate data, describe, analyze and explain events. This clearly implies that research methodology is a guide that shows us how research is conducted.

Nieuwenhuis (2007) further reveals that, in the research process, the choice of research design by the researcher is evidently based on their assumptions, research skills, and practices and on the influence of their style of data generation. Cohen et al. (2011) and Punch and Oancea (2014) concur and assert that, during the research process, the researcher must consider the following four main ideas while developing a research design: the research approach/methodology adopted for the study, the research context, the research question, and the data generation and analysing instruments/methods, and procedures.

For this study, the research design is qualitative and exploratory in nature and is placed within the interpretive paradigm. The study is descriptive because it provides a detailed description of the case that is being researched, which is an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Within the case study, a multi-modal approach which comprises of the photovoice process, self-reflective essay and focuses group discussion was used to offer understanding and ideas on ways in which the university can create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Meanwhile, the research design outlines in detail the blueprints/plans that show how a research project should be performed (Creswell, 2009; Labaree, 2009). It also allows the researchers to address the research problem logically through the findings/results of the study.

In the following section I discuss in detail, the major components of the research process that I adopted, as shown in the diagram of the research onion by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009; 2012; 2016) below in figure 4.1. This diagram clearly illustrates my choice of research approach, paradigm, strategies, data generation, and analysis through which qualitative data (visual and textual) was generated in response to the research questions (see figure 4.1).

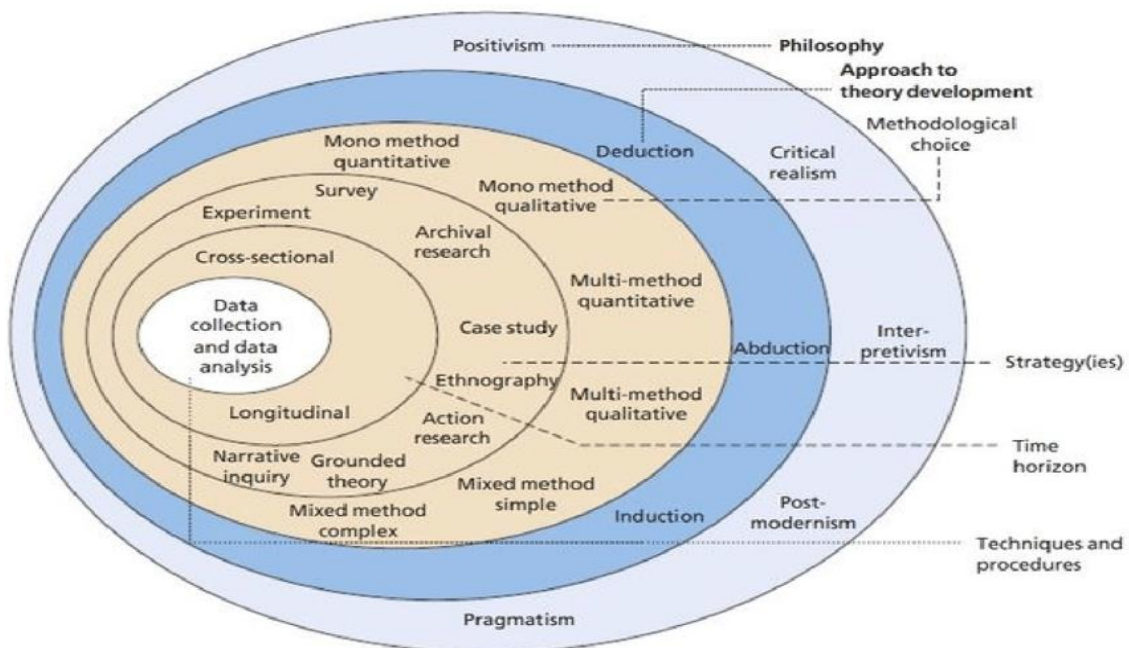


Figure 4.1 Research onion model (adapted from Saunders et al., 2012, p. 128)

The research onion model above clearly elaborates on the relevant issues considered while conducting research. The different layers of the research onion signify how the research process was followed and how it was discussed in an orderly manner. For instance, the diagram shows firstly, the researcher’s worldview or philosophical direction, followed by the research

approach adopted, the research design/style, the research timeline, and lastly the methods employed in generating and analyzing data. This presents the elements for my study, based on its purpose, to propose an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Using this frame, I would identify these elements; interpretive paradigm, qualitative research, case study strategy, which involves the research context, i.e. location, participants, data generation methods, data analysing and interpretation, issues of trustworthiness and lastly research ethics. The following sections discuss these in detail.

4.4. FRAMING THE STUDY IN THE INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM (RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY)

The concept of ‘paradigm’ means different things to different scholars. A paradigm is described as a researcher’s worldview or way of life (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). It could also be referred to as a research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2009). Nieuwenhuis (2016a, p. 52) defines it “as a set of assumptions or beliefs about the fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular worldview”. It can also be referred to as a framework or a way of thinking and doing things that include belief systems (Shuttleworth, 2008). Hence, most researchers, due to their diverse viewpoints, believe that there are multiple paradigms. There are diverse paradigms which clearly reveal the various worldview/ beliefs of social science researchers and how they position themselves in a positivist, interpretive or critical paradigm (Neuman, 2009; Cohen et al., 2011; Christiansen et al., 2010). This clearly indicates that a paradigm is a lens through which realities are interpreted.

Based on the phenomenon (an enabling learning environment) under investigation, the paradigm that is used to frame and position this study is the interpretive paradigm. Nwokedi (2015, p. 53) states that “the interpretive approach to research differs from the positivist paradigm which interprets natural laws in order to predict, describe or control events, and from the critical paradigm, which tries to emancipate or transform society”. This clearly reveals that the structure of this research is situated and guided by the interpretive paradigm. Saunders et al. (2016) state that the interpretive paradigm is concerned with the way humans/individuals provide insights into the world around them. They further indicate that the aim of the interpretive paradigm is to understand and explain phenomena. Cohen et al. (2011) concur and assert that the objectives of the interpretive paradigm are to understand human construal of the universe and their knowledge/experiences. Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006) further

argue that the interpretive paradigm connects and broadens the strengths of language and expression in order to enable people to understand the social world they live in. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) also argue that the main purpose of the interpretive paradigm is to acquire a deeper understanding of the way people create the meaning of the context in which they are situated. It thus aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how humans /people behave.

Engaging in the interpretive research process, Terre Blanche et al. (2006) and Kim (2003) assert that the researchers' position becomes the primary instrument through which data/information is generated. It also enables the researchers to rely on primary accounts, in order to describe, explain, interpret and examine in detail their understandings of people's behaviour, experiences, actions, agency and interactions in and around their socio-environment (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This follows the view of Cohen et al. (2011) who state that interpretive researchers study in-depth the various opinions, views, attitudes, behaviours, characteristics, and experiences of people in this kind of paradigm. Meanwhile, Terre Blanche et al. (2006, p. 274) claim that the "interpretive researchers take people's subjective experiences as serious as the essence of what is real for them; making sense of people experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they tell us and ensuring that qualitative research techniques are used to generate and analyse data". This suggests that the significance of the interpretive paradigm is to understand and explain an individual's lived experiences within their environment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Different assumptions/positions outlining this research within the interpretive paradigm are emphasised by researchers (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Cohen et al., 2011; Bakkabulindi, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016; Nieuwenhuis, 2016a, 2016b; du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). My study, using this paradigm, highlighted and recognised these assumptions:

- There are multiple realities and not a single reality
- People through social interaction, create meaning and knowledge of their world
- Knowledge is subjective and socially constructed
- Truth/reality is fluid and constantly changes
- People are influenced by their environment

Meanwhile, based on the short outline given above, it is pertinent to note that the interpretive paradigm is based on the following assumptions below.

4.4.1. The ontological position

The notion ‘ontology’ is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of reality or being (Saunders et al., 2016) and with the existence of people in their social context (Lyon, 2017). Bakkabulindi (2015) defines ontology as the science of being or dealing with matters of existence or reality, while Killiam (2015) asserts that it is people’s belief about reality. In other words, the interpretive researcher views reality as subjective, socially constructed, multiple and fluid (Saunders et al., 2009; 2016). Du Plooy Cilliers (2014) concurs and argues that people’s reality is socially constructed and is found in the meaning that people ascribe to their own experiences and their communication with others. This suggests that people see the world the way they want to view it. Therefore, Bakkabulindi (2015) states that people cannot be separated from their reality and that reality is fluid; fragile and constantly changing (Killiam, 2015) because of how they observe it and their different values, experiences and cultural background (Du Plooy Cilliers, 2014). Thus Nieuwenhuis (2016a) claims that interpretive researchers enter the world of people to observe them from inside their diverse experiences in order to understand how they construct meaning. People’s diverse cultures, knowledge, and experiences are shaped by their interpretation of the world/reality they are located within.

4.4.2. Epistemological position

Etymologically, the word epistemology is derived from two Greek words ‘episteme’ meaning knowledge (Krauss, 2005) and ‘logia’ meaning science or study (Lofgren, 2013; Duberley, Johnson, & Cassell, 2012; Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). According to Lyon (2017), this is a branch of philosophy that studies the act of knowing or knowledge. Similarly, Steup (2018) describes epistemology as the study of knowledge and beliefs, whereas Saunders et al. (2009) asserts that epistemology concerns what represents acceptable knowledge in a field of study. Bakkabulindi (2015) also argues that it is the science of truth and the reliability of claim about knowledge. Interpretive researchers believe that knowledge is relative or subjective and socially constructed (Lyon, 2017). In addition, they claim that there is no world-wide or absolute truth, but rather knowledge is internal and has a subjective meaning that involves social phenomena (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a). This implies that what is truth or knowledge is based on people’s environment and their interpretation of knowledge (du Plooy Cilliers, 2014).

4.4.3. Axiological position

This is another branch of philosophy that studies judgments about values (Saunders et al., 2016). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) assert that it is regarded as the ethical issues in research that need to be considered when organising research and Bakkalundi (2015) argues that it is the study of values, its judgments, and ethics. Similarly, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) claim that axiology includes the definition, assessment, and understanding of the notion of right or wrong behaviour connected to the study. Hence, the interpretive researcher considers research as value-laden/bound and recognises that they are subjective in revealing people's explanation of their lived experiences, through dialogue with the participants (Du Plooy Cilliers, 2014). This implies that interpretive researchers ensure that during the research process, they consider their values in making judgments and in giving credibility to the research (Saunders et al., 2009; 2016). Scotland (2012) also indicates that human reasoning and actions are guided by values, as well as the choice of paradigm and methods of data generation that reflect our values. Thus an interpretive researcher should report their own biases and values and qualify the nature of the data generated.

4.4.4. Logical position

This is one of the major branches of philosophy. The word logic is derived from a Greek word 'Logia or logos' which means 'word' or what is spoken, an idea, thought, argument, or reasoning (Jaako & Sandu, 2006). It is described as the principle that guides reasoning or the study of reasoning (Jaako & Sandu, 2006). However, two types of reasoning are employed by researchers in educational research namely inductive and deductive reasoning (Saunders et al., 2009; 2016). Interpretive researchers engage in the inductive approach during data analysis, which is qualitative in nature. Sonubi (2010) contends that qualitative research is based on inductive logic in which features of interest arise from the theme rather than being recognised by the researcher as outdated. The interpretive researcher generates data and from the data analysis, creates a theory. The qualitative researcher's goal here is to reveal and find theories or patterns that will help to explain the phenomenon. This clearly shows how the interpretive researcher employs their analytic skill.

4.4.5. Methodological position

The methodological position refers to what is seen as the best way of obtaining knowledge. According to Bakkalundi (2015), a methodology is an approach taken to acquire knowledge. Interpretive researchers adopt a qualitative research methodology, as their aim is to derive an in-depth understanding of multiple realities (du Plooy Cilliers, 2014). This suggests that interpretive researchers are able to employ different methods of data generation, such as focus group discussion and interviews, document analysis, ethnography, life history, narrative inquiry, etc. (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), that are useful to study the context and subjective reality of their participants. These methodological approaches enable them to gain an in-depth understanding of interpreting and describing individuals' lifestyles and experiences (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Table 4.1 gives a succinct summary of the characteristics of the philosophical assumptions/positions of the interpretive paradigm for my research.

Characteristics of the interpretive paradigm for this research.

| Feature | Description |
|----------------------------|---|
| The focus of the research: | To explore and understand how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. |
| Purpose of the research: | To propose an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. |
| Ontology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is more than one truth/reality. ➤ No straight approach to the real world ➤ Reality exists externally ➤ Reality is relative |
| Epistemology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Knowledge is socially constructed. ➤ Knowledge is subjective ➤ Knowledge is gained through personal experience ➤ Different ways of knowing the truth ➤ Social and cultural interaction influences knowledge creation ➤ Believes that people are influenced by the social context |
| Axiology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Difference between truth and value is unclear ➤ Permit empathy and thoughts to rule people's actions |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Logic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It relies mainly on explaining and understanding ➤ Reason is inductive ➤ Knowledge and meaning of truths/reality are biased |
| Methodology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Primarily use different qualitative methods to generate data. ➤ The data generated are textual and visually represented. ➤ Role of the researcher is to become a participant-observer |

Figure 4.2 The characteristic of the assumptions of the interpretive paradigm for this research (adapted from Edirisigha & Materiality, 2012, p. 1).

This table shows how this study is positioned within the interpretive paradigm, whose aim is to understand in-depth the views, knowledge, human agency, actions, thoughts and experiences of international students in regard to how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. The interpretive paradigm, which is the philosophical framework employed to conduct this research, aims to understand, explain and clarify social reality through different perspectives (Cohen et al., 2012). It allowed me as the researcher to see how the international students make meaning of their actions, reasons, and motives by describing, understanding and examining their behaviour, experiences, and interaction in and around their socio-cultural environment. In the context of this research, people developed their own knowledge through the influence of their own understanding and experiences within their environment, while I positioned myself as the researcher and participant-observer, deriving meaning from participants' actions within their environment.

Meanwhile, as I emphasise the multiple and socially constructed nature of the reality of this paradigm, the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched (phenomenon) is that within which the participants (international students) can voice/express their knowledge, understanding, and experiences in constructing how the university can create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS; their understanding of an enabling learning environment; why they need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and lastly how the use of photovoice could enable agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. This research context also offered me the opportunity to recognise, explore, perceive, and describe in-depth international

students' knowledge and experiences by employing different research methods such as photovoice, focus group discussion and self-reflective essay within their socio-environment where learning takes place. The next section discusses the qualitative research methodology that was employed to conduct this study.

4.5. QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Qualitative research does not have a homogeneous definition. This implies that it has different definitions. However, Parkin (2017) claims that the key principle of the qualitative approach is to gain an in-depth understanding of people's social world and reveal the co-existing lived experiences of a specific phenomenon in order to understand how people negotiate relational aspects of their daily life. Vasilachis (2009), points out that qualitative research consists of diverse research approaches and ideological positions. Therefore, this study is drawn from the assumption that meaning is constructed in different ways, by different people (Scotland, 2012).

Foregrounded on the above assumption, the research is positioned within the qualitative approach. My aim is to explore and understand in-depth how the university can create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS, international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment, why they need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and how the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Bricki and Green (2007) argue that the aim of qualitative research is to describe the attitudes, behaviours, and experiences of people regarding a phenomenon. This view is supported by Mack (2010), who posits that, epistemologically, qualitative research's main purpose is to understand or describe people's ideas, experiences, knowledge, behaviours, and attitude of how they live their lives within their social context. Meanwhile, from the ontological position, Fouche and Schurink (2011) claim that qualitative researchers believe that there is no objective truth out there, rather reality is subjective and can only be formed by showing understanding and care towards the values in which the research participants have in their life. In other words, employing the qualitative approach for this study enabled me to acquire access to the subjective interpretations of an enabling learning environment identified through the international students' perspectives. Vasilachis (2009) and Scotland (2012) argue that realities are constructed through the interaction between

consciousness (language) and the social world. This suggests that the personal interaction I had with the international students during the research process enabled me to know their realities.

In line with the above, Struwig and Stead (2013) points out that the notion ‘qualitative research’ is not easy to define but can be used to describe various types of research methods. Nieuwenhuis (2016a) also describes the qualitative approach as a process used by researchers to understand, explain, and describe the socio-cultural contexts of the attitudes of their participants, and involves the ‘why’ question of research. Strydom and Bezuidenhout (2012) also contend that it consists of the fundamental values of individual experiences and their significance connected to a phenomenon. This implies that qualitative research confirms that realities are multiple and are socially and relatively formed. Accordingly, Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, and Snape (2014) argue that qualitative research does not have a set of rules or methods of its own, but it is an extensive methodological approach. This shows that there is no single way of conducting qualitative research. Nevertheless, how qualitative research is done depends on the beliefs, values, reasons, researchers’ characteristics and philosophical assumptions (Ormston et al., 2014).

Creswell (2016) further claims that the interpretation of phenomena by qualitative researchers could be influenced by different factors such as understanding, contextual factors, background, and history. Thus, the context in which a study is conducted is very important because people do not act or behave in a vacuum (Struwig & Stead, 2013). Babbie and Mouton (2010), as well as Marshall and Rossman (2014), concur that qualitative research is conducted in a physical location or the natural settings of the participants so that their attitudes and behaviours can be understood better. Thus, Struwig and Stead (2013, p. 11) contend that “contextualism emphasises the numerous macro and micro contexts of an individual and how these contexts dynamically interact with one another”.

Creswell (2016) highlights that the physical setting of the participants enables the researcher to interact one on one with the participants. This focus enabled me to ensure that the use of photovoice could provide me with relevant information that is correct and authentic. In this study, my data were generated in a selected university as the physical or natural setting where HIV and AIDS prevalence ratio is high, and the university is making attempts to deal with it. In addition, the university lecture rooms, reading spaces, LAN, research commons, sport field, relaxation spots, library and other areas in the university provided the natural settings in which I observed, listened and communicated with international students on how the university could

create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. My objective was to make sense of the participants' social interactions in their environment, which are seen as the most important element that influences the meaning the international students make about how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. This indicates how data was generated through the interactions between the researcher and her research participants.

Subsequently, recent studies have shown that qualitative researchers employ diverse multiple and flexible methods such as case studies, personal experiences, and introspection, structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, document analysis, focus group discussion and interviews, life histories, visual methods (photography and videos), ethnography, direct observation of a sample, examination of relevant text, researchers own involvement in the research activities to conduct research (Parkin, 2017; Hogan, Dolan & Donnelly, 2009; Marshal & Rossman, 2014; Nwokedi, 2015). Hence, adopting the qualitative approach in this study enabled me to produce rich, thick and descriptive data through the participants consisting of visual, textual and verbal data instead of numeral data (Cohen et al., 2011; Rajeseka et al., 2013; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). It also assisted me (the researcher) to use multiple and flexible methods to conduct a detailed study with international students in finding out how they feel, think, their knowledge and experiences (Hogan et al., 2009; Marshall & Rossman 2014). Therefore, the qualitative approach gave me the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding using several flexible methods of generating data with international students in their learning environment and also to generate data that consists of words and pictures.

The aim of the qualitative approach is the understanding and observing of social actions within a particular context (Delpont, Fouche & Schurink, 2011). This approach, being an interpretive inquiry, gives the qualitative researchers the chance to explain and clarify their observations, understandings, and experiences. In addition, Creswell (2016) indicates that participants also offer their own interpretations of the phenomenon researched. This implies that, in this study, the methods of photovoice, focus group discussion and self-reflective essay employed in this study provided participants with the opportunity to participate in the study individually, collaborate with one another and engaged in dialogue during the research process (Thomas, 2010) and within the university context. It also enabled them to become active participants (Thomas, 2010) and co-constructors or co-researchers (Scotland, 2012) during the research process. Based on this, my choice of qualitative approach is to gain an in-depth understanding of how the university can create an enabling learning environment for international students in

the context of HIV and AIDS and the meaning derived from their understanding of an enabling learning environment through pictures, visual, spoken and written text produced from their multiple responses to the critical research questions.

On this note, this study assumes that international students in a South Africa university in particular in a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal are able to make sense/meaning of their worlds. This implies that this study adopts the case study research design as its specific research methodology through which data was generated for this study.

4.5.1. Case study research design

This research used a case study design, a well-known research approach used by qualitative researchers in the social sciences and in education (Rule & John, 2011). It provides a holistic focus that aims to preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of the case (Punch & Oancea, 2014). This implies that a case study can be referred to as an approach and not a method. Rule and John (2011, pp. 3-4) report that the word ‘ case ‘ is derived from the Latin word ‘casus’ meaning fall, chance, occasion, or misfortune while the word ‘study’ is also derived from a Latin word ‘studere’ which means to be eager or diligent. Rule and John (2011) further elaborate that the word case might refer to a particular instance, a problem that requires investigation or a body of evidence that supports a conclusion, while a study is seen as the investigation of something in-depth. A case might be a person, school, group of people, an organisation, a school, community, or a country (Rule & John, 2011) or is used to describe a unit of analysis or a research method (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b). Punch and Oancea (2014) state that a case could also be regarded as a policy, decision, an occurrence, a process or event of some sort. For this study, the case comprises one university in South Africa and the international students.

Punch and Oancea (2014) claim that to describe a case study is very difficult because anything can be a case and it can be simple or complex in nature. Therefore, Creswell (2016) defines a case study as an investigation of an enclosed instance in which the researcher employs various data generation methods to get rich and thick data within a context. Rule and John (2011, p.4) indicates that it “is a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge”. In contrast, Ahmed (2008), with Cohen et al. (2012), contend that case studies offer a distinctive illustration of people in an actual circumstance, supporting

or aiding the readers to understand their ideas more clearly than by simply presenting them with abstract theories or principles.

Punch and Oancea (2014) further elucidate that the intention of a case study is to have an in-depth understanding of the case and its natural setting by identifying its complex nature and its environment. Babbie (2013) concurs that the main purpose of a case study is to perform an in-depth investigation of a specific case that can produce descriptive insights and attempts to understand the process and structure of the case. Case studies are used to answer the ‘how and why’ questions of research (Yin, 2013). Moreover, Crowe et al. (2011, p. 2) confirm that “a case study approach is used to generate in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings. Therefore, the use of a case study helped me to generate an in-depth understanding and insights “into a particular instance by providing a thick, rich description of the case and illuminating its relation to its broader contexts” (Rule & John, 2011, p.7). In this regard, Yin (2009) also highlighted that more emphasis is being placed on the participants’ contexts that contribute to the area of case study research. This indicates that a case can either be single or multiple. Hence, this study adopted a single case study of one university with the focus of exploring and gaining an in-depth understanding of how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Qualitative case study researchers have identified several characteristics of the case study. For instance, Yin (2013) these four: (a) a case has boundaries that needs to be clarified and identified by the researchers, (b) the case need to be known and identified, (c) the focus of the case must be explained to preserve the unity and wholeness of the case, (d) the case study is flexible and uses numerous methods of data generation, mostly in natural settings. In a similar vein, Rule and John (2011) also highlight four characteristics: a case study approach enables the researcher to investigate in-depth; it is also flexible and allows the use of a variety of methods to generate data. It can also be used in combination with other research approaches (versatile) and lastly, it occurs in a bounded context and can be managed.

This implies that there are several case study designs and it is essential for the researcher to be aware of the multiplicity of the case study designs. Accordingly, Cohen et al. (2011), John and Rule (2011) and Yin (2013) argue that there are different kinds of case study research design, namely, intrinsic case study, instrumental case study, explorative case study, explanatory case study, descriptive case study, multiple case study, and the combination of the intrinsic and instrumental case study. Gay, Mills, and Airasia (2009) also confirm that qualitative

researchers may conduct a single case study, multiple case study or a collective case study of a specific instance. This study used the instrumental case study design, which is a single case design to include a specific group, international students studying together in a selected university. Nevertheless, instrumental case studies help to provide insights into an issue when a specific case is examined and used to refine a theory (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b; Punch, 2013). Rule and John (2011) concur and stipulate that instrumental case studies examine cases to explore a broader issue. Punch (2013) also argues that instrumental case studies are seen as a single case study in which the focus of the study is being positioned within the case (the university and international students). In addition, Rule and John (2011, p. 8) also affirm that the focus of instrumental case studies begins from an issue and “examines cases to explore the issue in-depth”. Similarly, Crowe et al. (2011) argue that an instrumental case study uses a particular case (international students and university) to gain a broader understanding of an issue or phenomenon, as in this study (of an enabling learning environment).

The qualitative instrumental case study design was suitable for this study because it assisted me in identifying and understanding the phenomenon (enabling learning environment), given that the international students are experts on their own learning, are active beings, have human agency and have insight into the ways they make meaning of their learning and environment. It also helped me in engaging the international students in exploring their understandings, knowledge, and perspectives of how the university can create an enabling environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS, their construction of an enabling learning environment, why they need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and lastly how the use of photovoice could enable agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. The importance of using case study research design in this inquiry was evident in the various data generation methods employed, showing the flexibility of the research approach and design. Case study research provided an opportunity for my participants’ voices to be heard. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 289) maintain that “case studies recognise and accept that there are many variables operating in a single case study and thus to catch the implications of these variables requires the use of more than one instrument to generate data and many sources of evidence”. In summary, my decision of using photovoice, focus group discussion and self-reflective essays were informed by the assumption of the qualitative case study design. Therefore, the next section reveals the different ways in which the research context and participants were selected for the study.

4.5.2. Selection of research context and participants

4.5.2.1 The research context

This section describes the context – a university located in the Durban metropolis in KwaZulu-Natal where the international students’ understanding of how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS unfolded. This is thus the context in which the study was carried out. Rule and John (2011) note that the context of a study included various aspects of dimensions like socio-political, historical, cultural, organisational and policy factors. MacMillan and Schumacher (2010) also state that the research context is a research site for selecting knowledgeable people to be involved in a specific research issue. Therefore, this study will be conducted in a university in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, which has, according to a recent statistical report on HIV and AIDS by HEAIDS (2012), the highest HIV and AIDS prevalence ratio in South Africa.

KwaZulu-Natal province has four universities, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN, thereafter), the Durban University of Technology (DUT), Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) and the University of Zululand. Three of these universities are situated near the Durban metropolis and the other one far from it. The university where the study was conducted is located around the Durban metropolitan area and was chosen by me because it offers programmes on teacher education in one of its campuses. The university is co-educational and is made up of five multicultural and multiracial campuses with about 45,691 registered students (undergraduate and postgraduate) for the 2018 academic year. Amongst these registered students, 2075 were identified as registered international students in their undergraduate and postgraduate level within the five campuses of the university. The study was conducted on one of the five campuses of the selected university, which offers programmes for teacher education such as initial teacher education, continuing education, and postgraduate education. The university also has different transformational policies, one of which is to be a socially cohesive and inclusive institution. This implies that the institution thrives to actively promote the social and personal wellbeing of their staff and students by creating an enabling environment for them to realise their full human potential.

4.5.2.2 The research sites

The study was conducted in one campus of the university. The Peaceville campus is the data generation site in which this study was conducted. I conveniently chose the Peaceville campus

because of its accessibility and also that it is culturally diverse and all-inclusive. This campus is situated in an inland town, 16km west of the central Durban metropolitan area at an elevation of 1000 to 1300 feet. The town was built and established during the years 1849 and 1850 by Britain as a concentration camp for women and children displaced from farms during the second Boer war. The campus was established in 1970 in the city as a college of education to train white students during the apartheid era. In 2001 it was incorporated into the one university, which then merged with another in 2004.

The Peaceville campus consists mostly of black students followed by Indians, coloured, and white students from diverse provinces in South Africa, and is seen as a major producer of teachers in South Africa. Consequently, the campus boasts of a diverse group of students from different international countries such as Mauritius, China, USA, Nigeria, Uganda, Botswana, Lesotho, Ethiopia, Turkey, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Kenya, Zambia, Germany, China, Phillipian, France, and others. In addition, the campus has a functioning clinic that supports their students and workers, as well as HIV and AIDS center located inside the clinic with well-trained staff and a psychologist who is always available to give psychosocial support to its students. Moreover, it also has students' residences located within the campus and its environment while some other students shuttle to and from the campus to their respective homes daily.

The students who participated in this study were predominantly international students in their postgraduate and undergraduate levels of study living within and outside the campus and from different African and Western countries depicting diverse experiences, knowledge, voices, and culture. During the period of the data generation process, the number of international students studying at the Peaceville campus was 208 registered postgraduate students doing their MEd and Ph.D. programme and two undergraduate students doing their Bachelor of Education degrees for the 2018 academic year. The diagram below in Figure 4.3 shows the geography of the Durban metropolitan area where the university and campuses are situated.



Figure 4.3 A map of the Durban metropolitan area. Adapted from <http://www.wheretogolf.co.za/kloof>

4.5.2.3 International students as research participants

Myende (2014) asserts that choosing or selecting participants and research site for a study should be done on the basis that they are rich with information. This study employed purposive and convenience sampling to choose my research site and participants, who were intentionally selected due to their diverse experiences, knowledge, beliefs, ideas, culture, and thoughts about the phenomenon being researched. Nieuwenhuis (2016b) and Creswell (2012; 2016) concur that qualitative researchers mostly use purposive and convenience sampling to choose or select participants that are appropriate for their study, while Teddlie and Yu (2007) affirm that, in education, applying the purposive sampling to research mainly consists of selecting people or schools to respond to research questions and focusing on the research aim. Rule and John (2011) emphasize that the basis for selection is potential participants' relevant knowledge, experiences, and awareness of the case. The basis for the purposive selection of international students for this study was that they had been living and studying in Peaceville campus and its environment for more than two years while pursuing their undergraduate or postgraduate degrees respectively. Cohen et al. (2011) assert that purposive sampling involves knowledgeable people who have in-depth knowledge and understanding of a specific problem within their experience. In this study, the research participants and site were selected due to

their diverse experiences and knowledge of the issue being researched. Nwokedi (2015) stipulates that they are the 'knowers' of their learning environment.

The research site was conveniently chosen because it falls within the environment where I both study and resides. Struwig and Stead (2013) indicate that convenience sampling of a location is based on availability while the participants are selected since they are accessible and accommodating. Cohen et al. (2011) also state that convenience sampling comprises selecting the people closest to you to act as your research participants. Therefore, my motivation for this choice of sampling was based on the proximity and accessibility of the research site and participants. To elaborate, all the participants fell within the age group of people known as a youth and also termed as a group of people vulnerable to being affected and infected with the HIV and AIDS prevalence ratio (HEAIDS, 2012). Another reason for choosing my participants was because they were well known to me and easy to reach because we are all members of the international students' organisations (ISO, thereafter) on the campus were carried out. This gave me the opportunity to develop a mutual relationship with other international students and this made it easy for me to identify and select my participants because of their knowledge, understanding, and experiences of how an enabling learning environment is in a foreign country, which was pivotal for this study. They were also easy for me to reach because we are all studying on the same campus although some of them do not reside on the campus.

One benefit of engaging in qualitative case study research is that it consists of a small sample size. This is because the aim of a case study is not to generalise the result but to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' worldview or experiences (Christiansen et al., 2010; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Creswell, 2016). Premised on this, twelve (12) participants consisting of six male and six female international students between the ages of nineteen (19) to forty-six (46) years old were purposively selected to obtain thick and rich information pertaining to their understanding, ideas, knowledge, and experiences on how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. Despite having many international students studying in this campus who could have participated in the research, the study was limited to twelve international students who were convenient to work with and easily accessible. Rule and John (2011) attest to this as they argue that the qualitative case study researcher does not need all potential people involved in the case but only chooses those individuals who could shed more light or a different light on a case. Meanwhile, four criteria were considered in selecting the international students in the study:

- Doing their undergraduate (B.Ed.), postgraduate degrees i.e. Master of Education (M. Ed. thereafter) or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD., thereafter)
- Living within and outside the campus for more than two years
- Studying in this particular university campus for more than 2 years
- Who are members of the international student's organisation (ISO)?

The next section gives a brief description of the biographical data of the research participants.

4.5.2.4 Bio-sketches of the participants

This section presents a brief synopsis of participants in the study. The bio-sketches highlight the participants' age, gender, country of origin, marital status, academic level, degree, discipline, number of years in the university and extra-curricular activity. The participants were given the opportunities to choose names of their choice which represents an enabling learning context. Pseudonym was used to guarantee the issue of confidentiality and anonymity.

Participant 1.... Friendly: She is female and single. She is 19 years old and a citizen of Kenya. Friendly is currently doing her Bachelor of Education degree and in her third year of study. She lives on the university campus and she is majoring in Natural Sciences and English. Friendly loves dancing and shopping.

Participant 2.... Inclusive: He is 37 years old, married, Ghanaian and resides outside the Peaceville campus. Inclusive has been studying here for three years and is pursuing his Ph.D. in Educational leadership and Management. Inclusive's hobbies are swimming and skiing.

Participant 3.... Peaceful: This is a thirty-nine years old male student, currently divorced and doing his MEd study in Mathematics. Peace has been living and studying on this campus for three years and he is from Tanzania. Peace loves to read and exercise.

Participant 4.... Safe: She is a female student from China. Safety is thirty-two years old, single and currently doing her Ph.D. study in Language and Media studies. She is currently residing outside the campus environment. Safety is a ballet dancer and enjoys reading.

Participant 5.... Caring: Is from Nigeria. Caring is forty-two years old and married. He is doing his Ph.D. study in Science education. Caring has been studying on this campus for five years and lives on the campus. He loves to keep fit and enjoys going to the gym and running.

Participant 6.... Supportive: Supportive is from Cameroon, is thirty-six years old and married with two kids. Supportive is doing his Ph.D. in History Education. In addition, Supportive lives around the university campus. He loves to drive and listen to gospel music.

Participant 7.... Secured: Is twenty-three years old, single and from Burundi. Secured is an undergraduate student doing BEd degree in Mathematics and Life Science Education. He is in his fourth year, lives on the university campus and loves soccer and poetry.

Participant 8.... Convenient: She is thirty years old, married with three children and doing an MEd in Educational Psychology. She has been studying at the Peaceville campus for three years. Convenience lives far from the campus environment and she is from Tanzania.

Participant 9.... Conducive: It is from Germany. He is twenty-four years old, single and doing his PhD in Teacher Development. Conducive has been studying in this campus for three years and lives around the campus environment. He loves to cook and watch movies.

Participant 10..... Resourceful: She is a female student from Zimbabwe. Resourceful is forty-six years old, single and has been studying and living in the Peaceville campus for three years now. Resourceful is doing her Ph.D. in Curriculum studies. She loves to shop and pray.

Participant 11..... Welcoming: She is 27 years old and from Libya, married with three children and has been studying in the Peaceville campus for four years. Welcoming is currently doing her MEd studies in Science Education and lives in Durban town. She loves to sing and dance.

Participant 12.... Cooperative: She is a female student from Ethiopia. Cooperative is 44 years old, married with two children and has been studying in the Peaceville campus for 4 years. She is doing her MEd studies in Language and Media Studies. She loves to cook.

The above bio-sketches of the participants provide insight into their lives and world. The above participants are the 'knowledgeable people' who have in-depth knowledge and experience about the current environment. This is because they spent most of their time in this particular environment where they learn and interact with their peers, resources, and facilities.

4.5.3. Data generation methods

The data generation methods selected to address the key research questions were based on the research design and approach adopted to conduct the research. In addition, my choice of using

the participatory visual method also inspired me to employ several methods of data generation which enabled the participants to be active, participative, engaging, and collaborative and for their voices to be heard. They also enabled the generation of extensive and complex data. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016) and Marshall and Ross (2014), qualitative research allows flexibility in using several research methods/instruments /techniques to generate data. Maree (2016) also notes that these research methods are interactive. Wahyuni (2012) with Cohen et al. (2011) describes research methods as a research procedure, instruments, tools or techniques that are employed by researchers to generate and analyse data. Cohen et al. (2011) further assert that qualitative researchers employ diverse methods to generate data such as interviews, observation, life history, visual media, document analysis, focus group interview and discussion. In this study, three data generation method was used with the international students in order to acquire and gain detailed information for my research questions.

For the main research question, which focuses on how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS, the photovoice method (Mitchell, 2008; Wang, 2009; Wang & Burris, 1997) and focus group discussions (Redmond & Curtis, 2009; Punch, 2013) were employed as data generation methods. Photovoice method (Mitchell, 2008) alone was used to generate data for the sub-question 1, which is on their understanding of an enabling learning environment. In addition, the focus group discussion was also used to gather data that responds to sub-question 2, which centres on why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. The international students' self-reflective essays were also used to answer sub-question 3, on how the use of photovoice could enable agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, the photovoice approach, focus group discussion, and self-reflective essay was employed as my main data generation method with the participants. Qualitative researchers have indicated that using multiple methods to generate data helps in producing rich and thick data (Creswell, 2016; Cohen et al., 2011; Maree, 2016). The next section outlines and describes in detail the data generation process in the study.

4.5.3.1 The process of data generation

Obtaining ethical clearance for the study gave me the opportunity to meet with my participants on the 14th of March 2018 at about 4 pm in the evening after the international student's organisation (ISO) general meeting. The meeting was firstly held by the ISO this year to

welcome old and new students into the new academic year. It was after the meeting that I met with my participants, one on one, to inform them about my interest in using them as participants for my Ph.D. research. During the course of the one on one meeting, I verbally elaborated to them on the purpose and focus of the research and the reason why I chose to use them for the research, I explained to them that the purpose of the study is to propose an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. I also informed them that the aim of the study was to explore how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS; their understanding of an enabling learning environment; the reason they need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and lastly how the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. This first meeting enabled me to familiarise myself with my participants and use the opportunity to seek their consent as my participants for the study, which they granted. I also used the privilege of our first meeting to obtain their personal email addresses and cell phone (mobile) numbers and I promised to contact them in order to schedule a second meeting.

The participants were divided into three groups of four persons each and were communicated with by email and SMS. The reason for dividing the participants into three groups of four was for the researcher to be able to facilitate and moderate the group discussion between the participants as well as to observe nonverbal interactions among the participants. They were also informed through phone calls to schedule for focus group discussion and photovoice sessions. To ensure they did not forget the meeting sessions, they were reminded the evening before the scheduled date and venue of the focus group discussion. Participants were availed all information pertaining to the study through a detailed informed consent letter which they signed. Furthermore, they were informed that an audio recorder would be used to tape their discussions as well as note-taking the focus group discussions. After ensuring their consent, I progressed further to generate data for the study using the photovoice method, self-reflective essay and the focus group discussion methods.

For the photovoice process, a meeting was scheduled with all the participants on the 24th of March 2018 in a safe and secure environment chosen by them, the seminar/conference room in the research common of the campus, but was cancelled due to their various engagements. For example, some of the postgraduate students were part-time tutors and the time scheduled for the photovoice session was when they were busy with their work and research, while the

undergraduate students were busy with their study group meetings, writing tests and assignments. So, the meeting was cancelled and postponed to the 17th of April 2018.

In addition, the first group meeting for the focus group discussion was scheduled and rescheduled twice before it was held on the 16th of May 2018 between the hours of 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. while the second and third focus group discussions meeting was held for the participants on the 14th of June 2018 and on the 10th of July 2018. The data for this study was thus generated over a period of six months from March to July 2018, due to the student's busy schedules. The photovoice session was held for all participants on the 17th of April 2018 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. in a safe and convenient place chosen by the students on the campus. Because of the midterm break, most of my participants were free during this period.

The photovoice session was used to explain to my participants what photovoice is all about, using a PowerPoint presentation and examples to clarify the different stages of engaging in a photovoice process, such as the photo-shooting and photo-interpretation sessions while using prompts to guide them and to make it easier for them to understand. The participants were also informed and reminded before the day of the meeting to come along with their digital cameras if they have any. Ten of the participants turned up at the venue with a digital camera during the meeting while two of the participants used their phones (Android) to take photographs. The participants' photographs were uploaded in a folder created for them on my laptop and due to the weather condition (winter) and time factor, the photo-interpretation session was scheduled to take place when they came back from the photo shooting session was rescheduled. The participants unanimously agreed to do the photo-interpretation session at their respective homes and send them to my personal email on or before the 24th of April which was one week to the day after the photovoice process took place.

4.5.3.2 Participatory visual method (PVM, thereafter)

What does it mean?

Visual methodologies in education are concerned with the production, organisation, and interpretation of imagery. The history of visual studies, most especially using visual methodologies, according to Nguyen and Mitchell (2012, p. 279), "dates back to the late nineteenth century as a way to study the histories and images of non-western cultures". Bagnoli (2009) argues that visual methodologies are typically conceived of as dealing with the concrete

real world rather than the abstract world of symbolism. Prosser (2007) states that they draw on analytical perspectives, including sociology, media studies, psychology, anthropology, and cultural geography, to study a wide range of topics ranging from community, power, and gender studies, to spatial relationships, and spectatorship. In other words, PVM is regarded as a display of facilitated process which supports participants to create their own images or performances (Black, Davies, Iskander & Chambers, 2018). PVM has been reported as capable of offering a nested approach to research as a forum for sharing and voicing experiences (Olivier, Wood & De Lange, 2009); and plays a vital role in promoting critical thinking especially in learning and classroom communication (Prosser and Loxley, 2008).

Bagnoli (2009, p. 548) states that using participatory visual and creative methodologies “can generally facilitate investigating layers of experience that cannot easily be put into words”. Prosser and Loxley (2008) also contend that images are insightful and can gain entry into different parts of the human mind. Bagnoli (2009) argues that, by using participatory visual methods, people can communicate more generally through images. Richards (2011) concurs with Bagnoli and affirms that using visual images enhances learning in multiple ways and provides a rich setting for the understanding and development of complex and abstract ideas. Weber (2008) also argues that the use of PVM could enhance supportive understanding, capture the indescribable, and enable people to pay attention to reality in different ways, thereby making the ordinary become extraordinary.

Most importantly, PVM offers opportunities to participants who engage in it to show the researcher how they perceive their world (Richards, 2011). Sullivan (2010) also posits that PVM provides a sense of enjoyment in the research activities. Black et al. (2018) further argue that visual data could be employed by the individuals who create them to tell their individual stories or visually interpret their thoughts and lived experiences of relevant phenomena. Thus, a body of literature has identified an increase in the use of several PVM approaches (Rouse, 2013, Richards, 2011; Wang, 2009; Mitchell & De Lange, 2011). There are many ways of collecting visual data and the choice of method depends on the aims and theoretical perspective of the researcher, but Richard (2011) identifies photography; painting and drawing; sculpting; filming; collage; maps; timelines; relational maps; or any method, in fact, that produces data in material visual form. Other approaches are photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997); drawing (Prosser & Burke, 2008; Wood, 2012); body mapping (Gastaldo, Magalhaes, Carrasco & Davy, 2012; Gastaldo, Rivas-Quarneti & Magalhães 2018); digital storytelling (Lambert, 2013); self-reflective activity (Khanare, 2015); producing participatory video (Milne, Mitchell & De

Lange, 2012); photo-elicitation (Mitchell, 2012); textile making and video diaries (Bates, 2013).

The benefits of PVM are evident in educational research (Mitchell, 2008). Parkin and Coomber (2009) concur that PVM in education research provides a means of exposing social problems in order to influence social change. Vince and Warren (2012) highlight that it involves participants in the co-creation of qualitative data. A recent study also reveals that using PVM in educational research, in general, heightens involvement in research and provides a stimulus for eliciting further verbal material (Richard, 2011). It also enables collaborative learning (Black et al., 2018), empowers the participants and enhances the quality of the research data (Wang & Sommers, 2016; Black et al., 2018). This implies that engaging in visual methods and producing visual data allows qualitative researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, opinions, ideas, and knowledge of the research participants (Richard, 2011). Furthermore, De Lange (2012) states that using visual methodologies is effective in studies on resilience, sexuality, gender, gender-based violence, and HIV and AIDS. Chikoko and Khanare (2012) also state that using PVM in educational research demonstrates the ability to provide participants with new experiences and diverse ways of thinking about the phenomenon at stake.

Thus, PVM has been used in different fields of research and with different groups of people. For instance, Chikoko and Khanare (2012) used PVM, in particular collage, in exploring school management teams' understanding of school assets as a means to respond to the needs of orphans and other children made vulnerable by AIDS in the context of rural schools in South Africa. Khanare (2015) also used PVM approaches like drawing, collage, and photovoice to explore vulnerable learners' construction of care and support in the age of HIV and AIDS in South Africa. Barleya and Russell (2018) made use of photo-elicitation, sculptures and drawing to explore young people's identities, hopes, and feelings in the UK. Blackbeard and Lindegger (2015, p. 85) used auto-photography, photo-elicitation, biographical drawings and combined visual methods to re-examine the benefits and limitations of participatory visual methods in young masculinity research and "to better understand the construction of masculine identity in" the context. Therefore, this research employs the photovoice method which is "photography" as a key method in generating data. Photovoice is one of the elements of the field known as visual research or participatory visual methodology (Wang, 2009). It is also seen as a visual method of research that offers opportunities to research participants to express their subjectivities as they view the world, using pictures. Employing photovoice to generate data in this research enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding and knowledge of how the

university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and to also explore international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment. The next section discusses the photovoice approach.

- Photovoice

This is a participatory visual method (PVM) and one of the data generation methods employed to generate data for this study. Harrison (2002) indicates that photovoice is a qualitative research methodology designed to specifically tap into everyday realities in which the essence of these realities is being defined by the research participants themselves. The word “photovoice” does not have a universal definition because it is defined differently by different scholars. For instance, Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001, p. 560) define “photovoice as a powerful photographic technique that promotes critical dialogue and produces knowledge”. On the one hand, it is referred to as the process by which videos/photo images are used by people who are discriminated against, disadvantaged and made vulnerable due issues like language barriers, class, tribe, HIV and AIDS, culture, poverty, race or other conditions to described or portray aspects of their environments and life experiences by sharing them with other people to get the attention of policymakers to either provoke or motivate for change (Khanare, 2012; Carlson, Engebretson & Chamberlain, 2006). Black et al. (2018) concur and point out that it facilitates change, for example, a shift in policy (national or university). It also enhances social participation and enables people to develop self-awareness, critical thinking and critical consciousness (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006).

In essence, photovoice is a participatory visual method that is effective and aids learning by allowing successful engagement of the participants in natural discussion and in the building of democracy (Wang, 2009). This suggests that engaging in the photovoice process enables the participants to become actively involved in the research (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Wang (2009) also explains that photovoice allows individuals to monitor the photographic procedures in order to have a voice, think and talk about their lived experiences. Snell and Hodgetts (2007) argue that photovoice enables people to present their experiences or feelings that might be difficult to express using conventional methods like interviews or observation. Given, Opryshko, Julien and Smith (2011) highlight that photovoice is different from photo-elicitation methods because it requires that the images used be generated by the participants.

Involving the participants in the photovoice approach could empower them to be more deeply involved in the process of the study by being the ones in charge of their pictures/photographs

used in the study (Given et al., 2011). Photovoice also stimulates discussion among participants (Mitchell, 2011) and assists them to become active (Wang, 2009). Wang (2009) further argues that social researchers use photovoice as a research method to make the participants become co-researchers, photographers and data producers. Black et al. (2018) suggest that it enables participants to develop self-awareness of their vulnerability. It enables participants to be involved in explaining data (Given et al., 2011) and enhancing their critical consciousness and problem-solving skills (Wang, 2009; Goodhart, Hsu Baek, Coleman, Maresca & Miller, 2006). Harkness and Stallworth (2013) and Rania, Migliorini, Rebora, and Cardinali (2015) contend that photovoice promotes the exchange and sharing of ideas among participants and enables them to gain valuable visual skills in reflecting on the realities of their lives (Khanare, 2012). Nykiforuk, Vallianatos, and Nieuwendyk (2011) also note that it enables participants to develop personal skills. Chonody, Ferman, Amitrani-Welsh, and Martin (2013) indicate that photovoice enables participants to develop critical dialogue and Rania et al. (2015) assert that photovoice assists in communication and helps to integrate influences from the participants' lives.

Through photovoice, the participants were supported to see both sides of an issue, to see what is not obvious, and to educate others about these things (Wang, 1999). Given et al. (2011, p. 3) further state that "photovoice offers an innovative way to triangulate research results due to multiple streams of information gathering, such as visual-verbal information, group discussion, and individual reflection on taking photos. Rania et al. (2015) also state that photovoice offers the participants an opportunity to relate/interact, discuss/dialogue, and interpret their pictures collaboratively. Ebersohn and Eloff (2006) assert that the photovoice method could be used to enhance agency among participants, which is I strongly believe aligned with the agentic capability theory on which this study is framed. Therefore, the photovoice approach is appropriate in engaging international students as active and critical agents in making informed decisions that affect them. Meanwhile, the photographs are used usually with captions composed by the participants for critical discussion and reflection and to enable the researcher to understand their perspectives and knowledge of the issues or phenomena researched. Hence, each of the photographs is described differently due to the diverse voices and interpretations of the participant and the researcher (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007).

However, Bagnoli (2009) suggests that the participants might have trouble presenting complex or abstract ideas through their photographs during the photovoice process. Estrella (2012) and Richard (2011) indicate that it is time-consuming and expensive (Given et al., 2011). Despite

that, photovoice enables the participants to essentially function as co-researchers and co-producers, documenting conditions and problems in ways that can be used for community assessment and as a spur to policymakers and other officials to institute community change (Wang & Burris, 1999).

-Advent and utilisation

Photovoice was mainly developed as a participatory action research method used by people (Wang, 2009) to photograph their everyday health and work realities. According to Khanare (2015), it was first introduced into education research by a Brazilian scholar known as Paulo Freire during the post-colonial period. Paulo Freire used participatory photography in his work in Peru to conscientize the marginalised and oppressed people to become promoters of change in their community (Freire, 2002). However, this methodology was later enhanced as a photovoice in 1992 by Wang and Burris (1994) who developed photovoice from Paulo Freire's (2000, p.87) empowerment education notion and theory of critical consciousness; to become the feminist theoretical ideology and the non-traditionalist approaches to documentary photography (Wang & Burris, 1997). Although the concept 'photovoice' has existed for many years, much of the theoretical background of its current programmes comes from the work of Caroline Wang (Mitchell, 2008; Wang & Burris 1994).

The theoretical underpinning of photovoice, which is based on Freire's (2000, p. 87) critical consciousness theory, assumes that there is a deep understanding of the way the world works and how society, politics, and power relationships affect one's own situation. This implies that photovoice is an empowering methodology that allows individuals to reflect upon their strengths, gain knowledge and work collectively towards issues in their community. In addition, drawing from the feminist perspective, Wang and Burris (1997) emphasise the importance of voice. The feminist theory acknowledges the experiences of women as a force for social change and in turn, encourages women to share their knowledge and "know-how" regarding their understanding of how communities and dominant institutions affect their lives (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 372).

According to the study by Wang and Burris (1994, 1997), cameras were given to a group of women living in a rural community in the China province of Yunnan, to record their lived experiences and environment for a complete year. They were required to meet at regular times to examine and deliberate on the photographs they took. The women held an event in which

their photographs were displayed and used to raise peoples' and policymaker's awareness around their needs. This clearly suggests that the women had gained a voice, greater self-respect, and a sense of increased control over their lives (Wang & Burris, 1994). The study also showed that the photovoice project by the women resulted in policymakers developing three key policy changes, for example, policies that mandated child care provision; the right to using midwives for women who still bear children and lastly education for all girls to support the welfare of the women in rural communities (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Concurrently, the documentary photography approach of photovoice (Kuratani & Lai, 2011) has been extensively used to provide vulnerable people like women, children, youths and elderly people who have previously suffered the consequences of structural violence (Carlson et al., 2006) a means to voice/tell their stories and views of the world. Photovoice (Kuratani & Lai, 2011, p. 3) puts power into the hands of the oppressed, permitting them to voice out and to make decisions by themselves and choose the ideas that are denoted in the pictures. Thus, it is frequently used to assist in bringing about change social (Wang, 1997; Wang, 2009). Therefore, photovoice has three main goals: firstly, to enable people to record and represent their everyday realities; secondly, to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community strengths and concerns and lastly, to reach policymakers (Wang 2006, p.148).

Significantly, a body of literature has shown that photovoice method is entrenched in the ideal of democracy; the methodology also involves offering cameras to people so that they can take pictures of their everyday realities (Wang & Burris, 1999; Khanare, 2012; Moletsane et al., 2007; Taylor, 2009; Wang, 2009; Carlson et al., 2006); and can be used in different fields like the medical, feminist, anthropological, social and education apart from research. For instance, Budig et al. (2018) used photovoice to evaluate the transformative potential of women who engaged previously in a photovoice project. Given et al. (2011) also used it to assess the information literacy skills of students who transitioned from high schools to university. Flum, Siqueira, DeCaros, and Redway (2010) used a photovoice method to highlight health and safety issues in the workplace and their social impacts.

Furthermore, Kovacic et al. (2014) used photovoice to explore environmental health and health inequities in a minority community and revealed issues such as poor eating habits, inadequate nutrition, lack of safety and violence as impeding the community's wellbeing. Walker and Early (2010) used photovoice to identify barriers to caregiving for orphaned and abandoned children and to identify ecological factors that impede or promote health and wellbeing among

orphaned and abandoned children. This led to the building of organizational and community capacity to bring about change in the community (Walker & Early, 2010). Moletsane et al. (2009) report on its use to raise awareness on HIV and AIDS stigma and the impact it has on people in rural KwaZulu-Natal villages. Khanare (2012) used photovoice to explore how school children made vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS in the KwaZulu-Natal rural environment of South Africa cope and thrive in living with HIV related adversities.

- *The photovoice process in the study*

The photovoice sessions explored further how the university could create enabling learning for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. The data generated in this session complements the participants' replies to the research questions 1 and 2 about how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and about international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment.

The photovoice session was divided into three sessions/stages shown below, in which two of the three sessions were done for an hour each and the last session which was the photo-interpretation session was done in the participants' respective homes due to time factor. They were requested by me to send the pictures and their interpretations including their self-reflective essay to my email within a week's time. On the day of the photovoice session, which was during the winter season, I conducted the photovoice workshop with all 12 participants in a safe and convenient place, the seminar room chosen by them in the campus where the research took place. This room enabled me to use my laptop to present my PowerPoint slides on what photovoice is, how it's been done, different places where photovoice has been used and the ethics guiding it as a research approach, and also to be able to upload their photographs on my laptop. Moreover, I was able to conduct this brief workshop on photovoice because of the experiences I received on using it as one of my research methods during my MEd study and also based on the knowledge and training I received on photovoice training in a module during my BEd Honours degree in 2013. The photovoice process is presented below in Figure 4.4 as it showed how each session process took place.

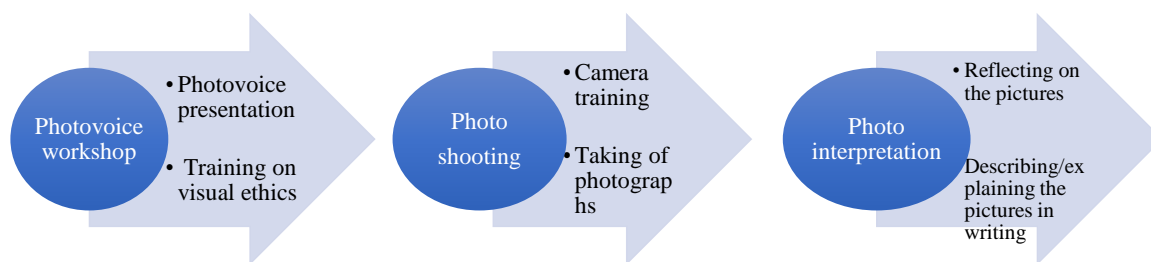


Figure 4.4 *The photovoice process in the study*

Session 1

Photovoice workshop

This included the photovoice process namely, explaining to the participants what the photovoice method is and giving a brief PowerPoint presentation on the use of photovoice and cameras by explaining to the participants where and how photovoice has been used. In this aspect, I used an example of the research I did during my MEd study with my participants' pictures and other studies that have been conducted using photovoice to show the participants how photovoice was used. Lastly, I discussed the ethical guidelines for taking photographs in the university context (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001 Mitchell, 2011). I explained to my participants about taking pictures that include people or items that are identifiable and that, if need be, they must request permission from the participant by issuing a photograph waiver to the person (see Appendix 6).

Session 2

Photo shooting

In this session, I requested from my participants the previous day to come with their digital cameras if they have. This was done telephonically on the evening of the 16th of April by 7 p.m., to remind the participants of the photovoice process scheduled for the next day between 3 to 5 pm. During the day for the photovoice process, I was able to get five digital cameras, four from the Centre for Visual Methodologies and Social Change on the campus and one that belonged to me. My participants already had the knowledge of using a camera because five of the participants already owned one. They brought their cameras to the venue, so it was easy for me to give a brief training on how to handle the cameras while engaging in a photovoice process. Two of the participants did not have a digital camera, so I suggested that they could use the cameras on their mobile phones during the process, which the participants agreed to. With their individual digital cameras and mobile phone cameras, the participants were told that, before they take any pictures, they must think carefully and critically on the kind of pictures

they planned to take that will represent their perspectives and understanding of an enabling learning environment. The participants were then informed by me to take four photographs with the given prompt “Take four photographs that represent your understanding of an enabling learning environment and another four photographs that represent how the university could create an enabling learning environment for you in the context of HIV and AIDS“(see Appendix 3), making the total photographs taking by each participant to be eight.

This photovoice process took the participants more than an hour to complete as envisaged by me. More time was consumed in this session as the participants were going around the campus taking pictures that depicted their understanding of an enabling learning environment and how it could be created in the context of HIV and AIDS. The reason I chose eight photographs each from the participants, making 96 photographs in total, was more accurate and rich descriptive data from the interpretations of their photographs, which drew on the participants’ understandings, experiences and perspectives of an enabling learning environment and how it could be created in the context of HIV and AIDS. On returning with their photographs, I opened twelve folders on my personal laptop, one for each participant, and uploaded and saved their pictures in it.

Session 3

Photo interpretation

Immediately the participants returned, their photographs were uploaded to the respective folders created for each of them in my laptop with the description of participants 1 to 12. The 96 photographs were saved in a folder marked as “Peaceville photos”. A photo-interpretation session (2011) involves a process in which the participants generate and explain the meaning of the pictures they capture. This had to take place in their respective homes because of the time factor and due to the cold weather caused by the winter season. The participants agreed that due to the time factor they will interpret their pictures in their respective homes and send them to my email. Thus, this they did by giving me their emails in which I sent them the various folders containing their individual photographs, so they could interpret them and send them back to me in a week’s time. In this session, I requested that the participants interpret their photographs using a PowerPoint design that has content and caption on it, in order to arrange and upload their photographs according to the way I arranged it in their various folders so that they could affix the interpretations of their photographs in the space for content.

This stage of photo interpretation is regarded as the photo story because it allows participants to explain the message that is being portrayed by the photograph (De Lange, Mitchell & Stuart, 2011). It helps to generate data by eliciting the meanings and intentions the participants have behind each photograph. Cohen et al. (2011) note that, during photo interpretation, photographs are used to invoke, prompt and promote discussion, reflections, comments, observations, and memories. Mitchell (2011) affirms that by attempting to interpret our photographs enhances our understanding of the phenomenon and critical thinking skills. However, the participants were instructed by me to abide by the following prompts known as SHOWeD mnemonics (Wang & Burris, 1997) while interpreting their photographs and to give full detail of what the photographs mean. The following questions were used to probe their thoughts:

- What/ who is in the photograph?
- Why did you take the photograph?
- How do you feel about the photograph? (See Appendix 4)

The reason for employing the photovoice approach for the study was to enable me to stimulate, enhance and trigger discussion on the international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment, and on how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. The photovoice approach was used in this study to complement the focus group discussion method. Photovoice also is consistent with Bandura's (2008; 2012) agentic capability theory while places participants as active agents who are situated within a context. People do not live and learn in isolation or in autonomy but within a context that influences their actions (Bandura, 2006). Using photovoice also enabled the participants to talk about their experiences freely using artefacts, that is, their photographs.

4.5.3.3 Self-reflective essay

- *What does it mean?*

This is an important method of generating data in educational research (Khanare, 2015) According to Pithouse-Morgan (2011), a self-reflective essay is an activity that allows the participants to write down their thoughts on the issues being researched and to reflect on the issues and events surrounding the issues. Khanare (2015) notes that self-reflective essays provide positive and negative information concerning the participants' worlds, about the research process and the researcher. In a similar vein, Rocha (2008) stipulates that a self-

reflective essay is a genre in which people take time to reflect personally on events, places, people or ideas that affect them. In addition, it is composed of the participants' viewpoint. Shields (2010) further asserts that the aim of reflective essays is to lead participants into a more profound way to deal with learning, utilising reflection on their sentiments, what they watched, and their observations as they relate it to their own personal encounters. Furthermore, Shields (2010) contends that a self-reflective essay is the result of a cognizant arrangement to ponder on certain parts of learning. Therefore, it enhances students' understanding of how occasions in the world impact their lives.

- *Using a self-reflective essay in the study*

At the end of the photovoice sessions, the participants were requested to write a self-reflective essay on their experiences of engaging and participating in the photovoice process. The participants were prompted thus: "Write what you have learnt today while participating in the photovoice process" (see Appendix 6). This prompt was also guided with the following questions to assist the participants:

- Write about today's session
- Write how you felt
- Write about your experiences of engaging and participating in the photovoice process.

This self-reflective essay was done by the participants in their respective homes due to time pressure. It had been scheduled to take place immediately after the photo-interpretation session but could not be held due to the weather and time factor. However, we reached an agreement to do it at their homes and send it to me by email with their photo-interpretation, which they did. The self-reflective essay was used in this study because it enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the way my participants think and act, as well as how they make informed decisions on issues that affect them. This method was used in other words to explain the growth and development of the participants' learning experiences while engaging and participating in the photovoice process. Marchinton and Wilkinson (2012) state that learning from experience is assisted by the use of self-reflective essays. Therefore, this method was used to answer sub-question 3 on how the use of photovoice could enable agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. The next section discusses the focus group discussion, which was one of the major data generation method employed to generate data for this study.

4.5.3.4 Focus group discussion

Different studies on qualitative research have identified the importance of doing research and using focus group discussions to generate data. This method of data generation is quite distinct from the focus group interview, being used to explore people's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Redmond and Curtis (2009) also assert that focus group discussions compel researchers to engross themselves in their participants' lives and to stress the significance of an issue. To Babbie (2013), focus group discussion provides researchers with the opportunity to discuss with various participants concurrently and systematically. Punch (2013) also contends that, during a focus group discussion, researchers work with various participants simultaneously instead of individually. This suggests that the method is an appropriate approach to be used for this study because, during the interpretation of the photographs, not every detail of the pictures was interrogated well by the participants. The focus group discussion helped me in dealing with some of the issues that could not be dealt with during the photovoice session, in particular during the photo interpretations/narrations sessions. Meanwhile, the focus group discussion was used to complement the photovoice approach. The focus group discussion was conducted thrice in the convenient place chosen by the participants which are the research commons seminar room at the campus and each session lasted for one and half hours with four participants each in the group.

According to Newby (2010), using focus group discussion in social research helps to clarify issues and must take place in a conducive setting in order to enable discussion and to enhance critical thinking and reflection. Punch (2013) similarly affirms that a well-facilitated focus group discussion can expose issues that are hidden. Other benefits of engaging in a focus group discussion are that it is stimulating, cheap, generates rich data, is flexible, cumulative, elaborative and aids recall (Cohen et al., 2011). Holloway and Wheeler (2002) agree that this method is a cheaper and quicker way of obtaining valuable data and that all participants including the researcher have an opportunity to ask questions, and these will produce more information than individual interviews. Furthermore, while using this method. The researcher may be faced with the problem of managing debates and controlling the process with the participants (Cohen et al., 2011). Despite such problems, this method is valuable in picking up a feeling of the scope of differences of participants, whose perspectives in the group are predominant and whose minimal and it helps to initiate dialogue based on the understanding of the participants in the gathering (Rule & John, 2011). The discussion during the meeting

becomes interesting in generating data as the researcher attempts to question those elements of human behaviours. In this study, the focus group discussion provided more debate and helped me to generate rich data from the participants' perspectives, experiences, ideas and views on how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

- Moreover, the focus group discussion was most helpful in generated thick and rich data to answer research questions 3 and 4 on why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and on how the university could create such an enabling learning environment for them. The focus group discussion helped my participants to engage in discussions through open-ended questions, to reflect, argue and to produce rich and in-depth information. In this study, three focus groups discussion was held, with four participants in each group. Each of the focus group session lasted for one and a half hours and with the consent of the participants. I used an audio tape recorder and a field note to capture the information elicited from the participants. Consequently, using these three data generation methods (photovoice, focus group discussion and self-reflective essay) resulted in having huge data that needs to be well handled and to be kept safe. The three data generation methods also contributed to the credibility of the study and enhanced triangulation.

The three focus group discussion sessions were held in a safe and convenient place chosen by the participants which enabled me to use my audio recorder effectively with the permission of the participants. Each session of the focus group discussion lasted for one and a half hours and it took place during the weekdays of the 16th of May 2018, 14th of June 2018 and on the 10th of July 2018 between 12 pm to 2 pm each day.

During the focus group meetings, as the facilitator, I started by introducing myself to the participants again and also asked them to introduce themselves and to choose pseudonyms to replace their names. This stage was very interesting and fun because the participants decided to choose names that depict what an enabling environment means to them. The reason I asked them to choose names was to enable them to feel relaxed and comfortable with one another during the discussion. Despite knowing one another from ISO, I saw that the atmosphere was a bit tense. Meanwhile, I also reminded them of the purpose and aim of the study. By the time that the participants were now fully relaxed and ready to engage in the conversation, I went on

to explain to them that their participation in the focus group discussion was voluntary and that they were free not to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable with. All the focus group discussion meetings were an interactive session and were filled with critical dialogue.

4.5.3.5 Triangulation in the study

Triangulation is a process of using more than one data generation method to generate data and to examine some characteristics of human behaviour (Cohen et al. (2011, p.195). Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2011) argue that triangulation includes employing several sources of data to enhance the validity of a study. Carter et al. (2014) claim that triangulation is a qualitative research method used in testing validity by mixing information from other sources. There are various types of triangulation purposes used in research. Patton (1990) identifies four different types of triangulation used in research: methodological triangulation; investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation. This study employed three data generation methods: photovoice, self-reflective essay and focus group discussion (methodological triangulation) to enable triangulation. In addition, the field notes enabled me to compare the data generated from the three methods to derive similar or concurrent results. The use of these three methods added depth to the results of the data generated thereby enhancing the trustworthiness (credibility) of the findings in the study (Guion et al., 2011). Therefore, the data generated from the photovoice (textual and visual), self-reflective essay (textual) and the focus group discussion (verbal and textual) could be analysed thematically, as discussed in the next section.

4.6. DATA ANALYSIS

This section discusses how the data generated for the study were analysed. It also discusses and justifies thematic analysis (Tesch, 1990), the data analysis process used in this study and clarifies how the data was analysed to reach and recontextualise the findings.

Data analysis is vital in a research project because it is the point where all the data generated through various research methods are examined in order to obtain conclusions on the issue being researched (Newton, 2010). In contrast, Nene (2016) claims that it is a very difficult procedure that may leave the researcher with huge data that needs to be analysed. Cohen et al.

(2012) concur with Nene and maintain that data analysis is a complex process that involves organising, accounting and summarising the data in order to make meaning out of it according to the patterns, themes, categories and regularities of the participants. Based on this issue, Lichtman (2012) claims that data analysis is a long-lasting process.

The data generated in the study were analysed in three ongoing stages. Clarke and Braun (2013) highlight that, in data analysis, using detailed research questions enables grouping and patterns while recording themes within the data are vital in describing a phenomenon with a detailed research question. In the context of the current study, the thematic analysis method was adopted (Tesch, 1990; Clarke & Braun, 2013) to present an in-depth understanding of how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS, international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment; on why they need an enabling learning environment on the context of HIV and AIDS; and lastly how the use of photovoice could enable agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.

In the first stage, I firstly generated data using diverse data generation methods like photovoice, self-reflective essay and focus group discussion with the participants. Secondly; I organised the data (visual, textual and verbal data) and identified the common themes. Mouton (2008) therefore argues that in doing thematic analysis, researchers must consider the following which is the familiarisation with data, create main codes, examine themes, review themes, explain the themes, and provide names for the themes and lastly generate the final report. Rich, Brians, Manheim, and Willnat (2018) also indicate that researchers doing the thematic analysis, must identify relevant themes from irrelevant information in the data and break the relevant information to small segments that reflect a specific thought. In addition, they further assert that the segments must put into categories that reflect different meanings of the phenomenon as it is experienced (Rich et al., 2018). Furthermore, Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, and Walker (2018) in their study highlight also that the researcher must be considerate of the different ways in which participants may experience the phenomenon during analysis.

Hence, in this first stage, I followed the data analysis pattern of Tesch (1990); Leedy and Ormrod (2010); Marshal and Rossman (2011) and Nieuwenhuis (2007c; 2016c) by firstly organising the data to make sense of it. Consequently, the data generated for the study were analysed by identifying codes from the transcripts and photograph interpretations after I had

engrossed and absorbed myself in the data (Cohen et al., 2011; Devos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). It is important to note that I read the transcript several times to immerse myself in the data so that I could gain an in-depth understanding of each participants' perspectives, views, and knowledge about how an enabling environment could be created for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. This was supported by categorising the codes with similar responses for themes. However, the transcription of the verbatim quotes was done by the field researcher and was shown to the participants to verify for accuracy (to see if it was their word or not). In addition, I also informed participants that access to the thesis and published work of this study would be made available to them after the completion of the study.

The next stage was the data interpretation stage. This required that the huge data obtained from the photovoice interpretation, the self-reflective essay and the transcribed verbatim audio recorder from the focus group discussion were analysed thematically (Tesch, 1990). By adopting thematic analysis in this study, I was able to code and categorise the textual and visual data obtained from the study and place them into themes and subthemes to assist me in explaining and understanding how an enabling learning environment could be created for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Makhasane (2014) indicates that this the focal point of qualitative analysis. Similarly, Marshal and Rossman (2011) also confirm that this is a very difficult job that needs qualitative researchers to make use of their coding instruments. Coding was done in this study by using coloured pens and markers to label the themes. In addition, I also used photographs in the discussion of the themes, where relevant. Khanare (2015) argues that themes are constructed through the participants' diverse perspectives and are fortified using diverse proofs like photographs, collages, drawings, and quotes that are aided by discussions.

In the second stage, primary data (visual and textual) was employed in the study and was generated through several sources and analysed thematically. I used thematic analysis in this study to analyse data since it is greatly used as a qualitative research instrument and it is a flexible method to use in analysing research data (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Christiansen et al., 2010; Tesch, 1990). Drawing on Yin (2018), the data generated was analysed in relation to the facts, perspectives, experiences, feelings, motives, present and past behaviours, standards for behaviour as well as reasons for certain actions. The thematic analysis of the verbatim quotes from the focus group discussion and the interpretations of the photographs followed by the self-reflective essay by the participants in their replies disclosed certain themes that were

identified to be suitable for the study and in agreement with the participants (Tesch, 1990). Themes were organised based on the replies/answers from each research question.

This is the last stage of the data analysis which is about doing an in-depth discussion of the main themes. In this stage, the research questions were responded to and a combination of the findings was presented, drawing on the current literature and the theoretical framework of Bandura's agentic capability theory used in the study. Clarke and Braun (2014) stipulate that themes uncover the crucial elements in the data which relate to the research questions. This clearly depicts that the data derived from the study were grouped and arranged as themes and sub-themes (categories). As Nieuwenhuis (2016c) suggests, I continually moved amongst the current literature and theory to explore wisdom from the data. Meanwhile, the themes that emerged from the data were based on knowledge and information from the participants that spoke about how the university could create an enabling environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS; their understandings of an enabling learning environment; why they need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and how the use of photovoice could enable agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, similar and contradicting themes were identified in the literature in order to assess the importance and essence of the findings.

4.7. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

In qualitative research, qualitative researchers are concerned about the trustworthiness of the research. A study that is qualitative in nature and not quantitative does not demand measurement and striving for the validity and reliability of the research methods. Babbie and Mouton (2010) argue that the qualitative approach used in this study requires trustworthiness before being published. In the interpretive paradigm, the researcher believes that there are multiple truths and not a single truth (Creswell, 2011, 2016; Maree, 2007) and is involved in gaining an in-depth understanding of the way people create meaning of the context in which they are situated in (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Ensuring trustworthiness in this qualitative research study is important as it concerns itself with the issues of validity and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that trustworthiness is referred to as ways in which the researcher assures their readers that their findings/results can be trusted, and the research is worthwhile. The case study research also relies on generating an in-depth understanding and

insights into an issue in a particular instance (Rule & John, 2011). Participants in this context are active agents and experts of their own world.

In a qualitative research project, four criteria are employed to ensure trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Christiansen et al., 2010). Therefore, the study aims to explore and understand how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS; their understanding of an enabling learning environments, why they need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and lastly on how could the use of photovoice could enable their agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. So, in enhancing and ensuring trustworthiness in this research study, four criteria of trustworthiness used in qualitative research were applied by me.

4.7.1. Credibility

Credibility is described by Christiansen et al. (2010) as when the result of the research study reveals the realities and lived experiences of the participants. Babbie. Mouton, Vorster, and Prozesky (2004) also assert that credibility involves several strategies such as engaging in lengthy meetings; constant observation; triangulation; peer probing; sufficient references; and member verification. I addressed credibility in this study by employing several techniques. First, I was a student and was familiar with the structures and people on the university campus where the study was conducted. This is because I spent a long time in the participants' context as a student living in the campus residence from 2013 to date which is six years now. Secondly, I employed three data generations method to generate data on the phenomenon. These data generation methods complemented one another and were used to ensure credibility in the study: an audio recorder with the permission of the participants, field notes to record participants' discussions during the photovoice and three focus group sessions (Creswell, 2009). In addition, I enlisted the help of a competent field worker who assisted me in transcribing the data from the audio recorder after the three focus group discussion sessions. Results from the findings were also presented in our departmental Ph.D. cohort on a weekly basis. Lastly, the transcripts, photographs, and interpretation of findings were taken back to participants to check for accuracy and to see if anything was added to their responses or any word was omitted.

4.7.2 Confirmability

This is to measure how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data generated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011). In a similar vein, Anney (2014) argues that confirmability is the point that the findings of an inquiry are collaborated by other researchers. Moon et al. (2016) explain that confirmability is ensured in the study when the researcher clearly proves that the findings of the study are connected to the conclusions in a way that it can be duplicated as a research process. In addition, Bowen (2009) further highlights that confirmability is attained through an audit trail, reflexive journal or field note, and triangulation. Therefore, data was generated using photovoice, self-reflective essay and focus group discussion methods to achieve triangulation in the study. In addition, the issue of confirmability in this study was addressed by making sure that enough evidence was provided to back my data interpretations and that I do not make unsubstantiated claims from my findings, drawing on the triangulation purposes. I also ensured that I had a critical reader and friend who constantly criticised my research analysis constructively.

4.7.3 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of the study could be applied or transferred to another context (Christiansen et al., 2010; Babbie & Mouton, 2010). This is in contrast with the quantitative research approach, in which researchers try to explain how their results/findings could be generalised to the population in which the study was conducted. In qualitative research, the results of a study cannot be generalised (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Cohen et al., 2011). Therefore, transferability is not the same as generalisation. Transferability is created through rich description and purposive sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance transferability in this study, the researcher created a thick description by clearly explaining the research design, challenges encountered while generating the data, theoretical framework used to frame the study, and provided a detailed description of the data site, literature reviewed, and the theoretical framework (Moore, 2007) as well as the data analysis and interpretations of the findings.

4.7.4 Dependability

The concept 'dependability' is regarded as the consistency and trustworthiness of the research results and the extent in which the research process is recorded in ways that enable Thus,

qualitative researchers do a detailed record of their research design and application involving the research methodologies and instruments and the data generational methods such as the field notes and self-reflective essay used in this study (Shenton, 2004). Dependability was addressed in this study by ensuring that well-defined research questions were included, and a specific research design and analysis process was provided. The process followed to analyse the data and in conducting the research was clearly explained as well, revealing how the findings responded to the research questions. Guba and Lincoln (1994) with Lincoln et al. (2011) state that dependability in qualitative research is assessing the quality of combining the data generation, data analysis, and theory generation processes. In this study, the results were reported showing international students' voices, represented through artefacts (photographs) verbatim quotes, photo interpretations and self-reflective essays without alteration or correction.

4.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Christiansen et al. (2010), ethics in research is regarded as a very important issue, most especially in studies that deal with humans and animals. Key ethical permissions were considered and applied for before conducting this study. For instance, permission was granted as I sought for it, from the university and the campus where the research was conducted (see Appendix One and Two). In addition, permission was obtained from the twelve participants in this study, and I clearly explained the research in order to get their consent. The research purpose was clearly explained to the participants as they were issued consent letters (see Appendix Three), which were signed before the study was conducted. The participants were made aware of their rights to participate or withdraw at any stage of the research (Cohen et al., 2011; Rule & John, 2011; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). During the data generation method (photovoice session and focus group discussion), I made sure that the participants' rights were not violated all through the research process (Cohen et al., 2011). I also requested their permission every time during the focus group discussion to record their conversation using an audio recorder. Furthermore, I ensured that the study was non-maleficent and beneficial to the participants by expanding their knowledge and understanding of how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS (Christiansen et al., 2010). I ensured that the anonymity and confidentiality of the research context and participants were guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2007),

as I gave them the right to choose names that represent their understandings of an enabling learning environment, which would be indicated on top of their photographs.

However, using PVM as a research method is confronted with many ethical issues. This view is supported by Wiles et al. (2008), who also indicate that visual methods raise ethical issues. Mitchell (2011) highlights the importance of identifying issues and solutions that comes with photographs when including visual data in research. To Miller (2018), including photographs or other visual images offers an exceptional set of ethical considerations and Wiles et al. (2008) state that one of the major ethical issues facing visual research is how to manage anonymity and confidentiality regarding visual images. Therefore, I ensured that visual ethics was considered in this study during the photovoice session, by reminding the participants about the ethics of 'photography' during the photovoice workshop. According to Mitchell (2011), photovoice ethical measures include the avoidance of identifiable issues while taking photographs. For example, photographs of people, signs or symbols are not permitted in this aspect. Participants were instructed by me to issue a permission letter known as "Permission to use the photographs" (see Appendix Six). If they insisted on taking photos of people, the person should ensure he/she has given them the permission to use their photographs for the study (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001, p. 565). Although the researcher cannot guarantee the confidentiality of the pictures, if something goes wrong, measures will be employed by myself as the researcher to blur the photograph (Mitchell, 2011). Wiles et al. (2008) further state that, since the issue of consent, anonymity, and confidentiality are essential in visual research, however, it can be managed as shown above.

4.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research approach, design, and paradigm employed in the conduct of the study were discussed. I also explained how the research approaches were addressed by my research questions for this study. In addition, the research methodology and how data were generated and analysed was expounded on as well as discussed. Furthermore, I discussed the processes that I took to ensure trustworthiness in the study. Lastly, the essential ethical issues that were considered in this study were clarified. This chapter has presented the knowledge needed to assist in understanding the presentation of findings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

CREATING AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the research design and explained the correct methodological and interpretive approaches used to generate data. This chapter then presents the participants' perspectives, experiences, ideas and knowledge of how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. It does by presenting four key findings. The first centres on the international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment, which is revealed in their international students need an enabling learning environment in the photographs during the photovoice session. The second presents the context of HIV and AIDS; the focus group discussion method was used to generate data for this theme. Furthermore, the third finding addresses the main research question guiding this study: How can the university create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS? This relied mainly on the photovoice method and focus group discussion method to generate data.

The photovoice method gave a very good explanation of the different strategies that the university could use to create enabling learning for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS through visual artefacts. The focus group discussion method revealed the roles played by different enablers in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. In presenting the data, the researcher uses verbatim quotations and included the participants' photographs and their accompanying explanation where necessary to ensure that the participants' 'voices' stay intact in the study. Finally, the last finding draws on international students' self-reflective essays on how the use of photovoice could enable international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. The chapter then ends with a succinct summary.

During the analysis of the data, four themes emerged from the findings which are: *International students' construction of an enabling learning environment; International students' need for an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS; The multi-dimensional strategies for creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS, and, lastly, Photovoice agency and capabilities of international students in an enabling learning environment.* These themes and their findings are presented and described in the next section.

5.2. THEME ONE: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CONSTRUCTION OF AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

This is the first theme that emerged from the findings of the study and responds to research question 1: *What are international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment?* The international students' construction of an enabling learning environment through photovoice was represented by the following five subthemes/categories: *improve wellbeing; enhance learning; enabling creativity; encouraging active learning and engagement and promoting active participation.* These emerged from the findings of the study demonstrating the international students' diverse and multiple understandings, experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of an enabling learning environment, as revealed through photographs. Permission was granted by the participants before presenting the photographs (see Chapter 4). While presenting this data, the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and autonomy were recognised (Cohen et al., 2012). Furthermore, all the photographs were interpreted into English by the participants, making it easy for me to understand and analyse. The verbatim quotes were presented as it is, showing the participants' voices. However, during the photovoice process, I gave the participants the following prompt: *Take four photographs of your understanding of an enabling learning environment' Then explain who is in the photographs, why you took the photographs and what is in the photographs.* The figure 5.1 below, presents the findings that emerged in theme one.



Figure 5.4 International students' construction of an enabling learning environment

5.2.1. Promote a healthy lifestyle

This subtheme represents the international students' thoughts, understanding, and knowledge of what an enabling learning environment is. For international students, to study, think, reflect and develop holistically depends on the kind of learning environment they are located in. This implies that a learning environment could either enable, enhance or inhibit the students from learning and achieving their academic goals. However, participants through their photographs intuitively showed the positive aspects of their perceptions, thoughts, and understanding of an enabling learning environment in their host context. I identified from the photographs presented by the participants that they have some common elements that were interpreted in different ways, indicating how unique they are. The participants viewed an enabling learning environment as an environment that promotes healthy lifestyles, as discussed in the following categories that emerged which are: *sustainable healthy environment and a safe and secure environment*. The next section describes these categories that emerged from this theme.

5.2.1.1. Sustainable healthy environment

The international students clearly stipulated through their photographs and their explanation that an enabling learning environment is a sustainable healthy environment. This enhances environmental and human health and assists students to develop holistically. They described it as an environment that promotes and encourages a healthy lifestyle and student engagement in physical activities in order to keep fit. This environment will help the students to care and maintain their health, become proactive, develops personal skills, be fit, look refreshed, have

contact with nature as well as receive fresh air in order to enhance their health. It also helps to promote the physical and emotional activities of international students. The following quotations from some of the participants elucidate this:

Friendly:

It is where our health is being promoted and most of the health facilities required to reduce the spread of HIV and AIDS are made available there.

Inclusive:

...a healthy environment. In this type of healthy environment, people are cared for and well-fed and it enables the students to develop individual skills.

Some of the participants acknowledged that an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS promotes sustainability. This means that it ensures learning stability, promotes academic success and helps students to develop their individual skills by promoting and encouraging students to live a healthy and active lifestyle. This would help them develop holistically. The following comments from some of the participants are presented below:

Safe proposed that:

...With light comes stability and clarity... learning becomes easy, stable and achievable in such an environment...

Resourceful also added that:

...provide its students with sustainable living and learning communities that are critical to the success of the academic project.

Similarly, another participant, Support, commented:

...an enabling learning environment particularly in the context of HIV and AIDS enables each student to play a part in keeping their body healthy and fit all the time.

A specific feature in the participants' view of an enabling learning environment as a sustainable healthy environment was the impact of the physical environment on promoting their health. Most of the participants spoke about their experiences of encountering nature. Being given the opportunity to learn in a healthy and stress-free open space with better quality, refreshing air, enabled them to think, reflect and interact socially with their peers.

Secured added:

It is an open space for refreshing one's self, to think and reflect with easy walkways, spacious places for students to exercise together and a space to receive fresh air.

Cooperative affirmed that:

...it is a place to have contact with nature. A place where we can receive fresh air and breathe well. It is free from the confinement of space/classroom.

One of the participants' explanations of her photograph suggests that it provides and promotes social and emotional activity in order to overcome depression, stress, and frustration.

According to Welcoming, this included emotional health:

... provides psychosocial and emotional services to its students so as to help them to deal with different forms of depression, stress, anxiety, and frustration. This will help to improve international student's health.

The responses from the above quotations revealed that an enabling learning environment is a sustainable healthy environment that promotes human and environmental health. In addition, the finding reveals that it is an environment that enables its students to develop their personal skills while living a healthy and active lifestyle to keep fit.

5.2.1.2 Safe and secure environment

Most of the international students indicated that an enabling learning environment is a safe and secure environment. Such an environment should promote intellectual, physical and emotional security, which they referred to as a safe and secure environment, one that makes students feel safe and relaxed to learn and develop holistically. In addition, it is seen also as an environment that promotes students' learning and improves their respect for one another as well as protects them from any form of harm and external threats. However, the participants indicated that it is an environment that protects human life and properties. Some of the participants gave the following statements:

Friendly indicated that:

...an enabling learning environment... offers a safe and comfortable space, like a relaxing and secured space for us, students, to conduct research.

Secured points out that the learning environment should protect students from harm as he mentioned the gains of international students while learning in such an environment:

...a protected and secured environment. There are guards located at the entrance/gate of the university. This shows that in this kind of environment international students will be able to critically think, learn and develop and won't be afraid or scared of anyone trying to harm us. Our mind will be relaxed and at peace.

Some of the participants argued that the presence of security officers around the campus and at the entrance of the campus to control people coming in and going out of the campus made them feel physical, emotionally and intellectually safe in the campus environment.

Peaceful pointed out:

...people who goes in and out of the university campus are controlled. It also showed that people who are not supposed to be here are not here although some students can be dangerous, their activities can be checkmated, and they can be easily identified. This makes us feel safe and our minds to be at ease.

Caring was of the view that:

An enabling learning environment is an environment that is safe and secured. It is also an environment where you do not have anyone attacking you, no one threatens you. In this environment, one feels comfortable to learn and to develop academically, emotionally and physically.

One of the participants noted how a peaceful and safe environment enables students to comprehend the rules guiding their academic achievements:

The more students' study in an area of peace and safety, the better they are internalising the norms and standards expected of their academic pursuit (Conducive).

Additionally, one of the participants expressed concern about the incessant strikes and protest actions by local students which, according to him, challenges his thinking about who is responsible for ensuring an enabling learning environment. The findings of this study show that currently the environment is not safe or secured for international students due to the incessant strikes and protest actions by the local students. This view was succinctly indicated below:

...a peaceful and quiet learning environment free of external parties such as the police. It also challenges my thinking about who is responsible for the creation of enabling learning where students can enjoy, take pictures around and be proud of the school even after graduation. (Safe).

The findings from the above verbatim quotes of the participants showed that international students considered an enabling learning environment to be an environment that is safe and secured. The photovoice interpretations revealed that the participants understand and enabling the learning environment to be a comfortable environment that will make the international students feel physical, emotionally, socially and intellectually safe and enable them to learn, develop and grow holistically as well as attain their academic goals.

5.2.2. Academic support

All the participating international students indicated that in the context of HIV and AIDS and enabling learning environment is an environment that provides and offers academic support to its students. This will enable them to become more focused on their studies, be productive, finish their studies on time and have a sound and healthy mind. It should provide, support and meet their educational/academic needs, as they indicate that it would help and enable them to achieve their academic goals and support themselves academically. This is evident in the comments of Friendly:

An enabling learning environment is an environment that will help international students to focus on their education and finish their studies in record time and be productive. The idea of finishing their studies in record time and going back home with sound health is vital in this kind of environment.

One of the participants also highlighted that an enabling learning environment supports their learning and helps them to become focused which is one of the major reasons, they are in their host environment to study as seen in the case of Secured:

... an environment that supports our learning and helps us to be more focused. Ehmm that is the reason we are here to study.

Some of the participants also identified that receiving academic support in an enabling learning environment will help them to become more conscientized and educated on issues going on in their learning environment:

An environment that will make us become more conscientized and educated that would help not just us but also the local people here. So, it will help us to be cautious about our environment and know how to act and talk. (Cooperative).

Furthermore, all the participating international students indicated that an enabling learning environment is an environment that provides different learning resources like human, material, non-material and physical resources to support their learning. These resources according to the participants should be made available for students, so they could draw on their learning experiences from them in order to grow, develop and achieve their academic goals. The following quotes were stressed by the participants on how these resources (human, material and nonphysical) could support and shape their learning academically and help them develop:

An enabling learning environment offers students support academically when the students are having academic challenges. The administrators can assist the students and offer support. In addition, sometimes when we get feedback from our supervisor and it's not clear. It is a place that can throw more light for the students and give more ideas and insight. (Friendly).

Some also identified the availability of the dynamic learning resources in their learning environment that supported their academics, such as a whole range of teaching and learning resources (hard and print resources) and the learning spaces, for example, the Local Area Network (thereafter, LAN) and Library. This is discussed in the following excerpts below:

According to Friendly:

The university library has a variety of resources like books and journals that will help us, students, to access and find what we need to learn or even to work with our research. It is important for the library to have a big space so as to offer an environment conducive for studying and doing research too. A university library also contains resources like computers and internet services that help students to use them to complete their assignments. Moreover, the university library has assistants and library staff who can help students with special needs.

Some of the participants added that other resources (non-material), like the Information Computer Technology (thereafter, ICT) facilities like WIFI, projectors, cameras, and video in the university should be made available and accessible to them to use and support their academic/learning in an enabling learning environment.

Cooperative illustrated below:

A place where all ICT facilities /resources like internet, WIFI, computers, printers are made available. They also offer us a space for knowledge sharing/engagement with other people.

Resourceful also indicated:

Where ultramodern podium with their projector and document camera that tutors and lecturers could easily teach with for visual and audio learning that enhances understanding of students.

Other international students that participated in the study also identified some other physical resources like the learning space on the campus, for example, the LAN, library and study areas where they could read, do their group work, engage in discussion and share ideas. They indicated that assistance and support are received in this place. According to the participants:

The LAN is one of the resources for conducting research made available for both undergraduate and postgraduate students to support our learning. In addition, assistance and support is also received here (Convenient, Participant 8)

Caring also added:

...spaces created for students for convenient learning, group work, open discussion and ability to be free and learn with entertainment and socialise.

The above excerpts revealed that their understanding of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS is an environment that supports its students academically. It should offer the students academic support so that they would be focused on their studies, become productive, and finish their studies on time. Participants suggested that the university could provide academic support by ensuring that human, material, physical and non-material resources are made available for their learning.

5.2.3. Financial support

All the participating international students indicated that an enabling learning environment is an environment that offers financial support to their students, in the form of providing/offering scholarships and funds to their students as well as giving them opportunities to work as tutors or part-time lecturers so that they could sustain themselves in the context of HIV and AIDS

and enhance their economic welfare. More so, the findings also showed that a lack of financial support might make the international students vulnerable and make them engage in vices like prostitution or stealing that would influence their learning and development negatively. These excerpts from the participants' responses showed their understanding of an enabling learning environment as an environment that provides financial support to international students:

Peaceful stated:

As an international student here, we need financial support. For me, I see an enabling learning environment as an environment that provides financial support to help their students support themselves here like providing jobs, scholarships or funding's so that we can sustain ourselves.

Welcoming also said:

Ehmm, international students need more support, like financial support to help them support themselves here and finish their studies on time here.

Resourceful asserted:

... for me, I see an enabling learning environment as an environment that provides financial support to students like us who are self-funded in order to continue with our education and not to be involved in different bad things like prostitution and stealing to make money which will affect our health and study negatively.

Another participant, Resourceful, confirmed that:

...talking about funding for international students. The university needs to provide financial support for international students like jobs or scholarships to help them sustain themselves and make the environment enabling for them.

Participants perceive an enabling learning environment to be an environment that supports its students financially, by offering them resources like academic funding, scholarships, and job opportunities in order to make their learning environment enabling and help them to sustain themselves. According to the participants, studying in an environment that is not enabling causes many negative issues like making them vulnerable to diseases such as HIV and AIDS that could negatively affect their learning and development.

5.2.4. Encourages social integration

Participants saw an enabling learning environment as an environment that encourages social integration among its students and its local community. According to the participants, it is an environment that should promote students' appraisal of their self-worth, a caring and empathetic environment which should encourage cross-cultural relationships /interaction between the international students and their local peers. In addition, it is regarded as an environment that enables students to develop a sense of social belonging and also enhances the student's relationships with academic and non-academic staff and the local community. The encouragement of social integration in an enabling learning environment will help to enhance their learning and development, as was expressed by the following participants:

Caring highlighted:

...Ehmm! When international students relocate to another country, in particular here South Africa and they found it enabling to their learning. There is a tendency of cross-cultural interaction/integration that will take place among them and when there is interaction between them and the locals there may be some sort of cross-cultural, ahhh, relationships which in actual fact some international student might begin to imbibe the culture of their host country which helps them to feel belonged, enable them to share ideas and support one another.

Conducive also noted:

It is an environment that promotes cross-cultural fertilization of exchange of ideas, social ideas and intellectual life on campus. This makes us feel included in whatever is going on here in this university, you know.

Inclusive indicated that to study in an enabling learning environment provides an opportunity for them as international students to come together with local students to learn and exchange knowledge with one another. This finding is also based on their attendance at an event organised by the international student's office of the university last year which enabled them to experience and engage with other international students. The following quotations reveal the participants' utterances concerning their social experiences:

Inclusive:

An enabling learning environment should be an environment that provides cross-cultural, cross-national ehhh interaction because you know when you have a global

context when you have international students coming in, you have a global context of whatever you are studying. For example, in the last international students' day organised by the university international office, it was such a wonderful event and experience for me because I had to taste so many international cuisines, meet and interact with my fellow international students from other campuses.

Another participant, Resourceful indicated:

...relating with other international and local students on a social level is what enabling learning should encourage. For me, I will say this our campus needs to encourage and give us the opportunity to integrate and interact with the local students and to learn from each other's cultures. Let say how will I know what is going on in Germany or in Umhlanga, how will I learn about their culture, if I don't have the opportunity to engage with ehhe a German here. So, it has a lot of, ehhe implication for global engagement with other people, having international knowledge, connections, networking even with jobs.

Evidence from the above quotations has shown that the participants want an environment that encourages social integration of its students with local communities as well as with other students (international/ local students) and staff, which will help them to learn from other people and develop interpersonal skills. Therefore, the next section explains why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.

5.3 THEME 2: THE SIGNIFICANCE AND NEED FOR AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (ELE, thereafter) IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS

This section responded to research question 2, which is *Why do international students need an enabling environment in the context of HIV and AIDS?* The focus group discussion (FGD, thereafter) method was used to generate data for this research question in this section. In this section, the findings from the FGD sessions produced two subthemes for this theme: **To address the challenges experienced by international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and to improve the well-being of international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.** These themes are represented below in Figure 5.2 and interpreted in the next section.

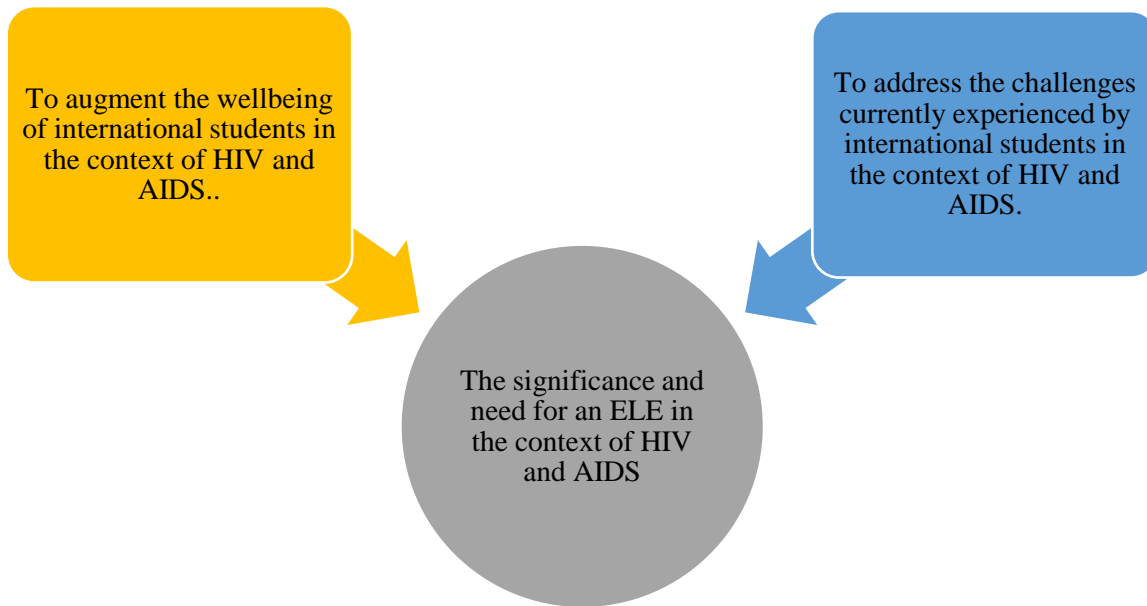


Figure 5.2 *The significance and need for an ELE in the context of HIV and AIDS*

5.3.1 *To improve the wellbeing of international students in the context of HIV and AIDS*

The responses from the participants in this study showed the significance of studying in an enabling learning environment. The participants indicated that improving their wellbeing means: *promoting their health, improving their psychological wellbeing, enhancing their learning skills and for financial stability*. These subthemes are explained in the next section.

5.3.1.1 Promote health

The findings of the study revealed that all of the participants in this study believe that they need an enabling learning environment to promote their health by engaging more in healthy lifestyles such as eating healthily and involving in different physical fitness activities and sports so as to keep fit and healthy. They indicated that learning in an environment that promotes their health will help them to achieve their academic goals, learn, develop and grow effectively. Therefore, the following excerpts from the participants below explain this:

International students need an enabling learning environment to maintain a healthy lifestyle so that they can develop holistically and achieve their academic goals. Health is wealth. (Supportive).

Having good sports programmes promotes students' health and also helps students not to engage in bad things like using drugs and alcohol. So, I think the university should organise events like sports bonanzas for international students so as to help them to have good health and develop properly. (Peaceful)

We need an environment that promotes our health especially through eating right and also encouraging us to exercise, you see it will help us to attain our academic goals here and be focused to finish our study on time. (Inclusive).

One of the participants also indicated that eating healthy would help to promote their health and help students affected with HIV and AIDS to boost their immune system.

The university cafeterias should promote the importance of eating healthy foods. This will help to promote our health and also help to boost the immune system of students affected with HIV and AIDS.

Some of the participants also revealed that another aspect of promoting their health is by having meetings and a routine check-up being carried out on the international students by the university health department. These views were candidly expressed by Caring and Resourceful in the following quotes below:

...the health department need to have meetings with international students. The health department in the university should be checking up on the students, especially international students regular this will help to promote our health here. (Caring)

I need to add that because the university needs healthy students, they should ensure that their health department always does a follow up to know how their international students are doing in their country and organise sports programmes to promote their health. (Resourceful)

The above excerpts revealed that international students need an enabling learning environment in order to promote their health, meaning staying well and living healthily, engaging in sports and physical fitness activities, and eating healthily. They believe that the enabling environment will help them learn, develop, and grow holistically, attain their academic goals and be focused on their study. It will also help them develop a healthy mindset.

5.3.1.2. *Enhance emotional and psychosocial wellbeing*

All the participants during the focus group discussion indicated that they need an enabling learning environment in order to enhance their emotional and psychological wellbeing. The study showed that the participants indicate that they need an enabling learning environment that will help them to feel safe, protected from harm, confident to move around within and outside their university environment and feel welcomed. This will enable the students to increase their academic performance and achieve academic success, as indicated in these quotes:

For Welcoming:

... international students would desire to have a conducive learning environment and part of the conducive environment is an environment where he or she can be psychologically balanced and also feel safe. (FGD 3).

Conducive indicated that:

You see, ehmm, anywhere an international student feels safe, to move around both within the academic and non-academic environment will be good and help us to enhance our psychological wellbeing. If a campus is not safe, and an international student is raped, she or he might contract HIV and AIDS and will be emotionally and psychologically affected. (FGD 3).

Secured contended:

You see learning or let me say doing research is purely a psychological work. It actually depends on the state of our being, on the state of our mind. If our mind is thinking about all the issues we are facing here, you see with such mind we cannot concentrate on our studies.

In a similar vein, Safe also stated:

To feel emotionally balanced, protected and not discriminated against so that we could learn properly and finish up our studies on time. (FGD 1).

Supportive also commented that:

International students need an enabling learning environment in other not to feel anxious (fear), unwelcome, alienated and discriminated. These things you know can

cause us not to concentrate on our studies and also affect us psychologically to lose focus and not academically balanced. (FGD 2)

The findings in the study revealed that international students need an enabling learning environment in order to improve their emotional and psychological wellbeing. It will help them to feel safe, protected, welcomed, be free to move around within and outside their learning environment and be more focused on their learning. In addition, the findings of the study also showed that when the students' emotional and psychological wellbeing is enhanced, they are able to overcome some of the challenges they face while adjusting and adopting to their learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and also concentrate on their studies to achieve their academic goals.

5.3.1.3 Enhance learning skills

All the participants in this study indicated they need an enabling learning environment in order to enhance their learning skills. They see their learning skills as enhanced by improving their critical thinking skills; communication skills; teamwork (collaborative skills) and encouraging active learning participation. This is presented below in figure 5.3.

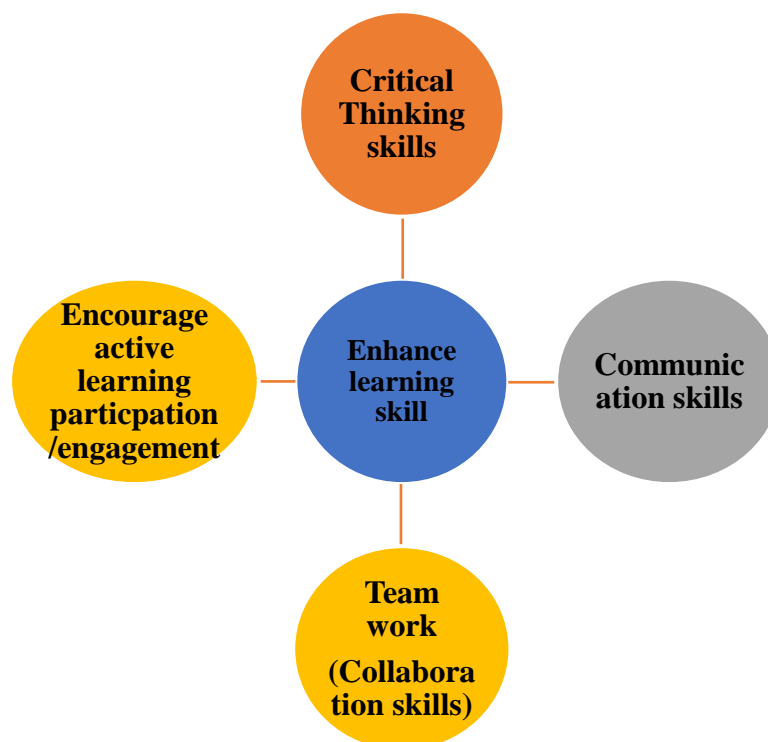


Figure 5.3 Diverse ways to enhance international students' learning skills

- **Critical thinking skills**

A significant element of an enabling learning environment is to develop and improve their critical thinking skills. Participants indicated that they need an enabling learning environment so that they could be able to think in-depth, analyse, develop problem-solving skills and gain a deep understanding of concepts in their learning, as is noted in some participants' responses:

Welcoming stated:

... to think deeply and outside of our intellectual expertise.

Peaceful indicated that:

... this will enable us to develop critical thinking skills, so as to be able to engage in our studies very well.

Convenient also asserted:

...to reflect, think and do my studies any time of the day which will assist me to have a good understanding of my studies.

Specifically, Inclusive stressed that:

We need an enabling learning environment in order to do an in-depth study in my area of specialisation..., to reflect on our studies and to develop critical thinking skills.

Another participant, Supportive, had this to say:

To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills to help us achieve academic success.

One of the participants, Secured, indicated that an enabling learning environment is important because it will enable students to develop analytic and critical thinking skills in their learning:

...to develop analytic and critical thinking skills so as have a clear understanding of my studies...

Furthermore, inclusive claimed that it is an environment that encourages students to become creative thinkers:

This environment aids the mind in being productive and impacts on student's ability to permeate their intellectual and academic depth and produce works and tasks work valuable and worthy.

The above excerpts indicate that improving the critical thinking skills of international students will help to improve their wellbeing in the context of HIV and AIDS and enable them to reach their potential and goals and help them achieve their academic success.

- **Communication skills**

A key finding is that participants thought that an enabling environment would be one that enables them to develop easy communication skills that will help the international students integrate, relate and interact with the local community. These illustrations are presented below:

Secured stated:

...to communicate through our body, feelings, and thoughts to other people...

Safe:

.... for interactions and interrelationships between us students and help us to engage with diverse people while learning.

Convenient:

.... for people to interact, develop interpersonal skills and to reason together...

Some participants asserted that they need an enabling learning environment in order to develop interpersonal skills and to engage in social learning among their peers/colleagues, which will help them learn from one another in the context of HIV and AIDS. One (Peaceful) spoke with excitement:

...Ahhh! In this context of HIV and AIDS, I will say it will help us develop interpersonal skills and it will also stimulate social learning, which is learning from one another and create a peaceful environment for learning.

For the participants in this study, improving their wellbeing depends on improving their communication skills in their learning environment. For Peaceful, an enabling learning environment is needed to stimulate their learning, for Secured, to communicate with other people using all their five senses.

- **Teamwork (collaborative skills)**

Most of the participants' responses identified that the significance of an enabling learning environment is to encourage them to work with others collaboratively and to help them increase their learning involvement and share ideas, which will assist them in enhancing their thinking

skills. Encouraging teamwork among the participants was a concept mentioned repeatedly by the participants during the focus group discussion, as shown in the following excerpts below:

Welcoming noted:

... working in teams or groups should be promoted, to help us students develop a sense of belonging.

Caring also commented:

...an environment where students could work together, share ideas and information...

Another participant who spoke with deep feeling emphasised that:

...it promotes unity between us students. The international students should have a feeling of acceptance by her/ his colleagues. So, in this kind of environment, they need to feel welcomed into the environment. In addition, with unity and acceptance to each international student, will enable them to work together collaboratively and as a team.

To these participants, an enabling learning environment is seen as an environment that enhances and promotes teamwork, which helps to enhance their learning skills. Such an environment is also characterised as a place that encourages students to increase their learning engagement. Some of the participants viewed that they need an enabling learning environment in order to work as a group, engage in cooperative learning and to be supported to learn and study collaboratively. One of the participants sums this up as follow:

We need an enabling learning environment, so as to learn as a team and also engage in cooperative learning and ehmm where we students can share and exchange ideas as scholars. So, you see this kind of environment helps us, students, to engage in active learning. (Secured).

Thus, the finding of the study, based on such responses, is that an enabling learning environment enhances and promotes teamwork (collaborative learning) with their peers and thus enhances their wellbeing. Furthermore, it encourages students to engage in active learning in order to improve their wellbeing and learning.

- ***Encourage active learning participation***

Some of the participants in the study indicated that the significance of learning in an enabling environment is to encourage international students to actively participate in their learning.

Participants need to be able to talk about what they are learning, reflect on their learning and apply what they have learnt into their lives. Encouraging them to actively participate in their learning will enable them to learn independently, construct their own learning, become more resilient, be highly motivated and develop self-confidence through attending cohorts, conferences, seminars, and doing presentations. Some of the participants provided the following utterances:

We need an active learning environment designed specifically to improve our learning here. I mean having an environment where cohorts, conferences, seminars, workshops are taking place and we participate too. This will help to enhance our research input/output and also promote our learning and make us involved in our learning. (Supporting).

Another participant indicated:

... an environment that will involve the students in their own learning and encourage them to learn from one another. (Conducive).

Caring, also inferred that:

...I think we need a conducive learning environment that will encourage cohorts, excursions, workshops and attending conferences to help promote and support our learning and assist us to talk about our learning experiences here.

Meanwhile, some of the participants also indicated that such an enabling learning environment will support them to learn independently, as in the case in the following excerpts.

We need such an environment to promote and supports international students to learn as a group and independently. (Safe).

... that will support and promotes us to read and learn independently. (Resourceful).

Furthermore, the findings in this study also indicated that most of the international students suggested that encouraging active learning will assist them to become more resilient in achieving and improving their learning goals. Thus, in the other sub-theme (see section 5.3.1), it was highlighted that most of the international students experienced diverse challenges within their host environment that affect their learning and development negatively. Paradoxically, the result in this study showed international students navigated through these challenges and developed various adaptive coping strategies that enabled them to become resilient, more goal-oriented and focused in their study in order to improve their general wellbeing and learning.

This finding also shows that creating an enabling learning environment for students to learn is essential as it will increase the students' academic achievements as well as support them to attain their academic goals. The following utterances were provided by some of the participants:

... the challenges we face here makes us be more daring and determined to work in adversity more than the local students. So, this makes us international students to be more resilient. (Peaceful).

We use that resilience spirit to achieve things, improve and develop our learning...
(Secured).

Resourceful also contended:

...because we are hardworking and resilient; you see we need a good environment, so that we become more focused on our studies, graduate on time and move on with our lives.

Safe noted as well:

The negative experiences will help us know to be resilient, adapt and adjust to the environment and it is also going to help us to be more focused on why we are here to study and to achieve our goals.

Some of the participants also point out that the effect of active learning participation is to help international students develop and improve their self-confidence. This is related to their resilient nature, which was revealed in the above excerpts. Further, participating in seminars, conferences, workshops and using some of the hard and software resources will help to improve their self-confidence and enhance their learning and wellbeing, as was indicated by some of the following participants:

Friendly also highlighted that:

...we need it to help us to develop self-confidence.

Inclusive remarked that:

Ahhh! you know one thing is that the university has provided us with some basic technologies/resources and using them to present in cohorts, seminars, conferences and

in research has to help me build myself personally as a scholar here and enhance my self-confidence skills too.

Another participant expressed this:

The university needs to encourage more participation of international students in cohorts, seminars, and conferences to help us develop self-confidence and to develop presentation skills.

Another factor was the increase in students' learning motivation when they are encouraged to actively participate in their learning. The participants also indicated that participating in cohorts, seminars, and conferences helps them to develop high learning motivation. The environment should promote participation and thus develop a high learning motivation, to enhance their learning outcomes and help them achieve success in their academic goals.

...learning in an enabling environment should be engaging which will makes us become highly motivated to study more because there is so much to learn here if the infrastructure/resources are there and also ehmm the recognition of what we as the international student can bring/offer to the learning process as agents and active individuals and not as passive people. (Safe).

Peaceful also indicated that:

... learning here should be much more student-centered and students driven, ehmm, to motivate us to learn more and there should also be the use of learning activities like presentations, seminars, group discussion that can be very creative and engaging ehmm and then also in terms of the assessment methods used whereby as students, we can even assess ourselves by involving in continuous learning activities that are creative, that are practical, and that is engaging not like rote exam this will help to enhance our learning here. (FGD 2).

Thus, encouraging international students to actively participate in their learning will help them enhance their learning skills in their learning environment. The participants revealed in this study that attending conferences, seminars, cohorts, and workshops will enable them to actively participate and independently, be more resilient, improve and develop their self-confidence and become highly motivated to learn.

5.3.1.1 Financial stability

All the participants indicated that they need an enabling learning environment that will help their students to become financially stable so as to improve on their wellbeing. However, the study identified that having financial stability for international students means having a means of livelihood such as jobs, funding or scholarships to sustain themselves and at the same time take care of their families. The findings in the study outline that lack of finances made the international students develop psychological stress, drop out of school and engage in prostitution. It would also affect their ability to achieve their academic success, as is shown in the responses from participants below that show the significance of being financially stable in the context of HIV and AIDS.

...we need financial stability in the cause of our study here because some of us international students come here with a lot of uncertainties, many of us left our home environment with promises from our government that they are going to give us financial support only to get here and the financial support is no longer realistic and some of us here are self-funded too you see. So, some of us who do not have any other source of income might go into prostitution and in the cause of it might contract HIV and AIDS and other diseases or become psychologically stressed. (Cooperative, FGD 3)

Caring pointed out:

...there is this thing called sustenance, you see to sustain ourselves in this context which is to be financially stable has always been a problem for s, international students, here which is the bone of contention because we need a way to sustain ourselves and pay some our bills monthly. Ehmm, we need jobs or funds to pay accommodation fees, eat, registration fees, medical aid fees, in short, so many things. (FGD 2).

Friendly emphasised that:

Ahh I think there should be a good way of actually you know giving some financial assistance to international students for them to support themselves at least for their personal sustenance which covers accommodation and the feeding. It will make us go further and it is going to reduce the psychological issues. (FGD 1).

One of the participants also affirmed that:

...for international student to sustain themselves, they need jobs and funding to reduce the stress of thinking of what will I eat, how will I pay this, what will I do, then the

whole concentration is actually on what we are here for to actually get the degree (Secured, FGD 2).

Another of the participant 'Convenient' enthusiastically explains that lack of financial stability could make some international students engage in prostitution in order to survive in their host environment and as result, they could contract the HIV and AIDS virus. Therefore, the extracts below captured Convenient's response:

Some of us international students left our home environment with promises from our government that they are going to give us financial support only to get here and the financial support is no longer realistic. So those who do not have any other source of income go into prostitution here and in the cause of it might contract HIV and AIDS.

Thus, participants need financial stability for their wellbeing in the context of HIV and AIDS. This is clearly seen in the quotes above. More so, according to the findings in the study, providing international students with jobs, funds, and scholarships will help them become financially stable to sustain themselves and ease their financial burdens. This will make the students not to feel distracted in their studies but help them attain and achieve their academic goals, feel emotionally and psychologically balanced as well as remain focused in their study. The next section describes how the challenges experienced by international students in the context of HIV and AIDS could be addressed.

5.3.2. To address the challenges currently experienced by international students in the context of HIV and AIDS

The second research question sought to explain why an enabling learning environment is needed by international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. However, during the focus group discussion sessions, participants could only speak about the significance of an enabling learning environment by identifying the several barriers/challenges they were currently experiencing in their learning environment that needs to be addressed within the context of HIV and AIDS. The various challenges that are needed to be addressed were derived from the macro environment, which is the broader community (socio-economic and socio-cultural barrier); the microenvironment i.e. university (local students, administrative staff and university policies) and meso environment (psychological challenges). These issues directly

and indirectly affected participants' learning and development. The illustration below in figure 5.4 explains the challenges, using the notion of interconnected systems.

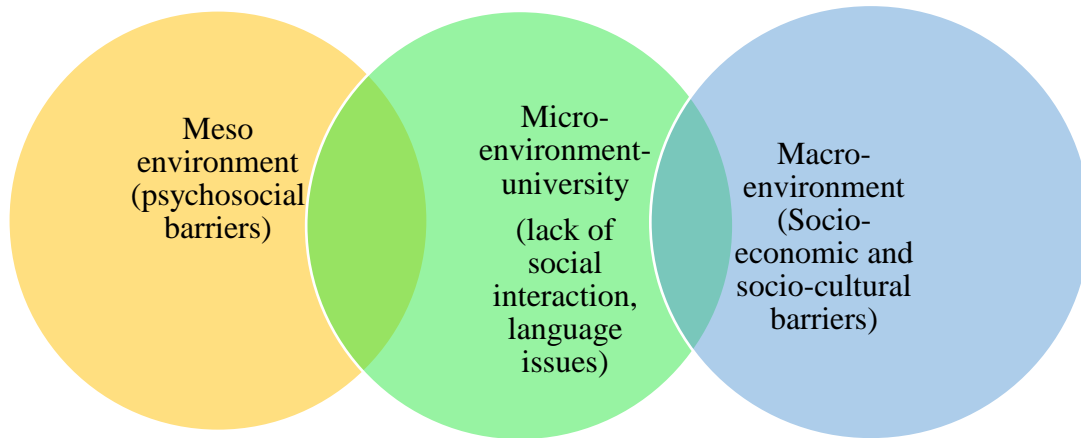


Figure 5.4 Interconnected systems showing international students' learning barriers

In the above diagram, the meso learning environment shows the diverse barriers that emerged within the international students' learning space during their learning processes (teaching and learning). These barriers are related to psychosocial issues such as lack of sense of belonging, anxiety, alienation, discrimination and the lack of self-esteem they experienced.

On the other hand, the micro-environment in the diagram depicts the direct physical environment of the international students which is the university in this study. The participants identified negative experiences that emerged as a barrier to their learning in the university, which is connected to some relationships like language issues and the lack of interaction /engagement with the local peers and some of the support staff. The international students expressed their dissatisfaction concerning the language issues, most especially in relating with the support staff who were assigned to help them with their various needs.

The macro-environment represents the outside broader environment in which the university is situated. The international students in this study identified some negative factors they experienced that are related to socio-economic barriers, such as lack of job opportunities, lack of funding and scholarships, high accommodation and medical aids fees which affected their learning experiences in their host university, and socio-cultural barriers, such as university and government or immigration policies in their host country. The macro-environment is made up

of the microenvironment and immediate environment and could directly/ indirectly influence international students' learning and development. Some of these challenges are described in the next section to show how they influence the students' learning and development negatively and the importance of addressing these issues experienced by international students.

5.3.2.1 The meso environment: Psychological barriers

The findings in the study revealed that all the participants experienced some psychosocial challenges/barriers in their immediate environment. These psychosocial barriers were categorised into lack of sense of belonging; feeling of alienation and xenophobia. These made them feel isolated, develop low self-esteem and become anxious in their learning environment. The following extracts from some of the participants illustrate this:

Conducive:

...and then in terms of challenges, we also have our challenges in the sense that. eh. The broader scale of South African society and the university is not as welcoming as it ought to be. There is always a feeling that as a foreigner we are sitting on an edge, we don't belong here because we are not so welcome. This affects us psychologically because you don't know what to do not to offend them. (FGD 3).

One of the participants also indicated:

...at the university level, these students do not really appreciate us because when you have a small conflict with the local students, the next thing you will hear is that you are a foreigner, you don't have any right, your right is small, 'I am a citizen, you don't belong here.' This makes us feel so alone and as if we are not valued here especially when they start telling you that you don't belong here. (Safe, FGD 1).

This view was also supported by Supportive who acknowledged that:

It shows that some of these issues are actually disturbing and cause some kind of psychological imbalance in us. This is because it makes you feel as if you are living in a place where you are not really welcomed, where you are hated. And you know some of these things in one area or the other, they actually derail us you see. You know as a student in this context, it affects us, it affects the way we think, the way we perceive

things you know when you are in a place that makes you feel you don't belong (FGD 2).

Meanwhile, during the focus group discussion, some of the participants expressed feeling alienated within and outside the university environment which affected their learning and development negatively. Some of the comments are represented below:

Resourceful commented:

I can clearly say that I am seen and treated as a foreigner and because of this I feel alienated. That is the part, you know when you feel that you are/where not welcome, you feel segregated in a certain sense, this thing makes you feel withdrawn and also makes you think that you are not wanted here. (FGD 3).

Friendly also provided a candid comment that sums up how the feeling of alienation made her develop low self-esteem:

...how they treat you matters here now, you can see clearly that they make you feel alienated, they draw a line of demarcation, so you don't really feel belonged here. I mean I always feel that I am a foreigner, excluded, and it makes me feel that I don't belong. And I think that finding myself in such a society it's not helpful for me at all becomes it makes me develop low self-esteem. (FGD 1).

Another factor that revealed the participants' experiences of psychosocial barriers within their learning environment was the issue of xenophobia. Most of the participants spoke about being discriminated against because they are foreigners and are excluded from participating or taking part in some of the school programmes. The following comments were made by the participants:

Caring:

...they are institutionalising xenophobia by making us not to have access to somethings in all their systems and by also not giving access to international students to work. The lack of access is the biggest xenophobia practiced here which psychologically affects us. (FGD 2).

One of the participants who spoke with intense feelings sums this up:

...the learning environment is not conducive, it makes us international students to lose focus, because of a lot of distractions like xenophobia which we experience here. I

remember in 2015 when there was the xenophobia crisis at its peak, I have my fellow international students who reside in the downtown where the xenophobic activity you know was really active, most of them couldn't do anything because learning is achieved in a peaceful and conducive environment but when there are uncertainties like xenophobia surrounding our lives here, as we are here to study, you see we won't be able to focus on our study even to progress, the person will not be able to pay attention to anything. (Welcoming, FGD 3).

The above responses indicated that the participants experienced several psychosocial barriers that directly and indirectly affected their learning and development negatively in the context of HIV and AIDS. For example, 'Welcoming' commented that the issue of xenophobia has an adverse effect on the psychological status of an international student.

5.3.2.2 The micro-environment (university)

The international students experienced different challenges within the university environment that affected their learning and development negatively, in particular, issues connected to relationships/interactions such as the lack of social support and some socio-cultural challenges.

- **Lack of social support**

The factors relating to lack of social support were identified as language difficulty and the lack of social interaction/relationship between international students and local peers. The home language of the local students and community is isiZulu, which is spoken across the KwaZulu-Natal province, which is the context where the study was conducted.

Language difficulty

Most of the participants indicated language difficulty, as making communication and interaction with the local students and community very difficult. It also affected their learning. Not being able to speak and communicate in the local language affected the international students' integration within the campus and their host environment and limits their participation within the university.

Caring indicated:

"...sometimes you find that you are not so welcomed to the society especially I will say the ladies and most of the time the students here, they become so very difficult to interact

with especially when you cannot speak the home/vernacular languages they will not relate with you. Sometimes they can come and greet you in their language and you when you ask them what do you say? The only thing they will say is that you are not speaking Zulu and leave you. (FGD 2).

Peaceful also affirmed:

...if somebody doesn't know how to speak isiZulu, they will just exclude the person or start calling the person kwerekwere here. This makes me develop an identity crisis, I keep imagining myself am I not their fellow African person or is it because I don't speak their language. It is so terrible I swear. (FGD 1).

Resourceful also added that:

...ehmm, the situation like going or leaving the campus here as I am resident in the campus, leaving the campus and going into the cities, simply the fact that you do not speak the language makes you feel a little bit insecure and scared to go out because you do not know who you might meet. So, not speaking the local language is what I see as a great challenge here. (FGD 3).

Another of the participant also points out that it hindered their participation in some of the events organised by the university.

...limits our participation as international students in those activities and it discourages many of us from taking part (Peaceful).

The finding in this study from the above excerpts showed that the participants experienced difficulty in interacting with the local students and the local community due to the language barrier. This limited their participation and engagement with the local community. So, because of this they developed fear and became insecure in their host environment.

Lack of social interaction

According to the participants, the university is an environment that does not support them to socially engage with their local peers and community. To the participants, they assert that the campus/university needs to create programmes for them to socially integrate or socialise with the local students. The following excerpts from most of the participants illustrate this:

Supporting noted:

Ehmm in terms of the social and psychosocial life on campus, I think it is poor. Then in terms of integration into the students' life on campus as an international student with local students I think that is non-existent here and not promoted by the university. If you ask me. (FGD 2).

Another participant also inferred:

I think most of the vibrancy that takes places in the university campus in the terms of social activities, then life orientation in terms of the emotional, cognitive welfare of students drawing from extracurricular activities, students' engagements, ehmm then also from the cultural point of view ehmm those things are lacking here in this campus (FGD, 1).

Additionally, one of the participants during one of the focus group discussions also gave a candid comment as revealed below:

According to Cooperative:

I haven't really found the environment as a social learning environment in the sense that I haven't been able to interact with the local people the way I used to like back home in my own country. I see that as a challenge, I mean it's not all about studying, learning, academics, ehmm, reading the books and making use of the facilities I mean. You see I strongly believe that, ehmm, social interaction is one of the key learning moments for me which is not promoted here for us and this affects us in adjusting and integrating into the environment. (FGD 3).

Another factor that reflects the participants' experiences of lack of social support within the university campus was the lack of communication and interaction between them and the administrative staff of the international student's office.

Friendly also asserted that:

So ehmm also more importantly, if I will say the interaction between the support staff and the student body which is the staff in the international student's office and the international students' group I think in this kind of environment is also very weak and not good at all. (FGD 1).

Thus, the study reveals language barriers and lack of social support (social interaction programmes) between international students and the local community (local students, the administrative staff in the international student's office) as a major issue affecting international students' learning and development that needs to be addressed in order for them to grow academically and achieve their learning.

- **Socio-cultural barriers**

Participants experienced several socio-cultural barriers that hindered their learning and development within and outside the university. These were categorised as the university exclusive policy and the government immigration policies and difficulty in acquiring a study visa to continue with their studies in their host environment. The findings in this study are that the university policy and the immigration policy were exclusive and not inclusive. This hindered the international students from working in their host environment while the processes of acquiring visa documents/study permits also affected the students' learning and development negatively as it made them lose focus and concentration in their studies. Some of the participants' comments are as follow:

Cooperative:

... concerning the policy that you have actually mentioned you see, eh, the policy of the country and this university is exclusive and not inclusive because as international students we were trying to do some certain work when we came here which actually give us some little change to pay for accommodation and for our general sustenance, but you see, these policy has changed and now considers the aborigine, the locals first which is very bad. (FGD 3).

Supporting mentioned that:

It is like whatever you do, you should always know that you are not one of them which is clearly stated in their immigration documents/policies that they send around. (FGD 1).

Secured also confirmed that:

...you know they have these policies here about when it comes to jobs because some of us are eligible but because we are international students or foreigners we won't get it

but they forget that in their policy somebody who goes to school and has a study visa, a study permit has the right to work for 20hrs which is not allowed by them. (FGD 2).

One of the participants also spoke with intense feeling as he stressed that:

It's a struggle to even get something to do even outside, all because it is just stated in their policy and study visa that you are a student and that means you are not allowed to work but the local students at the same level with you can work. I don't know how they will be able to conscientize people to tell them that when you are a student you cannot work and earn a meager living for yourself here. (Welcoming, FGD 3).

Apart from the exclusive policies limiting the international students from working, the participants also identified different difficulties they experienced during the process of acquiring their study documents/ visas/permits that demoralise them and have a negative effect on their learning. The subsequent responses indicate the participants' views on the issue of study visa:

Inclusive:

...in other universities permits are facilitated by the international office but here as a student you are the one doing it by yourself and the process of doing those things demoralises students first of all because just the hurdles of getting a document in this country is not easy and then you have an institution that is supposed to help you but the institution is leaving everything it to you. (FGD 1).

Conducive also stated that:

This issue of visa permits is hindering one's way of learning here. For us to be here, that means we need to have a valid document and if you don't have that it is always scary to move around. I think the university needs to be a bit more supportive, so that our learning can also be fruitful in order for us to finish with our studies here. (FGD 3).

Caring is of the view that:

I think issues of visa, issues of a permit, students getting permits that ahhh limits them. Not getting a visa also makes it difficult for us students to come for our graduation, so, we cannot talk about studies and not talk about graduation, both are together. So, we need the issue of a visa/permit to be corrected. (FGD 2).

Lastly, Welcoming pointed out that:

One of the things limiting us, is in the term of all these visa issues, you know when you go to renew your visa, there are so many other changes and they keep on changing policies every time. Some people are denied visas just because of silly things that are not included in their website. (FGD 3).

A closer examination of the participants' responses above has revealed several socio-cultural factors within the microenvironment such as the exclusive university and immigration policies and the difficulty experienced by international students in acquiring study visa/permit which needs to be addressed so as to make the environment conducive for international students' learning and growth.

5.3.2.3 Socio-economic barriers

The participants identified various socio-economic barriers within the macro-environment that affected their learning and development negatively in the context of HIV and AIDS. These socio-economic challenges were related to financial constraints identified by international students as a major barrier to their learning and development in the context of HIV and AIDS. These financial challenges were categorised as lack of funding and scholarships, lack of job opportunities, as well as accommodation fees. The lack of job opportunities and lack of funding/scholarship was found to be the most prevailing issues affecting participants' learning and development. This was revealed in the following participants' quotes below:

Cooperative asserted:

Most of the universities that I know from most parts of the world, by the time someone reaches a Ph.D. or master's level, you will be teaching undergraduates and also get scholarships or funding to continue with your studies. There is no way you will be doing a Ph.D. or master's programme that they don't give you the scholarship to take care of yourself and tell you that this scholarship is a full time and you are not supposed to work. Apart from that, they make sure that if you have no scholarship, the school, itself can create an environment where you can work or do something at least for yourself which is not applicable here because they will tell you are not a local. (FGD 3).

Another of the participant indicated:

I want to talk about funding. Not having funding is a hindrance to our learning and development here, because you find out that just like my colleague has said you find out that ehh we have to be looking for modules to teach, and do marking so that we can make some income to pay our bills for residence and sustenance and some stuff like that even books. (Secured, FGD 2).

The lack of job opportunities within the university and outside the university environment negatively affected their learning and development. Peaceful experienced difficulty in getting a job within and outside the university environment that affected him emotionally because he was unable to provide for his family as the breadwinner as he highlights:

This environment for a start, it is difficult to get a job here and there are many issues that are related to finding job opportunities here. Some of us have got families, we are no more like undergraduate students. So, sometimes when we go to look for work here in school and outside let say in shops like Shoprite, Clicks, Debonairs they will tell you categorically we don't have space for you people here. We can't get job opportunities here and they do not care whether you have a family or not here. The people believe you have come to steal their job, they will even call us kwerekwere. This issue is affecting me because I have to think about myself and family on how we are going to survive here and pay all our bills. (Peaceful, FGD 1).

In addition, another participant noted:

... getting a job here is a barrier because while some of us prospect to go and study abroad is like maybe in the cause of studying, we might get a job and you know to continue our career from there but here they just destroy your dreams and prospect, and this makes most of us see here as a transit country to other western countries. (Inclusive, FGD 2).

Resourceful concurs and pointed out that:

If you take your CV and everything you won't get a job outside. Even if the university advertises for a job inside, they will just tell you clearly please we don't have any place for you as a foreigner. It's clear they don't even say, they don't mince words. I have called companies; they have got my CV and everything and they just told me that

unfortunately because of my status and that's is their only reason not because of anything. (FGD 3).

Furthermore, international students also identified the incessant increase in accommodation or residence fees as a barrier to their learning. The participants revealed that the high cost of residence fees causes a high cost of living for them in their host environment which is a challenge and affected their learning and development negatively. Most of the participants expressed the view that the university should reduce the accommodation fees so that they could finish their studies within the given time. The following excerpts revealed the participants' views on the accommodation/residence fees.

...also, eh, what can hinder us like ehmm is still had to do with the cost of living, just like residence now, it is every year that the fees are going up. When I started it was around R23 000. Right now, it is R28 000 a year and by next year maybe it is going to R30 something thousand rands, and I heard it is going to go to over thirty-something plus. So that's a hindrance to our learning. And now they have to give us rules that we must finish within four years, so we have to like to make a plan. (Conducive, FGD 3).

Friendly also highlighted that:

Then also we can think about the issue of high fees in term of residence fees even though the university has made provision or had made a lot of sacrifice to give some sort of fee remission policies to accommodates students who are doing full research and their studies here but also I would personally argue that the fees are quite high, especially residence fees are quite high for us, so it is a bit of a challenge you know coming to terms with the huge amount of money you get to pay every single year to live in the school residence. (FGD 1).

Some of the participants revealed that the lack of finances to pay high accommodation fees affects them psychologically and made them lose concentration in their study, as noted below.

Secured:

If the mind is thinking about what am I going to eat, how am I going to pay for this accommodation, how am I going to do this financially? Such a mind cannot concentrate on the studies. So, and cannot actually have the best out of us. (FGD 2),

Conducive also has this to say:

...but as u can see now that we are worried about how to sustain ourselves here because there is no funding for us and most of us here are self-funded which affects our study negatively. (Conducive, FGD).

Based on the above findings, the excerpts from the international students above revealed that they experienced several financial barriers within their learning environment that affected their learning and development negatively in the context of HIV and AIDS.

In this theme, the study has identified several inhibiting elements/factors experienced by international students currently within the context of HIV and AIDS that affected their learning and development. The participants' quotes indicate that they experienced psychological challenges such as lack of sense of belonging, alienation, xenophobia, anxiety, low self-esteem), language difficulty, lack of social interaction/integration programmes, social-cultural barriers (like strict visa laws and exclusionary university and immigration policy) and lastly some financial constraints. These influenced the students' learning and development negatively in the context of HIV and AIDS, both within and outside their university environment (context of HIV and AIDS). Therefore, this shows the relevance of this study which is to create an enabling learning environment for international students. Meanwhile, the next section explains the diverse ways in which an enabling learning environment could be created in order to address all the barriers currently experienced by international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

5.4. THEME THREE: DYNAMIC STRATEGIES IN CREATING AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS

This session focuses on international students' perspectives, experiences and knowledge of answering the main research question: *How can the university create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.* I employed photovoice (the relevant sources are referred to as PV, hereafter) and focus group discussion to inspire/incite my participants to depict their ideas, knowledge, and views on ways in which the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in their learning context (campus), so as to enhance their learning and development. To answer this research question, the following prompt was used for the photovoice session; *take four (4) photographs of how*

the university could create an enabling learning environment for you in the context of HIV and AIDS". Therefore, the findings from the data identified two subthemes which were grouped as ***Multi-dimensional strategies of creating an enabling learning environment and enablers and their roles in the learning environment***. These themes were deliberately chosen and represented below to show the participants' ideas, experiences and understandings of how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, the participants' responses are explained below in the following sections.

5.4.1. Multi-dimensional strategies of creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS

My research findings depict that using photovoice and focus group discussion methods to propose ways in which the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS was appropriate. In this theme, insights into the diverse mechanism/strategies in which the university could use to create an enabling learning environment for international students were revealed by the participants. The following eight categories emerged from the study: a comprehensive HIV and AIDS programme; provision of food security; a culturally inclusive university policy; improving university security and safety; providing recreational facilities; providing grants and scholarship; enhancing the teaching and learning resources; and providing/creating job opportunities for international students. These subthemes were discussed in the next section.

5.4.1.1 A comprehensive integrated HIV and AIDS education

All the participants revealed in the study that providing students with a comprehensive HIV and AIDS programme and integrating it across all the modules in the university curriculum is a very good way to create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. This strategy is viewed by the participants as a vital way of sensitising and orientating international students on the prevalence and effects of HIV and AIDS in their host environment. Supportive stated:

...international students need to be informed of HIV and AIDS and taught how they should carry themselves around. I sincerely think HIV and AIDS education should be included in our studies here. It is vital that international students are well and properly

inducted on the effects of HIV and AIDS-like properly giving them some sort of orientation, and some sort of sensitization about HIV and AIDS in the context of South Africa (PV).

Resources added:

...ehh in terms of HIV and AIDS awareness, international needs a proper orientation in terms of the prevalence ratio of the disease in South Africa and the lifestyle of the South Africans. This should also be part of our study here to know the social campaigns that are put in place to attend to issues and concerns around HIV and ehmm, the kind of clinical support that is available for people who are living with HIV and AIDS, and the prevention mechanism or support that are put in place. (PV).

Convenient also indicated:

Ehmm! Particularly given that HIV within the context of South Africa is a disease that has some sort of national social significance. So how people in South Africa respond to the disease and how they, manage the disease and how they also conduct their lives with regards to the disease are things that an international student should be aware of, should be sensitized, should have the sensitivity and the enabling knowledge to handle. (FGD 3).

One of the participants, Safe, spoke eloquently on the importance of having a comprehensive HIV and AIDS programme for international students as she sums it up below:

HIV is such a critical disease that the knowledge of it is important for anyone living in any community in South Africa most importantly in a university community because it is not about contacting the HIV disease but it is also about how do we relate to issues of HIV and how those infected are being treated by us, and what are the social significance, socio-economic factors of HIV in terms of diversity, respect, upholding other people's human right and things like that. So, this is issues that are very sensitive, and I think as international students we need the university to provide us with a well-informed awareness around HIV and AIDS. It is something that is important, and we all need to have the knowledge. (FGD 1)

On the other hand, some of the participants also mentioned that the lack of HIV and AIDS education/awareness programme affected how they related and engaged with their locals' peers and community members. The following excerpts explain some of the participants' views:

So, the problem here is that some of us international students, when we arrived here, were not so familiar with ehmm this HIV epidemic that we have in South Africa. So, when we started hearing stories, it became an issue for us on how we interact/relate with the locals especially the women. This is because there is not enough awareness of the issue here during the orientation programme and also even as we settle down for our studies. (Welcoming, FGD 3).

...the challenge here as an international student is the lack of awareness about HIV and AIDS because where I come from, ehmm, it is not a serious issue the way it is here, regarding the South African context and this affects how I relate with them. (Inclusive, FGD 2).

International students may not be properly aware of the contextual implications/contextual symbolisms and also the contextual health issues and concerns regarding HIV and AIDS as a disease in South Africa. So, the knowledge of this will help us to know how to adapt and adopt to the environment and also, it is going to also help us to be very careful in this environment on how we interact with the locals. (Peaceful, FGD 1).

Lastly, all the participants also suggested that it is imperative that the university integrates the HIV and AIDS educational programme across all the modules in the university so that they could be well informed on issues related to HIV and AIDS and on the measures that could be used to reduce the spread of the HIV virus. According to the participants:

I think the university should go extra mile to integrate HIV and AIDS programmes into the school curriculum and sensitize the international students properly on the importance of taking precautions, like, for instance, the use of condoms, and also visiting hospitals, ehh, or testing centres regularly to ensure that, if for any reason at all they contact HIV and AIDS, that can be detected earlier and also be responded to likewise. (Conducive, FGD 3).

... encouraging students to check and recheck their health from time to time, the university will help the international students to know their HIV status and to know how to take care of their health. It will also enable the university to create a free HIV counselling and test awareness and other services like educational talks. The university will help students to get more knowledge about HIV and AIDS as well as to be aware of different ways to protect themselves from being infected. (Peaceful, PV).

Integrating HIV and AIDS programme across all the modules in the university curriculum would help create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study also revealed that the participants suggested an all-inclusive HIV and AIDS awareness programme during the orientation period for new international students in order to enable them to gain more exposure and become sensitised and conscientised to issues relating to HIV and AIDS within their host environment. This will help the students to gain more knowledge and develop coping and adaptive strategies in their learning environment.

5.4.1.2 Food security

Most of the international students that participated in the study showed the importance of universities' providing food security for their students in order to promote their health and help them eat healthily. The participants believe that by having good cafeterias and shop within the campus this will give them access to acquire healthy foods and to eat healthily. This is ascertained in the case of 'Peaceful' when explaining her photographs in Figure 5.5 below.

Encourage healthy eating



. The university should provide good cafeterias that sell healthy foods and not junk food, and this will help students to have access to safe and healthy foods that will enable them to learn and live a healthy life. (Peaceful)

Figure 5.5 Encouraging healthy eating

The participants also indicated that there are no good convenience shops within the campus where students could get good and healthy foods when they run out of food. It is vital the university establish these shops for its students. This is shown in the following extracts below:

There are no good grocery shops within the campus where students could buy healthy foods and enjoy each other's company. There is no recreational facility to get decent food when you are out of stock. So, it is essential that the university establish shops where we can get good and healthy foods here on this campus. (Caring, PV).

Creating good food courts and convenience shops within the campus to sell healthy foods will go very well with the students here and having these shops close by would be a viable business for outsiders because of the international students here. (Supporting, FGD 2)

One of the participants talked about the university creating good food courts where they can sit, eat and interact with other students after lectures.

Students, whether they are international or local students, need to have space/shops for relaxation where they can eat good foods and share news and discuss topics of the day around such tables. Having a communal eating space helps to avert discrimination either due to being an international student or the stigmatisation that comes with HIV and AIDS. Spaces as this come up such loopholes and open dialogues and cross-pollination of ideas. (Conducive, PV).

Some of the participants also identified that the university needs to educate students on the harmful effect of alcohol and drug abuse and provide stringent policies against it within the campus. According to the participants:

In the context of HIV and AIDS, the university should create a strict law against students who engage in such acts of taking alcohol and drugs in the university environment. The university should bring in different experts to educate/ talk to students about the danger of taking such dangerous substances. (Inclusive, PV).

The participants' responses clearly depict the importance of providing food security for students within the university campus. Food security is seen as another way of creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Food security was understood as having access to safe, good and healthy foods on the university campus. The excerpts also reveal that establishing good food courts, cafeterias and shops in the university will help to provide students with healthy foods that will nourish their life and enable them to live a healthy lifestyle, enabling them to learn and develop positively.

5.4.1.3. University inclusive policy

All the participants indicated that building a culturally inclusive university and developing a good inclusive policy for international students will help to create an enabling learning

environment for them. This policy will enable international students to freely integrate into the environment; be able to interact and relate with other people from different cultures most especially the local community (local peers and staff); be able to express themselves freely and give their own opinion. This was evident in the participants' responses below:

...they need to create an opportunity for us to interact with the South African society and then to make people understand that you know we are also human beings and we are also social beings like them in society and that we come in peace and not to destroy their communities. This is because the common man in the street always has the feeling that the kwerekweres are here to take their stuff, to take their lands but you know, that is not how it happens. So, I think the university needs to create an opportunity for us to reach out to people out there in the streets and then to let them know that the university provides an opportunity for some other people outside their country. (Secured, FGD 2).

The university needs to create more avenues for social interaction and cross-cultural dialogue between local and international students and among postgraduate students and undergraduate students. We are all one, there should be a policy for international students as representatives in the university students' representative council (SRC) so that our voices could be heard and issues concerning us could be addressed very well. (Resourceful, PV).

For me, I feel that if they want to create an enabling environment for us then they should create a culturally inclusive environment where we can freely express ourselves, feel welcomed or relaxed in a certain way and make us feel accepted. (Supporting, FGD).

Similarly, another participant added a comment:

...building an environment for discussion, debates and social interaction is very important for us here in this university. This will make learning and understanding one another easier as there will be spaces for such. Such spaces are sacrosanct, and ideas are born there. Friendship is initiated, and barriers are broken down. The gap existing between international students are removed when the school has a space for such interrogation. Peace and harmony are enshrined and tables of brotherhood built. Such spaces are a must for a learner center that accommodates international students. (Conducive, PV).

Some of the participants noted that organising conferences, cohorts, workshops, seminars, and excursions, socially integrating them with local students and engaging them in a dialogue concerning their challenges are essential in building a culturally inclusive university. During the focus group discussion, one of the participants gave a candid comment as shown below:

...as international students we haven't really had a cohort or forum, you know like a gathering or a meeting/seminar. It rarely happens and those are supposed to be at least eh hh done quarterly maybe once every four months or thereabout. At least international students need to be gathered and then they need to create an environment where we discuss these challenges and then they need to create an environment where we discuss the way forward on what we perceive as challenges in the context of learning here in this university. Yea, so, I believe strongly that workshops and maybe seminars for international students are a way of tackling and developing a very good learning environment for international students. (Welcoming, FGD 3)

Supportive also stated that:

The university needs to organise cultural conferences, forums, and seminars to engage international students and local students. This will help to improve the communications between the international students, local students, and the lecturers. This will also allow a friendly discussion among us. (PV).

Inclusive also opined that:

. Excursions may serve as socio-cultural integration and practical orientation and experience of different kinds of places, schools, and infrastructure in South Africa for international students. (Inclusive, PV).

All the participants expressed concern about the importance of including international students in the university policies and also consulting them in every decision made by the university concerning them. Some of the participants argued that the voices of international students were vital as they are the ones who are experiencing the challenges and they can explain it better. This was evident in some of the utterances of the participants in the following quotations:

Resourceful:

I think that as international students, our voices are important here. Eh hh, our voice is important because it is not always easy to know that someone is suffering unless the

person tells you. I think international students should be able to raise their voices about their concerns and their shortcomings and the kind of expectations they have like (FGD 3).

Safe also highlighted that:

...but I will also emphasis that the voice of international students is important in creating an enabling learning environment for them which is the only way we can have meaningful policies/strategies /programmes and workable implementation systems (FGD, 1).

Secured also expressed the view that:

...they should consult the international students in every decision and issues concerning us. We will tell them also what we know and what we expect and have a policy in place that should be followed.

The international students' quotes indicate that having a culturally inclusive university policy would help create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS, helping them to integrate socially in the context of HIV and AIDS as well as able to relate and interact with the local students and community.

5.4.1.4. Safety and security measures

The findings in this study revealed are that participants perceived that improving the safety and security measures of the university will help in creating an enabling learning environment for international students. According to them, installing security cameras and searchlights in areas within the campus that are perceived to be dangerous and placing security guards within the residences will help promote the safety of students' lives and property, especially during the holidays and student's protest actions. In addition, the findings also showed that enhancing the safety and security measures in the university is a way in which the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS, Therefore, the following quotations show the participants' responses:

Friendly:

There should be security cameras at every walkway and corners that are monitored by university security people, the RMS for the safety of students to avoid being mugged

and raped. In addition, we need working cameras at the entrance to all the study areas on the campus. The place is supposed to be a quiet place with a lot of security but as you can see the camera there is not working. (Friendly, PV).

‘Resourceful’ concurred and asserted that:

There is a need for security guards to be placed between the library and the students’ residences, no lights and the security people should be moving around all the time. You can’t stay in the LAN or research commons for too long especially late in the night if you are a female. (FGD).

We need security to be improved and a camera to be installed in all the dark footpath in the school. (Convenient, FGD).

One of the students spoke with annoyance concerning the importance of improving security and promoting safety within the campus. The participants spoke about how students said to have been raped, their rooms broke into and their properties were stolen within the campus, which calls for strict measures in ensuring safety and security in the university.

We have heard stories of people being attacked while on campus in the night, we have heard of people being raped on campus and students’ rooms being broke into and their property for example laptops get stolen. If a campus is not safe, and an international student is raped, she or he might contract HIV and AIDS. If the students’ room gets broken into and the laptop gets stolen or passport, it becomes very difficult for the students to study and achieve his/her academic goal you see. So, a safe and secure environment is important, and providing a good social-economic environment is equally important. (Welcoming, FGD3).

Another issue that was revealed in the findings of this theme was the incessant strikes and protest actions carried out by the local students which are seen as a threat to the international students’ lives and property. Moreover, the results of the study showed that university teaching and learning facilities were destroyed during this protest period. Hence, all the participating international students called for the attention of the university management to put a stop to the constant student strikes and protest actions due to their negative influence on their learning:

The campus management needs to stop incessant students protest /strikes and protect the lives and property of its students during these issues. As international students, our lives are at stake and not safe during this constant students’ crises and this affects us.

We are also not communicated to whenever there is a problem on campus. (Inclusive, PV).

One of the participants also emphasised that:

...the regular student violence always leads to the destruction of the learning environment and the facilities for learning and tends to put our lives and property in danger.

‘Resourceful’ also affirmed that the incessant strikes and protest action are seen as a major challenge to their academic goals as the facilities destroyed by the students are rather left unattended and unrepaired for a long time. The statement by one of the participants during the focus group discussion sums this up:

Recurrent incessant protests have been recognized as one of the major issues that disrupt academic activities and destroy the university facilities every year here. In my experiences as a postgraduate student, within the past 4 years, there has never been a year without the strike incidences. Sometimes some of the facilities destroyed are never fixed, hence remaining permanently destroyed. The university administration can reach a compromise to understand the root cause of students’ violent protests to stop and create an atmosphere that completely avoids this situation as it is a major challenge to learning, as an international postgraduate student. (Resourceful, FGD 3).

From participants’ responses, it is clear that improving the safety and security measures in the context of HIV and AIDS is important and is seen as another way of creating an enabling learning environment for them. In addition, the participants advised that installing security cameras in all the dark and dangerous areas within the campus, placing security guards to monitor the residences and stopping incessant students’ violent protests that disrupt academic activities would help to shape their learning and enable them to learn effectively.

5.4.1.5 Sports and recreational facilities

International students in the study suggest that creating an enabling learning environment for them requires providing diverse sport and recreational facilities within the university environment to promote their health and wellbeing. The findings showed the participants believe that having diverse sports and recreational facilities apart from soccer like aerobics,

yoga, walking, jogging will help to enhance their learning and development and help them to cool their nerves, destress, keep fit, develop sharp minds and become creative. The following comments were made by some of the participants:

Friendly:

All work and no play they say makes Jack a dull boy. So, health is wealth. There should be spaces for exercise and different sports programmes for students to cool down and de-stress after a very herculean and sometimes tortuous learning process. Here it is all about niggling deposits of doubts and feeding with the freedom that comes with running wild. This will help international students to close up the gap that exists as a result of language barriers and issues of HIV and AIDS, which are issues to be bothered by (Friendly, PV).

Peaceful also spoke with intense feelings as he stressed:

In the context of HIV and AIDS, the university can create an enabling learning environment by motivating students to participate in sports activities, encouraging healthy living and also to be physically fit. When students engaged in sports activities, their mind becomes creative and sharp too. (Peaceful, PV).

One of the participants commented on the importance of having different varieties of sports programmes developed weekly for students generally in order to accommodate and include other students to keep fit and release their academic stress.

Supporting:

There should be more varieties of sports and recreational facilities made available on the university campus to accommodate all the students. It should not only be soccer. These facilities will help us to keep fit and release academic stress. (PV).

Safe also indicated that:

... Sports and games, those things are supposed to be developed regularly and weekly for students to promote their health. (Safe, FGD 1).

The above responses from the participants revealed that providing/creating more sports and recreational facilities for students within the university campus will help promote the students' health and encourage them to live a healthy lifestyle. In addition, the findings also revealed

that when students engage in different sports and recreational activities, they live a healthier life and also keep fit. It also helps the students to destress, be creative and develop sharp minds.

5.4.1.6 Funding and scholarships

All the participants believed that providing funding and scholarships for international students by the university will help in creating an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. Some of the participants provided the following statements:

As international students we need funding/scholarships from the university, so to help and assist us in our studies especially in this environment of HIV and AIDS, and so that we will not get tempted to start looking for money using our bodies. (Safe, PV).

Another participant, Resourceful, noted:

...the university needs to create an enabling learning environment for us by providing scholarships and funding for international students, not only for local students, so that we will not be bothered to have menial jobs but to achieve our educational goals. Also, it will help international students not to feel distracted from their studies. (Resourceful, FGD).

Caring also stated:

By getting funding or scholarship, we will be able to achieve our academic goals and finish before the time that we are expected to finish... (Caring, PV).

One of the participants also asserted that she is self-funded and needed funding or a scholarship in order to survive and continue with her studies.

They could offer us funding and scholarship. As international students most of us here are self-funded. We need funding to continue with our education, to be able to survive. It is difficult for one to be here in a foreign country without access to money, especially as a student. (Cooperative, PV).

The excerpts above showed that the participants perceive that the provision of funding or scholarships by the university to international students will help in creating an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, the study revealed that this will enable international students to become more focused on their learning,

be productive and more goal-oriented, become financially stable, complete their studies on time and achieve their academic goals within the context of HIV and AIDS.

5.4.1.7 Teaching and learning resources

All participants saw enhancing the available teaching and learning resources in the university environment as another strategy of creating an enabling learning environment for international students. These teaching and learning resources were identified and grouped as the teaching and learning support (for example computers, WIFI, journals, online articles, thesis); and the learning spaces (for example LAN, research common, lecture theatres/room). According to the participants, these resources need to be enhanced, expanded and upgraded to enable students to learn better. This was elaborated in the following sections:

Secured, while explaining his photograph, wanted the university to:

...expand the LANS for studying, to have enough computers connected to printers and scanners for ease of completing the task and where international and local students could print their assignments and do other tasks. (Secured, PV).

Inclusive added:

Additionally, electronic devices such as printers and scanners need to be upgraded as it can be quite challenging that many times those devices fail to function properly. (FGD).

Resourceful also contended that:

Provision of more facilities and resources by the university, for example, we need more current materials in the library and the research commons need to be expanded or they build another one. (Resourceful, PV).

Another participant noted that the postgraduate LAN is an essential learning space that needed expansion for the students to learn comfortably. This is illustrated below:

From my personal experience and evidence of how postgraduate students utilise the research common (postgraduate LAN), it is one of the most important facilities that need expansion to accommodate the increasing numbers of postgraduate students. Nowadays, the research common gets overcrowded with a few functional computers.

Postgraduate students deal with a lot of pressure and deadlines with the nature of the research we do. Therefore, we need comfortable places to do our research.
(Welcoming, FGD)

Some of the participants also commented on upgrading and enhancing the learning resources such as the WIFI, as clarified by Caring and Conducive:

...WIFI needs to be improved. It works but sometimes it stops. It is always fluctuating, and this inconveniences us all the time. Although we appreciate having it ehmm I think the university has to upgrade it somehow, but they could still do a bit more improvement in terms of that. The turn-it-in is not user-friendly. (Caring, FGD).

We need constant WIFI for exploring the world at the click of a button. The WIFI needs to be upgraded by the school management. In addition, all the ICT equipment needs to be enhanced by the school management to enable us to learn better. (Conducive, FGD).

Some of the participants in the study also identified that the lecture theatres on the campus need to be expanded and equipped with more contemporary ICT facilities in order to assist the teaching and learning process and enable them to learn comfortably.

Inclusive, in his photograph in figure 5.6 below, indicated:

Expansion of the lecture theatres



The learning theatres need to be expanded giving students more opportunities to relate and dialogue with one another. This is to accommodate the large numbers of students in many of the modules as the venues allocated to them may not be comfortable and where they are done. It is difficult to do group work teaching in this learning space.

Figure 5.6 Expansion of the lecture theatres

Friendly also commented:

The university should have lecture theatres that stimulate concentration, collaboration and interaction among the students (international and local) and also between the

students and their lecturer so as to enable learning. Meanwhile, international students need to have modern facilities and equipment that helps in the teaching process even in relation to HIV and AIDS. (PV)

The above quotations revealed that participants believe that enhancing, upgrading and expanding the available teaching and learning resources in their learning environment will help the university to create an enabling learning environment for them. Learning using these resources will help international students to learn better, study comfortably, work collaboratively and achieve academic success. Cassum and Gul (2017) also identify that the presence of free space, moveable furniture, soundproof walls to limit noise transmission, different teaching and learning resources (projectors, flip charts, quality wide board, storage cabinet for dusters and board markers), and teachers' skills and knowledge are ways/strategies by which schools could create an enabling learning environment for their students.

5.4.1.8 Job opportunities

While talking about the strategies by which the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS, participants spoke about the university providing and creating job opportunities for international students in order to ease their financial burdens. Participants suggested that providing job opportunities for them will enable them to become more focused in their study, reduce their financial burden and stress, reduce thinking and help them to develop and adjust comfortably in their learning environment. The following utterances were derived from some of the participants' responses during the photovoice session and focus group discussion:

Cooperative:

International students need to be given an opportunity on and off-campus to work and earn small money and not be vulnerable do to financial challenges. We used to have such an opportunity but now they have changed all their policies. (Cooperative, PV).

Another participant noted:

So, if they want to say that these guys are our students. We want them to be comfortable, they should just give us the opportunity to work... (Safe, FGD).

Supporting also pointed out:

...they should create an environment where people can get something to do to earn something and they shouldn't start taking people out just because they are foreigners because basically that is what is going on and I don't think it is also fair.

Similarly, Conducive also concurred with the above comments and stressed that:

...the university itself can create an environment where we can work or do something at least for ourselves. So, I am thinking that when they want to create an enabling environment, one of the key things is to ensure at least people have something to do, that can take care of their basic expenses. If not that you are paying the person for anything but at least their basic expenses, where they will sleep, at least their fees as we are saying, even if you cannot pay for the fees or whatsoever. Then the person should be giving something small so that the person can be able to cater to some of the basic needs

Most of the participants indicated that providing work opportunities for them will help them cater to some of their basic needs and enable them to become psychologically balanced. Some participants also suggest that the university should develop policies that will allocate some a certain job ratio or a percentage to them in order to help reduce their financial burdens:

...even in the terms of giving jobs, they can have like a percentage... just like they are doing it in terms of scholarship, if you are from here, 90% go to our people and they say 10% or the rest for international students. In the case of job allocation in the university, they can say a 10% allocation is only allowed for international students. (Safe, FGD).

Thus, providing job opportunities is another way of creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Having the opportunity to work will help the international students to develop their potential in addressing their financial issues and become more focused on their studies, develop and adjust comfortably in their environment. The participants were able to identify several mechanisms and strategies that the university could use to create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. These eight strategies were: integrated HIV and AIDS programme; food security; building a culturally inclusive university; improving university security and safety; establishing health/fitness programmes;

provision of grants and scholarship; enhancing the teaching and learning resources and work opportunities in order to help shape and enhance their learning and development.

5.4.2 Enablers (ILU) and the roles they play in the context of HIV and AIDS

Establishing an enabling learning environment is seen as a joint/collective activity by human agency. However, the role played by these human agencies also known as enablers (international students, local students, university support staff, academics, and the university management) is vital in ensuring that international students' learning and development are enhanced as well as creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Nevertheless, this section explains the enablers and their roles in helping to enhance strategies used in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. These enablers are regarded as agents and the roles they play were identified by the participants as vital to enhancing and shaping their learning and development.

5.4.2.1 International students

The participants in this study commented on the roles of international students as enablers in enhancing the numerous strategies (see section 5.4.1) used in creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study found that the roles played by international students in enhancing the strategies used in creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS helped to enhance and shape their learning skills and enable them to grow and develop holistically. Meanwhile, their capability was also identified in their possession of different skills such as intrapersonal, interpersonal and language skills that assisted them to learn some basic words in the local language (IsiZulu), for easy communication between them and the local students, which was linked to enhancing their learning skills. The following excerpts were identified from the participants' responses during the focus group discussion:

To make this environment enabling for me, I have also tried to learn ehhh a bit of the Zulu language and yea. So, I tried as much as I can to communicate the little I can in the local language. And again, you know like I mentioned, about living in the campus residence, it has one of the roles I have to play for myself. (Supporting, FGD 2).

Inclusive concurs with the above comment and added:

...as for me, I started to learn some few words in the Zulu language like greetings, and when you ask something from somebody or some few words at least when you start a conversation with a South African student at least you can start with their language and it will be like you know them. (FGD 1)

Another participant also noted that:

I partially learnt the language on my own to communicate with the locals and I speak it to an extent... (FGD, 3).

On the other hand, most of the participants also indicated that participating in different activities individually and playing several exciting roles like mentoring their fellow new international students, creating time to see them, encouraging them, guiding them, organising a research group for the new students and taking them out for grocery shopping all helped to make the environment enabling for themselves. The following statements from three of the participants revealed the various roles they played as agents in the learning environment:

Ahhh, another thing is that I involved myself in some activities in the school, like mentoring, that gives me an opportunity to actually help my fellow international and local students and eh to encourage them and be part of their education. And another thing is my commitment to my church that I go to and that is another thing that actually made my eh this place quite worthy and enabling for me. (Resourceful, FGD)

Cooperative also commented that:

I made myself available in my department to make sure that new international students especially are settled down. I made myself available, I make my time available at any time of the day to make sure that when they come, I take them for grocery, some of them I helped them even to secure accommodation before they come if they engage me. Eh, if I have anything at home that is like plates, cups, all those little, little things. I don't allow them to buy all those stuff, I give it to them even up to the radio. I go to see them regularly, even as many times as they want me to come, I always give them time.

Lastly, Welcoming enthusiastically explained that:

I formulated a research group where the new international students. When they come can share their research challenges and, eh, even if I don't have any good thing to

say, I just reassure them that everybody came here like that. I can give ehmm technical or professional advice from my experience. I make sure I guide them, I give them guidance about the next thing to do and just sort of mentoring. And some of them who miss home, I invite them to my house, So, I make my house available to them.

This finding from the above quotes revealed the important roles played by international students as enablers to enhance their learning skills and to make the environment enabling for themselves and for their fellow international students. These roles were identified as mentoring students, reassuring them, creating time to see them, encouraging them, guiding them, organising research groups for those who are having research challenges and escorting them for grocery shopping. These roles performed by the international students helped to shape their learning and positively influenced their behaviour and thinking.

5.4.2.2 Local community

The participants also identified in the study the importance of involving the local community (Student Representative Council members, SRC hereafter, and local peers) in their matters to ensure that their learning in the context of HIV and AIDS are enhanced, drawing from the diverse strategies (see section 5.4.1) indicated in the previous section above for creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Participants suggested that involving local students and members of the SRC in issues affecting international students will help in enhancing the diverse strategies used in creating an enabling learning environment for them, as explained in following statements by the participants:

The SRC should also take part and be involved in enhancing the strategies we just mentioned. We only hear about them when they are complaining or striking about fees or accommodation, but we don't hear them to say or have a meeting saying we are meeting our international students. This is because there is a portfolio in the SRC for someone to oversee international affairs and students in the SRC. (Friendly, FGD 2).

...the issue of SRC. Well, the SRC is a students' thing, there is an office within the SRC for international students, but it is chaired by a local student who does not know what international students go through and their needs. So I ask, why can't the university automatically appoint the president of the International Students Association to be in

that position as an SRC member so that they will have first-hand knowledge of our challenges here. (Conducive, FGD 3).

One of the participants also commented on the participation and involvement of all the local students, not only SRC members, in enhancing their learning and development. Secured stated:

I also think all the local students must participate too because once they are there, they can hear the challenges that we face and from there maybe they will start to change their ways towards us. Especially if somebody doesn't know how to speak Zulu, they should not exclude the person or start calling the person kwerekwere. I think they must also be part of the meeting too so that they can hear and see how we feel. (FGD 1)

These responses confirm the significance of the local students' involvement in enhancing their learning and development. The findings of the study indicate that involving the local students will enable them to develop empathy towards international students and help them understand the challenges international students face in their host environment.

5.4.2.3 The university management team

Another element that was identified by the participants was the role of the university management teams as enablers in enhancing the different strategies used in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. The university managers/administrators were identified as the Dean in charge of the schools, the academic staff, support staff, and the health officials. The findings of the study international students showed the importance of engaging with the Dean and the university management teams on a regular basis. The students indicated that it would help the Dean and the university management team to identify with and proffer solutions to address the challenges they are presently experiencing in their learning environment. The participants gave insights on ways the Dean of the campus and his management team should be involved and the reason they need to be involved in enhancing the strategies they mentioned in section 5.4.1 above.

...Dean's meeting with international students. It broadens our horizons even the Dean's own horizon too even though he might have studied overseas he doesn't know what we are experiencing in his own country here... (Welcoming, FGD 3).

... the Dean needs to engage us or call for a meeting with the international students because he is the one in charge and makes a decision concerning the school in his office. He must recognise that we are here and listen to our issues. It is important because it will make us feel welcome and show they care for us. (Convenient, FGD 2).

...if we talk of having international students, this indicates having a meeting with the dean regularly here because he is in charge of the campus. (Inclusive, FGD 1).

The Dean and other ones at the top of the hierarchy have the power to ensure that international students are safe and secured because if anything happens, it discredits their name and the name of the institution and they would be held accountable because it is their responsibility. (Cooperative, FGD 3).

Furthermore, the importance of having other university/campus management team involved in the meetings and discussions or dialogue between them and the Dean was identified by the participants. All the participants indicated how important it was as they assert that it will enable them to understand their challenges and proffer effective solutions to solve them, as is seen in the following utterances:

Convenient explained that:

A discussion and dialogue between international students and the school campus management are vital. During this meeting, we can be open, voice out our problems and explain our challenges to them here. We need this opportunity on this campus which should be created (Convenient, PV).

Supporting also pointed out that:

It is the responsibility of all the school administrators (Dean, international office, health officers) to ensure we are welcome and treated well here. The school administrators need to take responsibility because it is their duty/role and they have the power to do it. (FGD 1).

Caring stated that:

The key stakeholders in the university need to speak and interact with us more, they need to understand our challenges (FGD 2).

Safe also spoke with intense feelings on the importance of engaging the key stakeholders of the university in a meeting with international students as she sums it all:

The key stakeholders of the university, the staff members, administrative staff... So, I mean bringing together the key stakeholders would make us know that we are welcomed and then they are open to sharing with us the challenges we are facing and then to assist us on how to ehhe create an environment, a social and enabling environment for learning. (FGD 1).

University management teams as thus potential enablers in enhancing the different strategies used to create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Participants expected them to engage international students in regular discussions and dialogue in order to understand international students' challenges and experiences.

The subtheme presented above revealed the enablers and their roles in enhancing and shaping international students' learning and development. The findings identified the enablers as international students, the local students, and the university management teams. The study also revealed the kind of roles they could play in shaping and enhancing international students' learning, growth, and development.

5.5 THEME FOUR: PHOTOVOICE: AGENCY AND CAPABILITIES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

This section of data presentation and interpretation was in response to the Sub-research Question Three: *How can the use of a participatory visual methodology such as photovoice enable agency in the lives of international students in the context of HIV and AIDS?* In this section, I employed the self-reflective essay in which the international students wrote an individual reflection based on the following prompt: *“What have you learnt today while participating in this photovoice process”*. This prompt was guided by the following questions to the participants: *Write about today's session, how you felt and about your experiences*. The evidence of the written reflections revealed eight (8) sub-themes/categories that emerged which are: *exposed to visual skills; acquisition of creative skill; it enhanced critical thinking; it's an unconventional way of learning; it enabled active engagement; connecting to other people; awareness to the university environment and empowering the disempowered*. These themes were purposefully chosen and presented below to show the participants' ideas, experiences, and understandings of engaging in the photovoice sessions and how it enabled them to ponder on their own agency of creating an enabling learning environment.

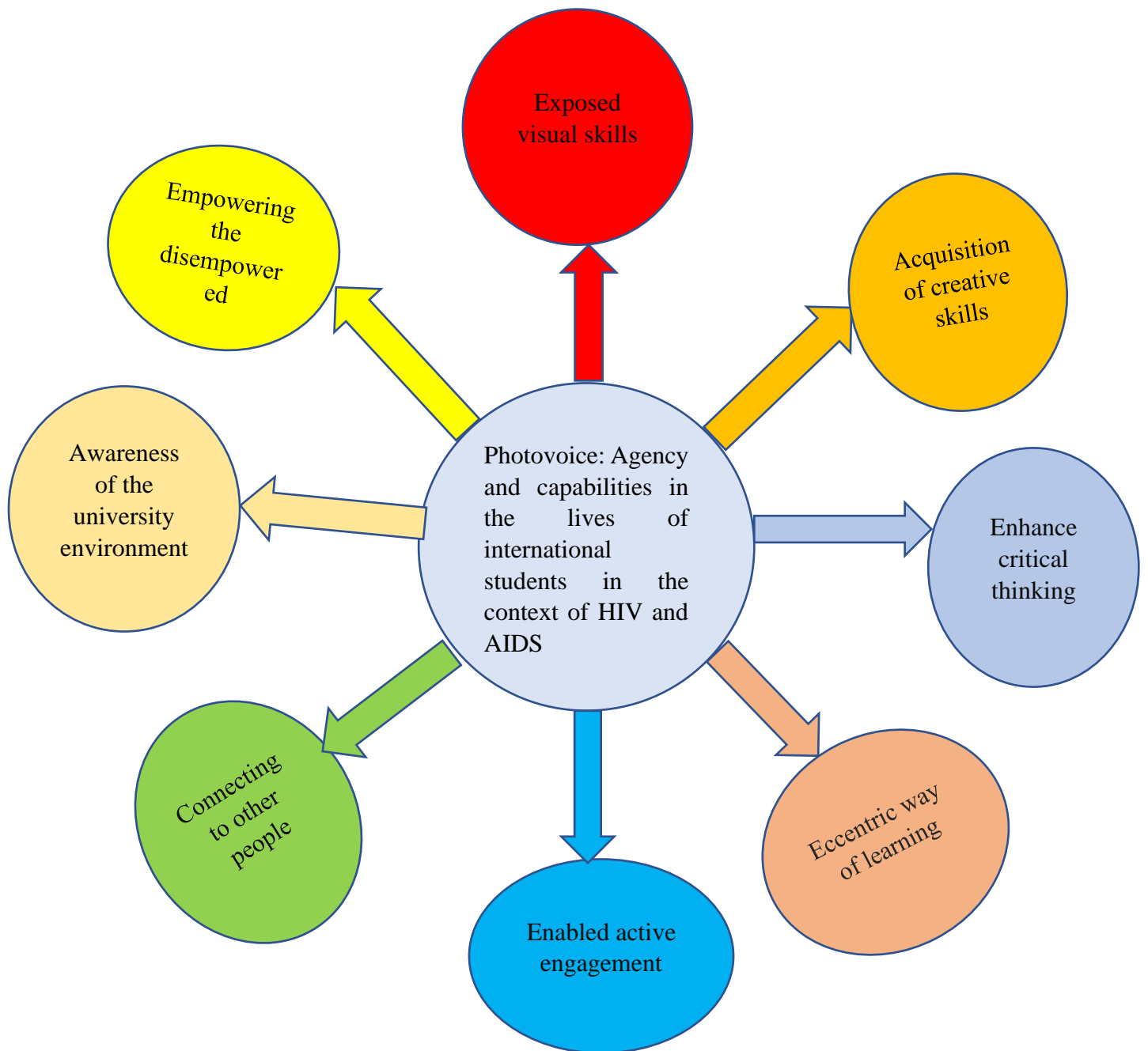


Figure 5.7 Photovoice agency and capabilities in the lives of international students

5.5.1. Exposed to visual skills

In this theme, the international students participating in this study explained that using a participatory visual method such as photovoice exposed them to several visual skills. The exposure to various visual skills as mentioned by the participants has to do with improving

their knowledge and understanding of technological advancement; learning about the different types of computer systems; helping them gain more awareness of the learning facilities; acting as a great learning tool; and, lastly, arousing their visual cognition. This was evident in the participants' responses regarding the photovoice process.

This made me feel so exposed... visual displaying the importance of my learning environment. It also improved my knowledge and understanding of technological advancement to learning while using this method to generate data. (Friendly)

...it aroused my cognition and brought into visual, my thoughts and views on what and how my learning could be enhanced. It also helped me to make differentiation and learn more about the different computer systems we have here at the campus (LAN)... (Convenient).

It made me gain awareness about the facilities we have here and how important they were for my learning. (Conducive).

To some of the participants, participating in the photovoice process gave them an opportunity to gain knowledge about visual ethics, which they never knew. To them, photovoice was a great learning method that can be used in exposing and voicing their knowledge and experiences of how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them. One of the participants gave an honest account and commented:

I never knew that taking pictures without people's consent was unethical but participating in the photovoice workshop made me know this. (Cooperative)

Another participant explained clearly:

... It allowed me to visually portray and express my personal knowledge about how the university can create an enabling learning environment for students in the context of HIV and AIDS. (Safe).

One of the participants, Caring, male added that using the digital camera and also taking pictures with it was indeed a great experience for him. He further asserts that it was indeed a great learning tool that should be recommended for adults to use:

It's a great learning tool, especially for adults. (Caring)

The above extracts from the participants' self-reflective essays which showed their experiences of engaging in the photovoice sessions indicated that participating/engaging in the photovoice method exposed them to diverse visual skills that helped to enhance their learning experiences and development in the context of HIV and AIDS.

5.5.2 Acquisition of creative skills

All the responses from the participants showed that participating in the photovoice sessions/process enabled them to acquire different creative skills. This indicates that photovoice helped them to become creative and innovative, to reflect on their experiences and learning environment and to be able to express themselves using pictures. In addition, the data showed that engaging in the photovoice session enabled the participants to develop self-confidence and innovative skills while using the camera to take photographs/pictures to view things in a creative form. This is discussed in the section below:

Peaceful:

Photovoice made me develop creative skills and become critical.

. Friendly also highlights that:

Now I can use this method to view things in a critical and creative form

Conducive has this to say:

I developed self-confident and innovative skills while using photographs to talk about my experience.

Meanwhile, some of the participants also indicated that participating in the photovoice session/process enabled them to be able to express themselves creatively using pictures. The following quotes by the participants highlighted how engaging in the photovoice process helped them create knowledge using pictures; by talking to the pictures and reminiscing.

I was so surprised and never knew that with pictures we can create knowledge.
(Cooperative).

...it made me critically talk to the pictures by way of interpreting the meanings in them and to find time to critically analyse the pictures. (Caring).

According to Cooperative the experience of participating in the photovoice process enabled her to apply her knowledge in using pictures to identify problems within her environment:

...I will say that the photovoice method helped me to develop research skills.

The findings above depict that photovoice enabled agency in the lives of the participants, as it allowed them to acquire creative skills by being creative and innovative, to express themselves creatively and to have a meaningful reflection on their environment and surroundings. The next section describes how photovoice enhanced international students' critical thinking.

5.5.3. Enhance critical thinking

Another common element that was disclosed by all the participants in their self-reflective essay was the fact that engaging/participating in the photovoice process enhanced/improved their thinking critically and made them become critical thinkers. According to the participants, photovoice improved the way they think and create space for them to think deeply about their learning environment; it gave them a time and opportunity to ponder; helped them to link the image to the phenomenon, enabled them to see that people developed and learn all the time and were mentally engaging too. According to the participants:

...the photovoice process made me think and enabled me to see that we develop and learn all the time.... (Inclusive).

Another participant affirmed:

...it also made me think critically. (Conductive).

Convenient concurred with Inclusive and Conductive and asserted that:

The photovoice process allowed me to think critically.

Some of the participants pointed out that engaging in photovoice was an opportunity to reflect.

Secured stated that:

The photovoice session gave me a platform to ponder on what I see that remain captured in my mind.

Conductive also pointed out that:

...gave me time to think about what was available in the school environment and what was not in order to enable my learning here. (FG 2).

One of the participants also highlighted that engaging in the photovoice process was mentally tasking as shown in the following quote:

...it was mentally tasking as on face value in most cases you are lost for ideas. But when you get into it, the ideas begin to flow. (Welcoming).

Supportive also explained that during the photo shooting session, he had to think critically on the type of picture/photographs to take that would link to the topic of enabling learning environments that were being researched:

I had to start linking images to the images around me. In some cases, I had to delete some pictures just to make sure that the ones I take are linked to the topic under research.

The findings highlight the fact that using the photovoice method in this instance with international students enhanced their critical thinking. The data from the participants' responses indicated that photovoice helped them to improve their thinking, made them think critically about their learning environments, gave them opportunity and time to ponder and think about their experiences and environment and to connect their pictures to the topic being researched.

5.5.4. Eccentric ways of learning

As indicated in the main theme 'photovoice, agency and capabilities of international students in the context of HIV and AIDS', the data from the participants' self-reflective essays shows that engaging and participating in the photovoice sessions was an eccentric or alternative way of learning. To the participants, using the photovoice, a participatory visual method, included looking at issues from a different perspective and having a new dimension to learning. They indicated that photovoice enabled them to understand things in diverse ways and to construct knowledge differently. The statements from the participants explained this clearly:

Inclusive emphasised:

...the photovoice process made me ... look at issues from another perspective.

While Safe stated:

Looking at the diverse learning environment has shown me another new dimension to learning.

In a similar way, another Participant, Convenient also stated that:

...it also gave me a different view of the essence of nature and my environment.

For some of the participants, participating in the photovoice session made them understand and recognise that there are some learning facilities that needed to be enhanced in the school environment, for example, the postgraduate study LAN and some of the books in the university library. One of the participants indicated:

I realised that there are things that need simple improvement like study LANS for postgraduate students and improving the books in the library. (Supportive)

Another factor that reflects the participants' experiences of using a participatory visual method such as photovoice was identifying that using pictures was a genuine way to create and construct knowledge. Most of the participants revealed that using visual images to do research was a new and great experience to them and a fun way of generating knowledge and ideas. The following statements by two of the participants sum this up.

Cooperative noted opined that:

...the use of visual images is a legitimate and valuable way to construct knowledge and create understanding about my surrounding world.

Welcoming also indicated:

My personal experience in using photovoice approach was fun and a good way of exchanging ideas on a particular issue. I found it fun to take pictures using a camera.

Thus, incorporating a participatory visual method such as photovoice into research with international students was a different way for them to learn that enhanced and increased their agency to learn. They expressed how engaging and participating in the photovoice process made them look at problems in diverse ways instead of looking at issues in the same way.

5.5.5. Enabled active engagement

All the international students participating in this study indicated that involvement in the photovoice method enabled active engagement between them, the local students and the

community in the university environment. The findings showed that photovoice enabled international students to actively engage with each other. Engaging and participating in the photovoice process is interactive, educative, demanding, and assisted them to practise what they were taught. This was evident in their responses to engaging and participating in the photovoice sessions.

During the photo shooting session, I experience that photovoice enabled us, students, to actively engage in our learning within the university environment and this helped me to understand my perception of an enabling learning environment. (Safe).

In addition, Caring asserted that “*Photovoice is quite engaging and interactive*” ... While Conducive is also of the view that “*The photovoice process was engaging and educative*”.

While reflecting on engaging and participating in the photovoice sessions in this study, Supportive identified that the photovoice sessions allowed him to practicalise what he has been reading and studying about photovoice. It enabled the international students to develop both positive and negative reactions (mixed feelings) towards issues in their learning context and to examine these issues. The study also found that engaging and participating in the photovoice process is exciting, fun and a great experience for the participants. It is also seen as a powerful method but, at the same time, is flexible. This was evident in the following quotes below:

According to Supportive:

This session gave me the opportunity for the first time to practice what I have ever read about photovoice.

Engaging in the photovoice process made me have mixed feelings. (Resourceful)

Welcoming also contended that:

... it was a great experience and it demanded more than just writing.

Cooperative excitedly indicated that:

I found it fun to take pictures using a camera and it is engaging.

Lastly, Safe claimed that:

...photovoice method is a powerful research method that allows flexibility.

Evidence from the findings in the study showed that involving international students in the photovoice process enabled them to engage actively with one other and to collaborate within

the university community. Supportive states that “*the photovoice process helped me to practise what I have been studying concerning photovoice and also allowed them to develop positive and negative reactions about their learning environment*”. This study revealed that international students’ collective agency enabled them to engage actively and interact with people in their environment (Bandura, 2008).

5.5.6 Connecting to other people

The participatory visual method used in this study appeared to have created an opportunity for the participants to connect to other people such as their fellow international students, local students, and the community and to their social world, using photographs. In addition, photovoice enabled the participants to connect, associate, relate and bond with diverse people, families, and friends and with people in their social world. Using photovoice also gave the participants an opportunity to develop interpersonal skills and abilities to communicate with diverse people through pictures and improve their communication skills with people around them, presently and in the future. These can be seen in the following quotes:

I, therefore, learnt that photo talks or carries a message for me. I then understand why people keep photos even of late people-when seeing them, a message is communicated clearly or constructed for future dealings. (Secured).

I feel confident about using a camera to take clear photographs and use those photographs to tell a story about my experience within the campus. Consequently, I never knew that we can communicate or do research with photographs. (Friendly).

It made me give my voice to burning issues concerning us here, which I wouldn’t have been opportune to contribute in especially in relating with local students. (Caring).

The ability to use a participatory visual method such as photovoice to encourage international students to connect and relate with other people was recognised in the photovoice session. The participants stated that the photovoice process created an opportunity for them to express their views and understanding of how the university could create an enabling environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS and also being able to have self-retrospection and do things they could not have done before.

...the method allowed me to ... express my personal knowledge about how the university can create an enabling learning environment for students in the context of HIV and AIDS with my colleagues. (Safe).

When I was taking the pictures, I came to realise that I was actually talking to myself more often and doing things I never knew I could do. (Supportive).

Using the photovoice method also assisted Inclusive to see how it aroused and motivated collaboration between them and the university community. His experiences during the session enabled him to see how people could relate and unite while using the method to learn and to do research. This is stated in the excerpts below:

...it stimulates collaboration between the researcher and the community which this particular research is based on.

The participants in their self-reflective essay emphasise the importance of using photovoice with international students which enabled them to relate and connect to other people most especially the local students. It also identified how photovoice helped them to become expressive and to voice out their challenges/issues and make it known using photographs. Using photovoice also provoked/stimulated self-retrospection among the participants as they were able to do things, they never thought they could do and share ideas and information's using photographs. It also enabled them to develop democratic ideals and to understand that relating and connecting to people in the environment is associated with their sense of agency. The next section elaborates on how the use of photovoice enabled international students to become aware of what is happening in the university environment.

5.5.7 Awareness of the university environment

The participants revealed in the self-reflective essay that pictures have the capacity to make international students become conscious of themselves and their learning environment. This finding became evident when the participants were giving a platform to reflect on how they are engaging in photovoice which brought about their awareness of their learning environment that needs more enhancement. The verbatim quotes below validate the findings of the study:

Caring spoke expressively and said:

The photovoice session gave me a platform to ...eventually reflect on myself and the university environment and how it affects my thinking about the future.

Whereas, Peaceful also has this to say:

It provided an awareness around my learning environment, revealing to us something that is important that is happening in this environment that we all need to know.
(Peaceful).

Convenient stated that:

It also filled my curiosity about what could actually make a good learning environment.

Some of the participants also indicated that participating in the photovoice process made them realise that the HIV and AIDS awareness programme within the university environment was insufficient and that the university needs to create and provide more programmes to make it an enabling learning environment for them. This was mentioned in these excerpts:

Friendly posed:

... made me aware that the university needs to create more strategy as a way to provide large scale awareness on social health issues including HIV.

One of the participants also mentioned that:

...photovoice helped me see that the awareness of HIV in this university is low, using photovoice makes me realise that they should do ahhh! Like more programmes for international students like support programme. (Convenient)

These excerpts from the participants above strongly spoke about how the photovoice method could be a platform used in identifying issues in their learning environment. The findings also revealed that engaging in the photovoice method raised the awareness of international students by indicating the significance of enhancing their learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, the photovoice method is seen by international students as an instrument for improving their awareness of themselves and their learning environment.

5.5.8 Empowering the disempowered

Using the photovoice method gave the participants the power to make informed decisions about their lives and on the challenges, they were experiencing in their learning environment. The

international students regarded photovoice as a powerful method for conducting research and felt empowered. The study showed that engaging in the photovoice process enabled the participants to take initiatives on their own and developed creative skills, became more confident and learnt independently.

In addition, Safe commented that *‘Through photovoice method, as a participant, I developed self-confidence and felt empowered. Therefore, the photovoice method is a powerful research method to engage in’*. While Cooperative alluded that *“ I feel confident about using a camera to take clear photographs”*.

Some participants contended that using photovoice is a way of empowering and giving voices to people apart from themselves who are less powerful and vulnerable. These were empathetically stated by the participants below:

Finally, I feel photovoice participation is a way of empowering people whose voices are suppressed in society (Caring).

While ‘Conductive’ pointed out that:

In short, I will say it was empowering for me and it will empower vulnerable people to speak out.

The above quotations revealed that engaging and participating in photovoice empowered the participants as it created an opportunity for them to become more confident, developed creative skills and learn independently. The participants in this study acknowledged that engaging in the photovoice process was mentally tasking which required them to think and visually portray their thoughts through photographs and this made them feel empowered. Safe indicated that she felt empowered and developed self-confidence while participating in the photovoice process. Caring believes that participating in the photovoice method is a way of empowering people who are vulnerable and seen as a deficit within the society.

Drawing from the findings in theme four, it is obvious that engaging in the photovoice process empowered the international students and made them more confident in their learning and development.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented and reported the findings on the participants' views, understanding, experiences, and knowledge of how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Four themes namely: imagining the university: international students' construction of an enabling learning environment; the need for an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS; dynamic strategies for creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and lastly photovoice, agency, and capabilities of international students in an enabling learning environment. The result of the study also showed how the participants through their collective views, experiences, knowledge, participation and engagement in the photovoice process and focus group discussion envisaged different ways in which the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, the self-reflective essay employed in the study identified that international students' participation and engagement in the photovoice method enabled and offered them an opportunity to ponder and reflect on the importance of learning in an enabling learning environment. The next chapter (Chapter 6) presents the discussion and synthesis of the data and how it is re-contextualised within the existing literature and theory based on the research questions and the emerging themes.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS: CREATING AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented and interpreted the results of the study while this chapter discusses and synthesises the data, showing how the findings respond to the research questions. It also highlights issues regarding an enabling learning environment. The findings are analysed and presented in four broad themes according to the research questions. In addition, the findings are discussed and integrated with the agentic capability theory and the conceptual framework used to frame the study and infused it with the existing literature. Further, in discussing the data, the researcher inserts the participants' photographs and accompanying explanations necessary to ensure that the participants' 'voices' remain integral to the discussions.

6.2. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section is organised according to the four themes that emerged from the findings of the study, which are arranged as the following subheadings: *Imagining the university: international students' construction of an enabling learning environment; The need for an enabling learning environment by international students in the context of HIV and AIDS; The dynamic strategies for creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and lastly photovoice: agency and capabilities in the lives of international students.* These themes are discussed and synthesised in depth in the following sections.

6.2.1. International students' constructions of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS

The study started by looking at international students' understanding of the notion 'enabling learning environment'. The findings reveal that international students possess different skills and capabilities within them that enables them to understand who they are and to share their experiences, ideas, and knowledge through different types of methods. Lee (2010) notes that

international students have diverse skills and offer cultural knowledge that can enhance learning and scholarship in the global world. The findings of this first theme are central to the context of the study (South Africa) and to the international debate on international students' lives and experiences and how they are seen as active agents and participants in their learning environment, in this case contributing towards ensuring that their learning environment becomes enabling in the context of HIV and AIDS. Employing photovoice as a method in this study gave international students the opportunity to reflect on their learning environment. However, the views of these international students do not represent all international students' views in South Africa, but their ideas, values, experiences, knowledge, and understanding are, intentionally, well-considered and explained within the scope of this study in South Africa.

According to the literature, the word 'enabling' is seen as a very complex term that does not have a blueprint definition. However, the Merriam Webster Dictionary (n.d) describes 'enabling' as the authority; competence; power; means; or ability to authorise, allow or permit people to do something. On the other hand, the construct 'enabling learning environment' is also seen as a complex term that does not have a homogeneous definition. This is because different scholars have defined it in different ways, showing its complex nature (Luna-Scott, 2015; Brown, 2006). Significantly, an enabling learning environment is explained as an environment that is supportive (academically, and financially), where students feel safe and secured emotionally and physically, encourages student agency and social interaction. The study. This view corresponds with the definition by Groff (2012) who describes an enabling learning environment as a stimulating and resourceful environment. In this same vein, Iten (2015) explains that it is a transformative learning environment that supports the students academically as well as meets all of their needs. Barge (2012) also argues that it is an environment that encourages cross-cultural integration and easy communication and interaction between the students and their lecturers, people. Brindley et al. (2009) contend that it helps students to develop higher-order thinking. Higher order thinking in these aspects indicates that students develop critical and cognitive thinking skills which will help them to solve some of the issues that might be affecting them. Barge (2012) also describes a positive learning environment as one that ensures the students' physical and psychological safety, helping them build a positive image, enabling them to gain a sense of belongingness (Ryan & Viete, 2009), as well as encouraging purposeful behaviours and helping them develop a sense of personal competence.

Further, in this theme, the findings reveal that international students' understandings of an enabling learning environment provided a wealth (multiplicity) of knowledge on how their capabilities could be nurtured through promoting a healthy lifestyle, supporting them academically and financially and by encouraging social integration. In the agentic capability theory, international students' personal agency is identified in diverse abilities and skills (Bandura, 2008; 2012), qualities they displayed while engaging in the photovoice process. They were expected to use their skills/abilities to actively participate and engage in the photovoice process effectively (Khanare, 2015). Moreover, the context of HIV and AIDS should be a healthy and stress-free environment, so that international students could achieve the relevant learning goals and develop holistically. As indicated in Chapter 2, this is in line with the agentic capability theory. Thus, international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment provided them with multiple ideas and knowledge on how their capabilities are nurtured to enable them to achieve their learning potential (Johnstone, 2007; Walker, 2010) and to become agents of change (Tuchten, 2012; Julie-Rengert, 2011) in their lives and in the life of others.

The findings under this theme identified four subthemes, namely promotion of a healthy lifestyle; academic support; financial support and encouraging social integration. Therefore, the university's provision of such a learning environment will help to nurture international students' skills and abilities and ensure that their learning environment is conducive in the context of HIV and AIDS. Within the agentic capability theory, the environment is identified as an essential contributory factor to international students' development and learning (Bandura, 2006; 2010) and students' agency is intentionally and unintentionally influenced by their diversities, experiences, values, cultures, knowledge, and ideas at a personal and proxy level (Bandura, 2012). Therefore, the next section discusses the above subthemes.

6.2.1.1. Promote a healthy lifestyle

Promote a healthy lifestyle



I took this photo because it demonstrates an enabling learning environment particularly in the context of HIV and AIDS. In as much as government through the department of health support the citizenry through the provision of treatment drugs and counselling services, each student has a part to play in keeping the body healthy and fit all the time. This supports the immune system in fighting the HIV virus. Universities, therefore, need to provide such facilities and programmes to support such activities. Without support programmes, these sporting facilities become white elephants as students spend most of their time studying and thus ignoring their health. Additionally, these facilities must be accessible to all students on campuses so that the university campus becomes a home with all amenities. (Caring)

Figure 6.1 Promoting a healthy lifestyle

The examination of the photographs and its explanation showed that international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment is based on the fact that it is an environment that promotes a healthy lifestyle. International students explain further that a healthy environment is stable, balanced, stress-free, and an open space that enables students to think, reflect, refresh and interact with one another. According to the findings, international students consider an enabling environment that promotes healthy lifestyles as a sustainable learning environment. The enabling environment enables students to live a healthy and active lifestyle. The findings in the study showed that promoting students to live a healthy lifestyle will help the students to achieve academic success and develop their individual skills. Themane and Osher (2014) affirm that an enabling learning environment builds students in a healthy way and enables them to succeed academically.

On the other hand, different studies have shown that learning in a stressful and unhealthy environment negatively influences the students' learning and growth (Nurumal et al. 2009; Firestone, 2015; Hannah, 2013). Iten (2015) argues that international students feel dissatisfied,

lonely, and lack a sense of belonging when studying in a constraining environment. Therefore, learning in a sustainable healthy environment in the context of HIV and AIDS, according to the findings, will improve international students' access to health information and facilities and their ability to utilise it. However, the findings of this study contrast with those of Ola et al. (2013), who found that students were made vulnerable to HIV and AIDS due to limited access to health facilities and social factors such as poverty.

Significantly, the findings demonstrate that international students' construction of an enabling learning environment focuses on making it safe and secure. The findings identified that a safe and secure environment enables students to study comfortably and feel calm and relaxed while studying. It promotes students' learning and protects their lives and properties. This finding is in line with the study by Osher, Dwyer, and Jackson (2004), which indicated that a good school creates an enabling learning environment for its students to feel physically and emotionally safe and secure. Osher et al. (2012) also contend that an enabling school is safe, supportive and reduces violence within and outside its environment effectively. Meanwhile, the study by Themane and Osher (2014) also revealed that an enabling learning environment ensures that students feel safe, supported, cared, respected and secured from emotional and physical harm and further developed a love for the school and the neighbouring community, fellow students and academic staff. Themane and Osher (2014) argue further that students need safe and supportive schools to succeed and to develop holistically in order to attain their academic goals. Therefore, the findings of this study clearly suggest that an enabling learning environment is an environment that should promote healthy lifestyle of their students which is by being a sustainable healthy environment that encourages and promotes the students general wellbeing as well as be a safe and secure environment that enhances and promotes international students' learning as well as enable them to develop higher-order skills such as problem-solving skills and critical thinking skill.

6.2.1.2. Academic support

Supporting students with academic overload.



The picture depicts a student who is overloaded with academic work. The university should provide strong support to its students when they consider the immensity of the problems they face with their academics and the difficulties involved in coping with the environment. Students' academic overload can cause students to feel disengaged, disempowered, and even resentful, which can disrupt the learning process. (Welcoming)

Figure 6.5 Provision of academic support

The international students in the study revealed in their photographs that receiving academic support from different resources – human (supervisors, lecturers, administrators, library assistants), material, nonmaterial and physical – would help to make the environment enabling for them and help them grow and develop personally. The participants view their supervisors, lecturers and library assistants to be a resource (human resource) that they can always rely on whenever they are having academic issues. The findings of the study also showed that respondents consider that human resources (supervisors, lecturers, administrators, library assistants) should always be available to assist and support them in their learning experiences. Wu et al. (2015) indicate that the adjustment and adaptation of international students in their host environment are easy when they are supported and encouraged by their supervisors and lecturers. This finding also reverberates with the study by Borg and Cefai (2014), which found that international students adjusted to their academic life because of the support and care they got from their lecturers. The study showed that human resources are vital to students' academic performances because they support students by giving them insights and ideas on how to engage in their academic work. This resonates with the study by Campbell and Li (2008) who also identified in their study that international students experienced high-quality education, practical programmes, favourable learning environments if they have friendly, helpful, supportive and highly qualified lecturers and tutors. On the other hand, the study showed that other resources such as the hardware and software resources like the ICT facilities, the computers in the research commons/LAN, projectors, cameras, WIFI, internet, print resources (articles) also enabled them to learn, share their knowledge and engage with diverse people.

Davies et al. (2013) contend that ICT facilities enable international students to learn in schools. Henard et al. (2012) also assert that international students while learning with different ICT facilities develop new learning approaches.

International students indicated that the academic support they will receive from these resources will help to enhance their learning and in achieving their academic goals. In addition, the study also found that the students see the physical resources as an essential factor in their academic achievement and academic growth. For example, open learning spaces like the LAN, Research Commons, Library and separate study areas provided by the university were found to enable the students to engage in group work, group discussion, and dialogues, and to learn collaboratively. The findings showed that learning can take place anywhere. However, Khanare (2015) argues that learning does not take place in a vacuum or in isolation. The agentic capability framework emphasis that the agency of students, as international students and as a group of people, does not exist in a vacuum but within a social structure (environment) (Krishnan, 2010) and their learning can be affected by the environment positively or negatively. Therefore, this implies that an enabling learning environment supports deep-rooted learning (Ruismaki et al., 2015).

6.2.1.3. Financial support:

Scholarship/funding



Figure 6.6 Provision of financial support to international students

The extracts from the data above and in Chapter 5 (section 5.3.1.4) show that international students believe that supporting them financially will make their environment enabling to their learning. International students need financial support such as scholarships, funding, grants,

and work opportunities to earn a living, enhance their economic welfare, reduce their financial burdens and sustain themselves in the context of HIV and AIDS. The findings also showed that a lack of financial support will make international students experience difficulty in their learning and life. Hwang et al. (2011) identify a lack of financial assistance as affecting international students' learning achievements. The findings also resonate with the study by Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015), who found that the reason international students experienced financial constraints was that they struggled to make ends meet, due to lack of funding, no jobs and the pressure to send remittances to family members back home.

6.2.1.4 Encourage social integration

Encouraging student's collaboration and conferences



The university should constantly organise social and academic events and programme that are inclusive to infuse international students and local students to interact and learn from one another. (Inclusive)

Figure 6.7 Encouraging students' integration

Therefore, to help international students the university may organise programmes and bring in a guest speaker to come and talk to them, or they can prepare a field trip or social events for all the students so that they bring the students together and help them learn in a new environment. (Supportive).

The findings from the excerpts above and in (Chapter 5) revealed that encouraging international students to socially integrate with other people will give them the opportunity to interact and relate with one another, their lecturers and local communities; share and exchange ideas/information; coexist, gain international knowledge and learn from one another. The findings in the study also showed that an enabling learning environment is an environment that will support and help the international students to build and develop relationships skills as well as network easily with one another and with other people, In addition, it will also help to improve their wellbeing in the context of HIV and AIDS. Brindley et al. (2009) assert that a rich

environment provides an opportunity for people to interact and interconnect, develop high order thinking skills, reflect, co-create knowledge and engage in transformative learning. The findings of the study also revealed that an environment that encourages social integration is a caring and empathetic environment that helps to develop its students' sense of social belonging. Ryan and Viète (2009) assert that an enabling learning environment encourages students to have feelings of belonging and the ability to communicate effectively, creatively, and with confidence and feel valued as knowledgeable people. Page and Davis (2016) contend that it is an environment that maximizes inclusivity and active learning.

A further aspect of the finding is in line with the study by Montgomery and McDowell (2009), which found that international students experience social support which is in form of a global network where they motivate each other greatly to succeed and assist each other as an international community intellectually, socially and emotionally. Brown and Holloway (2008) identify that international students enjoy a sense of belonging in their host environment, due to the constant social gatherings and interesting opportunities they have, which enables them to meet different people. Maundeni et al. (2010) also reveal that international students experience positive adjustment as a result of factors in their host environments such as the presence of supportive networks, the availability of services and academic facilities, political stability and good orientation programmes. Zar (2009) also identifies that international students' positive experiences are based on the social support they receive from engaging with their fellow international students.

The findings from this theme one clearly show that international students' diverse thoughts, ideas, experiences, values, and knowledge, produced multiple understanding of what an enabling learning environment means. Further, the excerpts from the participants' responses (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1 to 5.2.4) indicated that international students view an enabling learning environment as an environment that promotes healthy lifestyles by creating a sustainable healthy environment and a safe and secure environment for its students. Furthermore, it is also referred to as an environment that provides and offers academic and financial support to its students and lastly as an environment that encourages social integration between international students and their local peers/community in order to enhance and promote their learning and also enable them to develop a healthy and active lifestyle. Meanwhile, the agentic capability theory emphasises that international students' agency is revealed through their diverse capabilities (acts of being healthy and doing something, having access to good accommodation, clean water, being well educated, safe, secured, respected and

actively engaging in discussion with their peers) in identifying how an enabling learning environment should be. In the next theme, the discussion is focused on why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.

6.2.2 The significance and need for an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS

The findings in the previous theme showed the different understandings of an enabling learning environment by international students due to their diverse agency (personal, proxy and collective) and their diverse capabilities and skills that they possess. The agentic capability theory of Bandura (2012) focuses on human agency and its capabilities in shaping and enhancing learning and development. The second theme that emerged from the data analysis provides a discussion on the significance of learning in an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. The research question for this theme was clearly stipulated, as the participants were asked to explain *why they need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS*. The analysis of the focus group discussion suggests two themes and other subthemes that are identified in this section. The themes identified are: improving on the wellbeing of international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and addressing the challenges experienced by international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

The study found that, during the focus group discussion, when the participants were required to talk about the significance of an enabling learning environment and the reasons for it, they spoke eloquently, mostly on the barriers they experienced within the university that, they felt needed to be addressed. The research question for this theme was not based on the students' barriers. However, most participants spoke about the significance only in terms of the barriers/challenges they are presently experiencing in their host environment. This clearly shows that the significance of the barriers they are experiencing within their host environment.

The findings in the study also identified that the students indicated that they need an enabling learning environment in order to improve the wellbeing they already possessed before coming to study in their host environment. Wellbeing in this study implies promoting their health, enhancing their emotional and psychosocial wellbeing, being financially stable, such as feeling safe and secure, comfortable, successful and lastly enhancing their learning skills. The HEAIDS (2012) policy indicates that the objectives of the university in relation to HIV and AIDS is to promote the wellbeing of the people, group and institutions in the university

community by strengthening their capacity towards responding to the pandemic and lastly to create an enabling environment that will ensure a comprehensive and effective response to HIV and AIDS within the Higher Education sector, free of stigma and discrimination. In addition, the study discovered that the students' need for an enabling learning environment prompted them to talk about addressing the challenges they are experiencing within their host environment (immediate, micro, and macro environment) and to also enhance their capabilities (Sen, 1992; Walker, 2006; 2010). These themes and their subthemes are discussed in the following sections.

6.2.2.1. Improving the wellbeing of international students' in the context of HIV and AIDS

The data from the focus group discussions revealed that international students need an enabling learning environment to improve on their wellbeing in the context of HIV and AIDS, specifically in order to promote their health, improve their emotional and psychological wellbeing, enhance their learning skills and acquire financial stability. However, in theme one, international students are aware of what is happening within their learning environment and are also aware that they have the power to change things or situations to their own advantage using their agency intentionally and therefore becoming change agents (Bandura, 2006). This implies that the awareness (self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness) displayed by international students depicts that change emanates within them and as such, they can be regarded as agents of change (Bandura, 2012).

The findings in this second theme show that international students already have the knowledge and understanding of what an enabling learning environment is, which is regarded as an environment that promotes a healthy lifestyle, provides academic and financial support and encourages social integration, despite the challenges they experience within their host environment. Enhancing international students' learning environment will help to make the environment conducive for them and other students. O'Kane and Andrews (2014) claim that a constraining learning environment is an environment that is not conducive to learning. Meanwhile, in the first theme, international students demonstrated their self-agency whilst in this section, they were able to use it to identify different factors that influence their development, growth and learning negatively and positively showing their potentials, skills, and abilities to achieve their desired goals (Walker, 2010). Thus, in both themes, it is evident

that international students already possess some skills, qualities, and knowledge before coming to study in their host environment and as such are not empty vessels or deficit human beings (Orkin et al., 2014; Montgomery, 2010). They contribute to the institutional capital and socio-cultural capital and this shows the importance of their diversity. Tran and Gribble's (2015) study in Australia identifies that international education contributes to job creation and economic growth in the host country. Therefore, factors like health promotion improve emotional and psychological wellbeing, enhance learning skills and being financially stable are not only vital to improve on the international student's wellbeing but also help to enrich their host nation.

- *Promote health*

Understandably, a finding is that the health of international students when being promoted will strengthen their wellbeing in the context of HIV and AIDS. This finding corroborates the findings of Themane and Osher (2014) that students could only develop healthily and thrive if the schools are enabling, safe and supportive. The findings also revealed that learning in an environment that promotes health will help international students achieve their academic goals, learn, develop and grow effectively. Correspondingly, the study by Han et al. (2013) reports that poor current health of the students, poor relationship with their advisors, lack of awareness of the availability of the campus mental health and counselling services and low exercise routine were the major cause of depression and anxiety amongst the Chinese students.

- *Improve emotional and psychological wellbeing*

The data from the study showed that international students believe that they need an enabling learning environment in order to improve their emotional and psychological wellbeing. This will enable them to feel safe and protected from harm, feel courageous, achieve academic success and increase their learning performances. Durlak et al. (2011) found that students' social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour, and academic performances were increased while learning in an enabling learning environment

The findings also showed that the students could lose concentration in their studies due to the psychological problems they were facing which affected their learning. The finding resonates with Liu's (2009) study that found the change in university and environment could affect

international students' state of mind and wellbeing. This is also in line with the study by Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2011; 2016), which found international students studying in Australia universities experienced an increased incidence and severity of mental health problems due to their experiences of adjusting to a new and strange academic practice, heightened individualism/individualisation, wide range of knowledge needed, and applied abilities to manage their daily living and lastly, the drive to delay professional. Poyrazli's (2015) study also identifies that international students develop psychological symptoms like anxiety and depression caused by academic stress, which made them underutilise counselling available. The above discussion shows that international students need their psychological wellbeing improved for their learning to be enhanced and for them to achieve their academic goals.

- *Enhanced learning skills*

The data showed that international students need enabling in order to enhance their learning skills, as they will help improve their wellbeing in the context of HIV and AIDS. These findings resonate with the study by Melhuish et al. (2008) that found an enabling learning environment assisted students to facilitate and maintain their academic achievement and to develop learning skills. Kashdan and Yuen (2007) also identify that learners studying in an enabling learning environment increase their self-esteem, academic grades, and aspiration towards achieving their academic goals. Taggart (2008) indicates that an enabling learning environment helps students to facilitate and maintain their academic achievement and develop academic skills. Therefore, the findings in this subtheme reveal four categories in which international student learning skills were enhanced, such as critical thinking skills; communication skills; teamwork (collaborative skills) and encouraging active learning participation. These four categories are discussed below.

- *Critical thinking skills*

International students' responses in Chapter five (section 5.3.1.3) revealed that they need an enabling learning environment to enhance their critical thinking skills. The findings of the study also show that enhancing international students' critical thinking skills will help them to think in-depth, analyse issues, develop problem-solving skills and gain a deep understanding of concepts in their learning. Other studies also find that enhancing international students'

learning skills will help them develop critical thinking skills that will help to enhance their learning. Groff (2012) finds that universities play a significant role as an enabling learning space because they help their students to develop some of the most important skills for the future such as global awareness, creativity, collaborative problem-solving and self-directed learning. Davies et al. (2013), as do Cassum and Gul (2017), report that, when students are actively engaged in an enabling university environment, it enhances and promotes their creative and critical thinking skills. Similarly, MacGregor (2014) finds that international students develop skills, acquire computer skills and gain critical thinking skills. In addition, the findings correspond with the study by Henard et al. (2012), who report that university involvement in internationalisation could provoke strategic thinking, leading to the development of innovation skills. The above discussion shows that improving international students' critical thinking skills will enable the students to become experts in their field of study and more competent in their learning.

- *Communication skills*

Drawing from the participants' excerpts, the findings reveal that international students indicated that they need an enabling learning environment to develop their communication skills so that they can integrate socially and build a good rapport with the local community. The findings of the study show that developing communication skills will enable the exchange of ideas and information with their local peers and community and give them the opportunity to reason with others, as well as learn from one another. Similarly, Montgomery (2010) reports that the capability of international students to interact well with other people from different social and cultural contexts is a vital skill required to thrive in the global context.

The study finds that developing communication skills is important for international students because it will help them learn as well as interact and develop interpersonal skills. The finding is in line with Campbell and Li (2008), who state that international students have a good teacher-student relationship, due to language and intercultural communication skills which enable them to grow personally and intellectually in the university. Kelly (2010) contends that improving international students' wellbeing will enable them to change their ideas and thinking on how to communicate with people and their environment. Similarly, literature has shown that students who lack communication skills experience academic challenges and their learning and development are negatively affected (Wu et al., 2015; Campbell & Li 2008).

- *Teamwork (collaborative skill)*

The participants' excerpts revealed that they need an enabling learning environment to support and promote teamwork amongst them and help them to learn together (collaboratively) with mutual understanding (comparatively) to enhance their learning skills. Lillyman and Bennett (2014) report that international students derive their positive learning experiences from engaging in joint research and development through the support of the university, lecturers, local students, and their fellow international students and through the distribution of knowledge and cultural awareness. Osher et al. (2012) argue that students who learn in an enabling school environment develop a high academic and behavioural standard and make their achievements a collective and individual phenomenon. In addition, the findings also reveal that learning in a collaborative environment will enable international students to improve their self-confidence and develop a sense of belonging and that their development of communication skills will enable them to work together, share ideas and information and help to promote unity among them. The study resonates with Strayer (2007), who argues that students who learn in an enabling environment become innovative and develop co-operative skills.

- *Encourage active learning participation*

The findings from the participants' responses show that international students need an enabling learning environment to enhance their learning skills by actively participating in their learning. According to the findings, an environment that encourages active learning participation enables the students to engage in diverse academic activities like taking active roles, engaging in discussions/dialogues, sharing ideas and information, attending conferences, seminars, doing presentations and working in cohorts. These help to enhance and develop their academic skills. This finding is consistent with Glass (2012), in that international students feel positive in the campus environment because of the opportunity given to them to be involved in leadership programmes, interact with people from their own culture, choose modules where the lecturers enable intergroup discussion and acquire training on race and ethnicity and develop a higher level of knowledge and growth.

The findings also reveal that when students are actively engaged in their learning environment, they become independent and resilient learners, develop problem-solving and critical skills, develop self-confidence and increasing learning motivation, which helps them adapt to their host environment. The findings corroborate the study by Davies et al. (2013), which found that

international students need an enabling learning environment in order to promote their independence and individual development, enhance their creative skills, promote collaborative learning, increase confidence, resiliency, academic achievement, increase motivation and engagement in growth and in social, emotional and thinking skills, and improve school attendance. Fox (2015) reports that forming meaningful connections and interactions with other students enables international students to build their confidence and purpose, while Liu et al. (2009) argue that learning in an enabling learning environment enhances students' scientific knowledge and understanding, increases their knowledge and improve their learning motivation. In addition, Wang and Reeves (2007) find that an enabling learning environment also increases students' learning motivation. Warring (2010) report that students gain confidence and become independent in their learning.

- *Financial stability*

Based on the findings, the study identified that international students need financial stability to improve their wellbeing in the context of HIV and AIDS. The findings also show that international students experience many financial difficulties that affect their learning negatively, making them develop psychological and emotional stress and drop out of school. In addition, according to the participants they revealed that international students engage in prostitution because of poverty in order to survive in their host environment (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.1.1). The findings of this study through the participants' responses show that in order to augment or improve international student's wellbeing, it is necessary for their host environment to provide financial stability for them. This view resonates with the findings by Gu et al. (2010) that international students experience various kinds of financial difficulties. Svanemyr et al. (2015) also find that students engage in transactional sex and prostitution for money and for necessities such as school fees, accommodation fees, feeding and other items due to financial constraints. The findings are also that financial issues affect international students' ability to achieve academic success and develop holistically.

MacGregor (2014) and Nwokedi (2015) with Oluwafemi (2012) report that international students need financial help in their host countries in order to achieve their learning goals. In the agentic capability framework, financial issues could intentionally or unintentionally affect international students' learning and development in the microenvironment. Therefore, Bandura (2012) argues that lack of financial instability could take the form of conformity, peer pressure

and disobedience, which could inhibit and shape international students' learning, growth and development negatively within their learning environment. This clearly shows that international students need financial stability that is creating opportunities for them to work, providing funding and scholarship for them in order to improve on their wellbeing, survive, make ends meet and achieve their academic goals.

6.2.2.2 Addressing the current challenges experienced by international students in the context of HIV and AIDS

The study shows that the need to address the challenges experienced by international students especially if they outweigh the benefits they experience. Drawing from the agentic capability theory of Bandura (2006; 2012), the challenges experienced by the students seem to be more external and located at the macro and microenvironment. This implies that international students find it difficult to interact and interrelate with the local people or community within the macro and microenvironment. Therefore, this shows a lack of interaction within their learning environment. Moreover, the findings revealed the challenges experienced by international students in this context surpass what they already possess (capacity/ability/skills), which could make them be passive agents rather than active agents.

Thus, international students need an enabling learning environment to address several challenges within their macro environment (socio-economic and socio-cultural barriers); micro-environment (language difficulty and lack of social integration) and imposed environment (psychosocial barriers) in which they are currently experiencing in the context of HIV and AIDS. An enabling learning environment will help to address these challenges and strengthen what international students already possess as active agents. International students already possess abilities, skills, and capabilities that need to be expanded. Providing a conducive learning environment for international students will help them to achieve their academic goals and to develop and grow holistically.

Through the lens of the agentic capability theory, the challenges experienced by international students as 'agency' are identified as the lack of sense of belonging; feelings of alienation and xenophobia; lack of job opportunities; low self-esteem; language difficulties; exclusionary university and government/immigration policies; lack of social support; strict visa laws and difficulties in acquiring study visas, as well as financial constraints. These challenges could be addressed if the learning environment is made enabling and conducive for learning for

international students. When it is, international students will flourish through their human agency (personally, proxy and collectively). This is because most of these challenges experienced by international students are outside their control. The challenges experienced by international students in the different learning environments are thus discussed below.

- *The imposed environmental-psychological challenges*

The findings reveal that international students experienced several psychological issues such as lack of sense of belonging, feelings of alienation, low self-esteem, anxiety, and xenophobia in the context of HIV and AIDS. These challenges made the participants lose focus academically, feel stressed and depressed, develop low self-esteem, regress academically, have psychological imbalances and lose concentration in their studies. Generally in the literature, it is found that international students experience various psychological barriers such as isolation, low self-esteem (Aloyo & Wentzel, 2011), discrimination (Furnham, 2010); loneliness (Brown & Holloway, 2008) and exclusion (Dzansi & Mogashoa, 2013), the findings also indicate that due to these psychological challenges, the students' self-esteem and academic performance are affected negatively. This is in line with the study by Makeletso-Ntaote (2012), which found that such psychological issues place international students' resilience, self-worth, and psychological health in danger. Liu (2009) also identifies strict immigrant visa policies of the host nation, xenophobia, acculturative stress, language difficulties, financial issues, homesickness, lack of social support, racism, lack of social connectedness, and cross-cultural difference as contributing to the psychological issues of Chinese students. Rosenthal et al. (2008) report that international students develop anxiety and emotional stress due to psychological issues. This clearly shows that international students can only learn, progress and focus in their studies and meet their academic goals if they are at peace with themselves and with their immediate environment in order to develop the capacity to act as agents.

- *The microenvironment*

This is the university environment. According to the findings, another theme that emerged from the participants' verbatim excerpts was the lack of social support and some socio-cultural barriers international students experienced in the context of HIV and AIDS that affected their learning negatively. Osher et al. (2016) indicate that students' abilities to learn and excel academically can be affected by the school environment when they are socially constrained.

The finding showed that international students feel excluded within and outside their learning environment due to language barriers that affect their learning and relationships with the local community. Campbell and Li (2008) with Menzies and Baron (2014) find that international students experience academic issues caused by language difficulties in their learning environment. The findings from my study also revealed that these issues make international students develop fear and insecurity. Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) with Smith and Khawaja (2011) report that international students experience academic challenges due to language difficulties. Maundeni et al. (2010) also find that language difficulty and that lack of social support networks make international students have difficulty in adjusting to their host culture. Nwokedi (2015) reports that international students experience social exclusion by the local peers due to language barriers and group dynamics that take place within and outside their school environment. McMahon (2011) indicates that Chinese students experience language barriers both within and outside the classroom that affect their social life and academic performance. Mudhovozi (2012) and Vandeyar (2012) found that language issues caused alienation, loneliness, and lack of social belonging on international students' learning experiences.

The study also finds that, due to language barriers, international students' learning and development were affected as they are unable to perform well academically, interact and relate with the local peers and also adapt and adjust well in the context of HIV and AIDS. This finding resonates with the study by Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015) who identify xenophobia and discrimination as challenges faced by international students across the higher educational institutions in South Africa due to language barriers. Moores and Popaduik (2011) report that international students experience a lack of independent living due to the pressing social issues like xenophobia and discrimination they experience in their host environment. Campbell and Li (2008), with Gu et al. (2010), report that Asian international students have difficulties in making friends with domestic students and they lacked a sense of belonging due to language barriers. Wu et al. (2015) report that, due to the lack of social support strategies, international students experience social isolation while participating in different group activities.

Meanwhile, another factor that is evident is the socio-cultural barriers that affect international students' learning and development in the context of HIV and AIDS. According to the findings of the study, a key social-cultural issue was the exclusive university and immigration policies that hindered international students from finding jobs and working within and outside the university environment as well as the strict visa policies and the difficulties they experienced

in acquiring their study visa/permit. These issues make the students to feel demoralised, to lose focus in their study and to lack the zeal to study. The finding is in line with the study by Nwokedi (2015), who found strict and exclusionary immigration policies and the difficulty of acquiring students' visas and permits constrained international students' efforts in participating in some events and in interacting with people. Majyambere (2012), Rajapl (2013) and Caldwell and Hyams-Ssekasi (2016) report also revealed that international students experience strict visa laws and difficulties in acquiring a study visa/permit that affects their learning performances and prevents them from working or restrict them to work for lesser hours. Oluwafemi's (2012) study found that the discriminatory policies of some higher education institutions made international students feel excluded.

- *Socio-economic challenges*

The findings in the study show that, in the macro-environment, international students experience several socio-economic barriers such as financial constraints, which contribute a major threat to their learning and development in the context of HIV and AIDS. These socio-economic challenges (financial constraints) are identified in the study as lack of funding and scholarships, lack of job opportunities and high accommodation /residence fees that affect the students' learning negatively and make them feel discriminated and rejected within their host environment. The findings in this study corroborate the study by Oluwafemi (2012) in South Africa, which found extortionate international fees and lack of funding and scholarships as the major financial constraints experienced by international students in South Africa. Additionally, international students also experienced financial constraints due to the excessive cost of accommodation (MacGregor, 2014; Nwokedi, 2015) in uncomfortable environments, lack of funds (Marginson et al., 2010) and high medical insurance costs (Nwokedi, 2015; Oluwafemi, 2012). The findings show that financial constraints affect international students psychologically and cause them to lose concentration in their studies. Despite experiencing several financial constraints, the study by Tran and Gribble (2015) found that international students contribute to the economic growth of their host country through fees –school fees, accommodation and hospitality – and increased travel and tourism.

The findings in this theme clearly indicate that the reason international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS is to improve on their wellbeing and address the challenges they are currently experiencing in their context of HIV and AIDS.

According to the findings, the various challenges currently experienced by international students were found in the participants' imposed, micro and macro environments, which affected their learning and development negatively. The findings also reveal different barriers like psychological barriers, lack of social support due to language difficulty, some socio-economic barriers and socio-cultural barriers, and lastly the exclusionary university and immigration policy. All of these challenges affect international students' learning and development negatively. The findings in the study also identified that international students need an enabling environment to improve on their wellbeing while studying in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Further, the findings of this theme, clearly show that the challenges currently experienced by international students in the context of HIV and AIDS constrain their development and learning. They need an enabling learning environment to promote their health; improve their emotional and psychological wellbeing; enhance their diverse learning skills (critical thinking skills, communicative skills, collaborative skills and encouraging active learning participation) and provide financial stability. Therefore, creating an enabling learning environment for international students will help to enhance and shape their learning and wellbeing. The evidence of the above finding is significant to the agentic capability theory (Bandura, 2012), in which Bandura argues that in a constraining environment, different environmental factors influence people's learning, resulting in changes in behaviour, such as conformity, obedience, leadership, peer pressure and disobedience and negatively influencing the development and learning of the international students. When the environment exhibits constraining factors on international students' learning, they begin to experience psychological stress. Therefore, the next section explains the third theme, the multidimensional strategies used in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

6.2.3. Dynamic strategies for creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS

This theme provides universities with a mechanism or strategies to create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Masitsa (2011) believes that creating an enabling learning environment is important in enhancing students' mental, cognitive and academic skills as well as ensuring that effective teaching and learning occurs.

Upon the examination of the findings in this theme, the study revealed two sub-themes, which are the multidimensional strategies for creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS, and enablers and their roles in the context of HIV and AIDS. The verbatim quotations of the participating international students reveal that the university could create an enabling learning environment by developing a comprehensive integrated HIV and AIDS programme; providing food security; building a culturally inclusive policy; improving university safety and security measures; establishing more sport and recreational facilities; providing funding and scholarships; enhancing the teaching and learning resources and providing/creating job opportunities. Scager et al.'s (2013) study identified that student autonomy and complexity, linked with teachers' expectations, are strategies used in creating an enabling learning environment in universities.

HEAIDS (2012) notes that HIV and AIDS is a global phenomenon. In other words, the effect of HIV and AIDS is multifaceted, and the same time could be devastating to the people and society. Hence, building or creating a conducive and safe environment for international students to study in the context of HIV and AIDS is essential for their holistic development and growth. Thus the HEAIDS (2010; 2012) policy reports reveal that university could create an enabling learning environment for students in the context of HIV and AIDS by providing consistent and proactive campus support and guidance for students with unlimited VCT centres on campus, adequate campus security, integrating HIV and AIDS into the disciplinary curricula, engaging on more HIV and AIDS research and providing a caring and supportive health service staff in the campus health clinics. These strategies would help in reducing the prevalence of HIV and AIDS on the campuses and make the learning environment conducive for international students. The next section discusses the numerous strategies that the university could use in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS, as suggested by the participating international students in the study.

6.2.3.1 Multidimensional strategies of creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS

The table below reveals the participants' photographs and their interpretation during the photovoice process, which reveals the various mechanisms or strategies that they identified as needed to create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Photographs



Caption

More HIV and AIDS Education and awareness

Explanation

This is the HIV and AIDS centre on the campus. Funny enough most international students studying here don't know that there is an HIV and AIDS centre. International students to be oriented on how to deal with issues pertaining to HIV and AIDS immediately arrive at this campus. They need to be explained how to get access to the school clinic and how to treat and relate to an HIV infected person.
(Cooperative)



Healthy food

There are no good grocery shops within the campus where students could buy healthy foods and enjoy each other's company. There is no recreational facility to get decent food when you are out of stock
(Caring)



Inclusive policy

The policy of the university and country is not favourably to international students especially getting or renewing our study visa and also getting jobs. The university needs to create an enabling environment for us by helping international students process their visas by inviting the home affairs and also ensure we feel welcome and accepted here
(Convenient)



The pathway to the students' residence

This place is not safe and secured at night, the pathways are deserted while the research commons are always so quiet at night especially during the holidays. There is a need for security guards to be around these places every day and time to check and protect us, students. It is always dark and insecure. This is very essential because our lives are at risk. (Friendly)



Sport facilities

In the context of HIV and AIDS, University can create an enabling learning environment by motivating students to participate in different sports activities, encouraging healthy living and to be physically fit. When students engaged in sports activities, their mind becomes creative and sharp too. Sports also help students not to engage in bad things like using drugs and alcohol. So, the university should create time to time sports bonanzas to its students to help them stay healthy. (Inclusive)



Providing funding and Scholarships

This picture represents money. It shows that the university needs to provide scholarships and funding for international students not only for local students so that we will not be bothered by not having menial jobs and achieve our educational goals. Also, it will help international students not to feel distracted from their studies. (Resourceful)



More teaching and learning resources and facilities *Provision of more learning facilities and resources. For example, we need more current materials in the library and the research commons need to be expanded or they build another one. (Conducive)*



Create Job opportunities *This picture depicts job opportunities. International students need to be given an opportunity on and off-campus to work and earn small money not to be vulnerable do to financial challenges. We used to have such an opportunity but now they have changed all their policies. (Safe)*

Figure 6.8 *The multidimensional strategies of creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.*

- *A comprehensive integrated HIV and AIDS curriculum*

This study identified that a comprehensively integrated HIV and AIDS curriculum during the orientation periods and across university modules will be good in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. The finding also showed that this strategy is viewed by the participants as a vital way of sensitising and orientating international students on the prevalence and effects of HIV and AIDS in their host environment. This findings reverberate with the study by Svanemyr et al. (2015), which identifies that creating safe spaces, raising awareness on sexual and reproductive health, providing partner-oriented and peer focused programmes; mentoring and positive role modelling; mobilising and engaging adults and stakeholders in the community; promoting laws and policies that promote the human rights of adolescents in relation to their sexual reproductive health, all assist in creating an enabling environment for adolescents in schools. The findings are also in line with Maundeni et al. (2010), who found that universities need to create and implement comprehensive orientation programmes, expand support networks for

international students, improve information dissemination about the available services on inside and outside the campus and also empower students with knowledge and skills to cope with issues such as HIV and AIDS and the psychological challenges of adjustment. Further, Reddy and Frantz (2011) assert that campus health care services need to be more effective in notifying students about the spread of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, it is important to note that providing an intensified and comprehensive HIV and AIDS awareness programme for international students during and after the orientation, the period would help the students keep and play safe, stay healthy and relate well with their host community.

- *Food security*

These findings in the study show the importance of providing food security for international students at the university. International students indicate that university can create an enabling learning environment for them by ensuring that there are on campus good cafeterias and food courts where healthy foods are sold, so they could have access to healthy, safe, nutritious and well-balanced foods/diet. The study shows that providing food security for international students will enhance their health and help them to live a healthy and active life. The findings resonate with the study by Brown et al. (2010), who found that international students felt that eating healthy food provided them with emotional and physical satisfaction and they felt relaxed; while their physical health is enhanced as they consume healthier foods. A different perspective is taken by Alakaam (2016), who argues that the mobility of international students affects their food choices and practices, which could lead to a change in their eating behaviours and health. Kovacic et al.'s (2014) study on environmental health and health inequities in minority communities found that poor eating habits and inadequate nutrition with a lack of safety and high levels of violence hinder the community wellbeing.

- *An inclusive university policy*

The data showed that creating a university inclusive policy will enable international students to freely integrate into the environment, to interact and relate with other people from different culture, most especially the local community (local peers and staff), to express themselves freely and to be able to give their own opinion in the context of HIV and AIDS. Caldwell and Hyams-Ssekasi (2016) found that international students are excluded from the universities' inclusive policy as the issue of national diversity is not recognised by the universities, making

it difficult for the students to cope/adjust in their host environment, even though, as Colvin and Jaffar (2007) note, international students contribute to the enhancement of the teaching and learning policies of their host country. The findings in the study also show that building an inclusive university will help in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and enable them to adapt and adjust to the culture of their host environment. The findings resonate with the study by Fox (2015), which found that school create an enabling learning environment for students through differentiation and forming meaningful connection and interaction with them. Osher et al. (2012) argue that schools could create an enabling learning environment for international students by linking the students to mentors, providing prosocial student interaction in an inclusive community, teaching and encouraging growth, using cooperative learning, engaging positive behavioural help, and giving the students' real chances to learn.

- *Safety and security measures*

The study showed the importance of ensuring that the security and safety measures in the campus/university are improved. Meanwhile, the study finds that international students believe that improving security and safety in the university will help them feel physically and emotionally safe, as well as develop academic skills. Scholarly literature shows that providing a safe and secure environment and proper maintenance of the safety and security gadgets will help international students to feel physical, socially and emotionally safe (Themane & Osher, 2014; Osher et al., 2012; Barge, 2012; Xaba, 2006). Brennan et al. (2004) report that universities should be a safe environment set apart from the interests, orthodoxies, and pressures of the day. However, the capabilities of international students are developed when the environment makes them feel safe and secure (Walker, 2006).

- *Sports and recreational facilities*

The participants' photographs identified that, apart from the academic activities in which the students need to actively participate, providing sports and recreational facilities for international students will enable them to engage/ in different extracurricular activities such as sports, recreation, community service and social activities, which will enable international students to enhance their learning and development, cool their nerves, destress, keep fit, develop physically and mentally, and become creative. Zeleza (2012) reveals that

internationalisation of higher education occurs in the extracurricular level, which consists of international and intercultural events and networking with the local cultural and ethnic groups while at the research level is to support international exchange programmes, conferences, and seminars; engaging in joint research project and publications (extracurricular activities and received academic and personal support from faculty and staff of the school (Moore & Popadiuk 2011). Seow and Pan (2014) argue that extracurricular activities are a vital aspect of students' lives and universities are expected to contribute significant resources in providing extracurricular activities for their students.

- *Funding and scholarships*

Providing international students with funding and scholarship is seen as another strategy suggested by the participants in the study which the university could use in creating an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. However, Kotecha (2012) argues that the reason for internationalisation in South Africa universities is to prepare students to live in a world that is linked in both cultural and economic terms, as well as the need for increased economic development and competitiveness. The findings showed that providing funding and scholarships to international students by the university will enable them to be more focused on their learning, productive, goal-oriented, financially stable, complete their studies on time and achieve their academic goals. Svanemyr et al. (2015) report that universities in sub-Saharan African countries provide economic empowerment and poverty reduction intervention programmes to reduce poverty. Castells (2009) also reports that universities created good opportunities for economic growth for their students to help them attain their academic goals. In reality, however, the findings of the study show that a lack of financial support affects international students' learning negatively. Risley and Drake's (2007) study identifies that the socio-economic impacts of HIV/AIDS similarly affect students' learning and decrease teachers' management capacity.

- *Teaching and learning resources*

International students were able to identify the importance of improving the various teaching and learning resources made available in their learning environment in order to enhance their learning. Meanwhile, the study identified that enhancing the various teaching and learning resources is another strategy that could be used to create an enabling learning environment for

international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. These diverse teaching and learning resources are used for different purposes and are identified and grouped as the teaching and learning support (for example computers, WIFI, journals, online articles, thesis); and the learning spaces (for example LAN, Research common, lecture theatres/room), which were mostly revealed by their photographs and its explanation. The findings of this study corroborate the study by Enjelvin (2009), which found that adopting different strategies such as learning support assistants; non-human and material resources; assessment of course work; providing feedback to creating a supportive, enabling, and inclusive teaching and learning (T/L) environment; and maintaining academic standards; are ways in which universities can create an enabling learning environment. Aksovaara and Maunonen-Eskelinen (2014) identified that ICT facilities are found in the physical environment and they help to enhance students' learning. Davies et al. (2013) also find the use of different ICT facilities in schools enabled learning. Knight and Sehoole (2013) study also report that integrating ICT facilities into the internationalisation programmes made learning enabling. Sahani (2008) with Adamu (2012) found in their study that engaging internationalisation process improved ICT facilities of universities. Yet Neale-Shutte and Fourie's (2006) study found that internationalisation in African higher educational institutions confronted different issues caused by lack of teaching and learning resources and unavailability of ICT because of cost and poor energy supply. However, the Bandura agentic capability theory entails the various teaching and learning resources as capability inputs that assist international students in achieving their desired academic goals as they engage with them in their learning (Walker, 2010). Therefore, improving the teaching and learning facilities will help to enhance the students' learning.

- *Job opportunities*

The data showed that the provision/creation of job opportunities for international students is a way in which the university could create an enabling learning environment for them. In addition, the findings show that providing job opportunities for international students will help them feel comfortable, catering to some of their basic needs and enable them to become psychologically balanced. In contrast, Tran and Gribble's (2015) study in Australia identified that international education contributed to job creation in their host environment. Caldwell and Hyams-Ssekasi's (2016) study found international students were restricted from working or made to work for lesser hours, which affected their learning negatively. Furthermore, Tran and

Gribble (2015) report that international students are exploited as labourers, become desperate permanent residency seekers and compete with local people for a job. Ruhanen and McLennan (2012) find that international students' learning is affected negatively because of lesser job experience. However, the Group of Eight Australia (2014) contends that international students facilitate domestic participation in education and generate significant spillover benefits that include job creation and increased tourism. Therefore, the study demonstrates that universities in South Africa need to create job opportunities for international students to help them take care of some of their basic needs, gain skills and competence as well as become psychologically balanced. The next section discusses the role of enablers in the learning environment.

6.2.3.2 Enablers and their roles in the context of HIV and AIDS

In the third theme, the study finds diverse strategies that the university could use in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and that would help in enhancing and shaping international students' learning and development. In addition, the study shows the significance of international students' 'voices' and contributions to issues and decisions concerning them by the university.

In this second subtheme, the findings reveal the enablers and their roles in the learning environment. The participants were asked during the focus group discussion session who should take part in enhancing the strategies they suggested and how and why should they be involved. The participants identified international students, local community (SRC and local peers), and the university management teams (IUD), most especially the dean and the support staff, as people who should be involved in enhancing the strategies. Further, the findings show the several distinct roles that the enablers are required to play in enhancing international students' learning and in creating an enabling learning environment for them. According to Lipmann (2010), a learning environment is made up of enablers such as students; their peers; teachers, resources and the physical space. The study by Cassum and Gul (2017) revealed that the role of lecturers and institutions is to create an environment that is enabling its students to learn.

The diverse role played by these enablers in the context of HIV and AIDS is significant for the enhancement of international students' learning skills. The finding is that the enablers could enhance the various strategies recommended by the participants (see Chapter 5, section 5.4.1) to help, enhance and shape the international students' learning and development in their host

university. Meanwhile, the data revealed that the university is a learning environment that is made up of different resources, most especially people who possess different skills and abilities as a human agency (enablers). The enablers (ILU) are situated in the learning environment as active beings that have a bidirectional relationship with the environment that could result to a change in their learning, behaviour, development, and attitudes and in acquiring different skill or ability(ies) (Bandura, 2012) This shows that the environment and the enablers can influence each other directly or indirectly. Therefore, in this theme, the findings in this study (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4.2.1) revealed that international students as enablers (ILU) possesses different capabilities and skills as human agency (personal, proxy and collective), which they could use to create an enabling learning environment for themselves and other international students as well as also enhance and increase their academic skills.

- *International students as enablers*

International students were identified as enablers in enhancing their peers' learning skills and in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Their roles helped to enhance their learning skills. The findings of the study also identified that international students played diverse roles such as: providing their own inputs in the discussion pertaining to their issues, mentoring fellow/new international students, counselling, guiding, visiting, encouraging, organising research group for fellow international peer most especially the new students who are having research challenges and lastly escorting them for grocery shopping. These roles performed by the international students helped to enhance and shape their learning and positively influenced their behaviour and thinking. The findings of the study resonate with those of Carroll and Ryan (2007) that existing international students may work positively with new international students through developing peer mentoring programmes. Wilkins and Huisman (2011) also report that international students increase cultural understanding, encourages diversity in curricular design and learning experiences and contribute to research and teaching activities.

- *Local community as enablers*

The local community, which comprises SRC members and local students, were identified by the participants as enablers in their learning environment. International students believe that

involving the local students and Student Representative Council (SRC, thereafter) in their issues as well as in discussions/dialogue about them, will make local students be aware of international students' challenges. In addition, the study reveals that this will help in building their relationship with the local students and also enhance their learning experiences as well as enable them to develop effectively. Bandura emphasises in the agentic capability framework that people learn by actively engaging or participating in their environment, thereby developing abilities and skills that influence them and enable them to become change agents (McLeod, 2011).

- *University management team as enablers*

Moreover, engaging the university management teams in dialogue regularly, as indicated by the participants, will help to create a good communication/rapport between international students and the management teams. It will also create an awareness of the challenges the students are presently experiencing in their learning environment. This study shows that this would enhance international students' learning, broaden their horizon and help to address the challenges they are experiencing in the context of HIV and AIDS. The finding of the study reveals how important it is for the university management (dean, support staff, academic staff, campus health officers) to be actively involved in enhancing the strategies because they are the ones in charge of the campus, they make decision concerning the campus and have the power to ensure that international students are safe and secure.

The different suggestions raised during the discussion and meeting with the school management team might be useful for the university managers to use and review their policies as well as respond towards creating an enabling learning environment for its students. Davies et al. (2013) with Osher et al. (2012) also identify that students' academic and psychosocial skills, teachers' knowledge and skills, teachers' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, teachers' relationship with students, physical structure, human resources, and students' members were factors that support schools as an enabling learning environment. Walker (2006) argues that capability is developed when people actively engaged in discussions with their peers. The literature aligns with the findings in the study, showing the significance of the university management teams to be actively involved in enhancing international students' learning skills and experiences and in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Therefore, the findings in this theme reveal that the participants were able to identify several multidimensional strategies that the university could use to create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS, as well as the people involved (enablers) and their roles in enhancing these strategies the context of HIV and AIDS. International students are identified as active agents that can change their environment and achieve their desired goals (Bandura, 2012; Walker, 2010). In the next theme, the discussion focuses on how the use of photovoice enabled agency in the lives of international students.

6.2.4. Photovoice agency and capabilities in the lives of international students

Using the photovoice method in this study assisted the researcher and participants (co-researchers) to explore how the method could enable agency and capabilities in the lives of international students within the context of HIV and AIDS and in creating an enabling learning environment. The concept ‘agency’ as discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3.2.2) is an act done intentionally (Bandura, 2001). It can also be referred to as the capacity and ability of individuals to act independently, make decisions and express them in their behaviour (Bell et al., 2016). On the other hand, a capability is regarded as the freedom for people to achieve their wellbeing. In addition, it could be explained as to what a person is required to be and do rather than how much income they can achieve (Sen, 1992). Literature has focused on the importance of international students’ capabilities, their ability to achieve their goals and potential in life (Cole, 2015; Robeyns, 2016; Weibell, 2011). Johnstone (2007) also indicates that a capability is a form of authority needed by people to realise or achieve their potential.

The study, drawing on the participants’ self-reflective essays, explored how the use of photovoice could enable international students’ agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Such agency is revealed in their ability to reflect, probe, be critical, resilient and creative. Evidence of the above claim is revealed in the core properties of the agentic capability framework, which is intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self (Bandura, 2012; Julie-Rengert, 2011; Weibell, 2011). The study finds that international students’ participation in engaging and participating in the self-reflective essay enabled them to examine their selves personally, develop self-awareness reflectiveness (Bandura, 2006, 2009; Huitt, 2011) and reflect on their personal efficacy, thoughts, experiences, and actions (Bandura, 2006; Huitt, 2011; Giddens, 1984; Julie-Rengert, 2011; Weibell, 2011).

The respondents' active engagement and participation in the photovoice session and writing of the self-reflective essay revealed their different agency and capabilities, such as exposed visual skills, acquisition of creative skills, enhancement of critical thinking, unconventional ways of learning, enabled active engagement, connecting to other people, awareness of the university environment and empowering of the disempowered. This proves that employing the photovoice method as one of the research methods in this study is an appropriate way to work with international students as they explore their understandings of an enabling learning environment and on how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. Ebersohn and Eloff (2006) note that photovoice could be used to enhance agency among the participants which I believe is aligned with the agentic capability theory, the lens used in framing my study. Cohen et al. (2012) also report that using the photovoice method in this research results in generating rich data. The next section discusses the various skills that were developed by international students during their participation in the photovoice process, as was revealed in the self-reflective essays.

6.2.4.1 Exposed to visual skills

It is evident that participating and engaging in the photovoice process created space for international students to be exposed to developing and learning new visual skills. For example, the participants indicated that photovoice enabled them to visually explain their experiences; arouse their cognitive skills (cognition); gain new knowledge about visual ethics, and gain awareness of their learning environment and the diverse learning facilities available on their campus. The study shows that photovoice is a great learning tool and recommends it as an ideal method for doing research. The findings of this study resonate with that of Black et al. (2018), who found that visual data was employed by the individuals who created them to tell their individual stories or visually interpret their thoughts and lived experiences of relevant phenomena. Khanare (2012) identifies that photovoice enables students to gain valuable visual skills in reflecting on the realities of their lives. Literature also revealed that integrating photographs or other visual images into research raises for students an exceptional set of ethical considerations (Miller, 2018). Therefore, as in the literature, the study finds that international students were exposed to visual skills through their participation in the photovoice process.

6.2.4.2 Acquisitions of creative skills

It is apparent that while participating in the photovoice sessions, the participants acquired creative skills through taking photographs. Engaging in photovoice enabled participants to express themselves creatively, using pictures and creating knowledge. In addition, photovoice also enabled them to develop research skills and to analyse issues. The findings are consistent with Nykiforuk et al. (2011), who note that photovoice enabled their participants to develop and acquire personal and creative skills. Given et al. (2011) argue that photovoice assists students' transition from high schools to university, through acquiring information literacy skills. Wang (2009) reports that researchers use photovoice as a research method to make their participants become co-researchers, photographers and data producers. Therefore, the study concurs with the above literature in finding that international students acquired creative skills using photovoice as a research method.

6.2.4.3 Enhanced critical thinking

Engaging and participating in the photovoice session enhanced international students' critical thinking skills. The study also found that the photovoice process made the participants think critically about the kind of pictures they were going to capture that shows their understanding of enabling learning environments. The findings also showed that photovoice improved the way they think, created space for them to think deeply about their learning environment and gave them an opportunity to ponder and link the image to the phenomenon. The findings also show that photovoice enabled international students to see that people develop and learn all the time. Prosser and Loxley (2008) contend that photovoice plays a vital role in promoting critical thinking, especially in learning and communication in the classrooms. Similarly, Chonody et al. (2013) identify photovoice as enabling participants to develop critical skills and enhance their critical consciousness and problem-solving skills (Wang, 2009; Goodhart et al., 2006). Mitchell (2011) also identifies that the students' understanding of the phenomenon and critical thinking skills are enhanced as they attempt to interpret their photographs. Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) reveal that photovoice is a powerful photographic technique that promotes critical dialogue and produces knowledge. The participants experienced photovoice as mentally engaging/tasking and literature generally agrees with the findings that students' critical thinking is enhanced as they engaged in the photovoice process.

6.2.4.4 Eccentric ways of learning

The findings of the study revealed that the participants regarded engaging in photovoice as an alternative/eccentric way of learning. It enabled them to view and understand issues in diverse ways, using images to develop their knowledge. In addition, the findings also showed that engaging in the photovoice process was a new and great experience for the participants and they had fun while taking the pictures and using it to exchange ideas. In addition, it also enabled them to have a clear understanding of their learning environment. Literature shows that using visual images enhances learning in multiple ways and provides a rich setting for the understanding and development of complex and abstract ideas (Richards 2011; Bagnoli, 2009). Weber (2008) argues that the use of PVM could enhance supportive understanding, capture the indescribable and enable people to pay attention to reality in different ways, thereby making the ordinary become extraordinary. Chikoko and Khanare (2012) contend that using PVM in educational research, especially using visual images, demonstrates the ability to provide participants with new experiences and diverse ways of thinking about phenomena. Snell and Hodgetts (2007) also found that photovoice enables people to present their experiences or feelings that might be difficult to express using conventional methods, like interviews or observation. The findings in this section clearly imply that using photovoice in doing research is a new way of learning and it enabled the participants to look at issues in diverse ways.

6.2.4.5 Enable active engagement

In the study, photovoice enabled international students to actively engage with one other and their environment. The findings showed that engaging in the photovoice method was exciting for the participants. Participants reported that the photovoice method is interactive, educative, fun to engage in, a great experience and a powerful instrument that enabled them to relate and interact with other people. The findings in this study resonate with those of Harkness and Stallworth (2013), that photovoice enables participants to interpret their photographs collaboratively. Similarly, Black et al. (2018) argue that using photovoice enables collaborative learning. Vince and Warren (2012) also report that photovoice involves participants in the co-creation of qualitative data and enhances social participation (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006). It also allows participants to become active and successfully engage in natural discussion and in building democracy (Wang, 2009). Snell and Hodgetts (2007) report that engaging in the photovoice process enabled the participants to become actively involved in research and

Mitchell (2011) reports that it stimulates discussion among participants. This study also found that photovoice enabled active participation among international students. Richards (2011) contends that photovoice gives the participants opportunities to engage in and to show the researcher how they perceive their world. The findings support Bandura's agentic capability theory, which indicates that participating in the process enables students to actively engage in their environment (Bandura, 2012). Thus, international students are active agents in their learning environment. (Wang, 2009).

6.2.4.6 Connecting to other people

The findings in the section identified that engaging and participating in the photovoice process enabled the participants to connect, relate and deal with their social world and with diverse people through photographs. The finding is consistent with those of Rania et al. (2015), that the photovoice method offers participants an opportunity to relate/interact and discuss/dialogue with people. Bagnoli (2009) argues that visual methodologies are typically conceived as dealing with the concrete real world rather than the abstract world of symbolism. This also confirms the agentic capability theory contention that people do not live their lives in isolation or autonomy but relate and interact with one another for their lives to have a meaningful goal (Bandura, 2006).

6.2.4.7 Awareness of the university environment

In this study, international students revealed that photovoice helped them to gain awareness of their self and the university environment. The participants had an insight into what an enabling learning environment means, and this made them become more aware of their learning environment. Furthermore, the findings are that using photovoice allowed international students to ponder on their learning and made them realise the importance of learning in the context of HIV and AIDS. Participation in the photovoice process helped the participants to broaden their horizons and to gain more knowledge and understanding of their learning environment. These findings are similar to those of Black et al. (2018) and Checkoway and Gutierrez (2006), that photovoice enables participants to develop self-awareness of themselves and their vulnerability. In this study, using photovoice enabled the participants to develop self-awareness and awareness of their university learning environment.

6.2.4.8 Empowering the disempowered

The participants' responses confirm the contention made by other scholars like Wang and Sommers (2016) with Black et al. (2018), who argue that engaging and participating in the photovoice process empowers participants and enhances the quality of research data. Similarly, Given et al. (2011) also indicate that photovoice empowers them to be more deeply involved in the process of the study and to be the ones in charge of the pictures/photographs used in the study. Significantly, the findings of my study do not only reveal the empowerment of participants while using photovoice as a research method but also suggest they have the potential to influence their environment. Kuratani and Lai (2011) argue that photovoice empowers the oppressed, permits them to voice out and to make a decision by themselves and choose the ideas that are denoted among the pictures. In this study, it enabled agency and competency (capability) among participants (Bandura, 2012; Sen 1984; Walker, 2010).

In the discussion of the fourth theme, the findings in the study identified, through the participants' self-reflective essay, diverse factors associated with engaging and participating in the photovoice process such as exposure to visual skills; acquisition of creative skills enhanced critical thinking; eccentric ways of learning, enabled active engagement, connect to other people, awareness of the university environment and empowering the disempowered. These factors revealed international students as the human agency and active individuals in their host environment (Bandura, 2010). International students' capabilities also enabled them to achieve their desired goals by engaging and participating in the photovoice process (Walker, 2010; Robeyns, 2016; Johnstone, 2007). According to the participants, this factor identified above helped to shape their learning and development and helped them to develop different learning abilities to enhance their learning skills.

6.3. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I discussed the findings from the data generated from photovoice, the focus group discussions, and the self-reflective essay. The findings of the study identified four main themes, subthemes and categories, which were arranged and discussed based on key research questions guiding the study. Photographs were included in some areas in the discussion to ensure that they strengthen the presentation. Using a participatory visual method inspired the international students to reflect on their life and lived experiences as well as help to unlock their diverse potential and engage their abilities in ensuring that the environment is enabling

international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. References to the relevant literature were infused in the discussion of the findings. The next chapter deals with the summary, recommendation, implication, and limitation of the study. It presents the contribution that the study makes toward the body of knowledge.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY:

THEORISING AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

7.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the discussion and synthesis of the findings of this thesis. This last chapter provides a summary of the findings that answered the research questions used in guiding this study. The research contributions, implications of the study and recommendations from the findings as well as limitations are provided by me. In addition, the recommendations for future research are also emphasised.

In this thesis, I contend that international students' 'voices' in South African universities have been excluded from the discussions about them. They are not consulted about creating an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS, an environment that should include them. The aim to explore how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS, resulted in my asking the following key research questions that guided this study:

- What are international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- Why do international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- How could the use of photovoice enhance international students' agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS?

In exploring and examining the above questions, based on the guidance of Creswell (2016), I used the qualitative research approach within an interpretive paradigm, to enable the engagement and participation of my participants in their lived environment. The researcher employed a participatory visual method (photovoice) to increase the active engagement and participation of the twelve (12) participants that were purposively and conveniently chosen. While engaging and participating in the photovoice process and focus group discussion, the international students pondered on their learning in an enabling environment and on how the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and

AIDS. Further, in the study, the participants identified what an enabling learning environment means, revealed the significance and need of enhancing their learning environment to make it enabling and were also able to proffer solutions on the ways in which the university could create an enabling learning environment for them in the South African context, most especially in the context of HIV and AIDS. The findings of the study were theoretically framed using Bandura's agentic capability (2008; 2012) theory to make meaning of the findings. In addition, students provided input towards the discussion of creating an enabling learning environment for international students within the context of HIV and AIDS, with emphasis specifically placed on the importance of their own agency and capabilities.

7.2. SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

In this section, I summarise the findings that respond to the key research questions employed in framing this study.

7.2.1. International students' construction of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS

International students studying in South African universities come from different countries in the world. The majority of those studying at this university are from the African continent and possess diverse knowledge, ideas, potential, experiences, values, cultures, and identities. It is important and necessary to be informed pertaining to international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment. Although the literature shows that an enabling learning environment is a complex phenomenon, the findings of the study reveal that international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment is very complex and it is influenced by their views, diversities, backgrounds, and experiences. This implies that an enabling learning environment is not monolithic, but very diverse and cannot be understood through a linear process. In addition, the study showed that, due to the diverse knowledge, ideas, identities, cultures, diversities, values, potential and experiences of the international students, their understanding of an enabling learning environment was itself heterogeneous. Moreover, drawing from the South African perspective, this study demonstrates that an enabling learning environment can be understood using diverse concept that requires multiple strategies. This implies that an enabling learning environment does not have a single definition

because it is influenced by the diverse people within that context, in this case, the international students.

International students provided a web of definition which are interrelated, integrated and interdependent as they talked about their experiences and their agency and how the university could provide an enabling learning environment for them by creating a space for them to interact freely, socially integrate, where they are not discriminated by the local people, have financial aid, and academic support provided for them in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Consequently, the finding shows that there is a fabric of what an enabling learning environment means for the participants. In the context of this study, an enabling learning environment can be viewed as a social space, a socially just curriculum as well as a space for the acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, it is a space for international students to exercise their agency, make informed decisions, a free space, and space to fully realise their potential. The findings also showed that international students exercised some of their agency to acquire and access the variety of resources (non-material resources, infrastructure, academic support) made available in their learning environment to support and enhance their learning and capabilities. For example, gaining access to some of the resources, like meeting with their supervisors, financial aid, accessing the library, books, articles, computers, Wi-Fi, scholarship provided them with an opportunity to grow, develop and study better. In other words, this shows that an enabling learning environment enables people to access and use its resources freely, enhances international students' skills and capabilities as well as making them become active and agents of change in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Therefore, the key findings in this theme demonstrate how the freedom to use the resources within the university environment enabled the international students to learn, enhanced their social and learning skills and in the process helped them become better individuals.

7.2.2. The significance and need for an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS

The finding from this theme is the significance of an enabling learning environment. International students need an enabling learning environment for two reasons, to augment their wellbeing and to address the challenges they are currently experiencing in the context of HIV and AIDS. The findings in this theme are that, when international students' wellbeing is augmented, they become highly motivated, inspired and more confident. In the process of

augmenting international student's wellbeing, which is in line with the Bandura agentic theory, they acquire different skills such as critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills as well as resilience skills. Subsequently, these skills acquired by the international students enable them to access their personal and collective agency, overcome their challenges, be highly motivated, learn independently as well as make informed decisions. This suggests that creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS will enable international students to enhance their wellbeing as well as help them to live an active and healthy lifestyle; learn, grow and develop effectively; focus more on their studies; achieve excellent results, and attain their academic goals through exercising their agency using their diverse skills.

On the other hand, the study also found in this theme different inhibiting factors (inhibitors) within the international students' learning environment (meso, micro, and macro), in the context of HIV and AIDS, that affected their learning, growth, and development. Furthermore, according to the findings in this theme, these inhibiting elements or factors, which were identified as anxiety, xenophobia, low self-esteem, stress, language difficulties, lack of job opportunities, financial difficulties and visa issues have made international students lose focus in their studies, become psychologically imbalance, feel excluded and discriminated against. However, participants indicated that addressing these inhibiting elements that they are currently experiencing will enable them to finish their studies within the specified time frame, enhance and shape their learning, growth, and development within the context of HIV and AIDS. Succinctly, enhancing international student's wellbeing and addressing the challenges they are experiencing will ensure that they learn better, attain and achieve their academic goals and develop holistically in the context of HIV and AIDS.

7.2.3. Dynamic strategies of creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS

International students were able to identify various dynamic strategies that could be used by the university to create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. In this theme, the researcher identified two subthemes, the multidimensional strategies used in creating an enabling learning environment and enablers (agency) in the learning environment.

Consequently, the findings reveal that creating an enabling learning environment requires multidimensional strategies. This is because of the complex understanding of an enabling learning environment by the international students and informed by the fact that international students come from different contexts and they have different needs, challenges and expectations. Hence, it is not surprising that the findings revealed multidimensional strategies as suggested by the international students because of their diversities and heterogeneous nature (different background, culture, ideas, views, experiences, values and knowledge) in suggesting ways in which university could use create an enabling learning environment for them. Based on the above facts, the study shows that an enabling learning environment cannot be understood from a narrow/linear thinking.

Thus, the findings revealed several multidimensional strategies in which the university can use to create an enabling learning environment for international students as comprehensive integrated HIV and AIDS education programme; provision of food security; a culturally inclusive university policy; enhance university safety and security; provision of more sport and recreational facilities; offering funding and scholarships; improving teaching and learning resources and lastly creating job opportunities. Hence, international students' needs and challenges must be taken into consideration based on these multidimensional strategies. The concept 'multidimensional' is an important term in this regard as it shows that people cannot focus on one skill and capability, rather, they are able to focus on the different skills and capabilities of the individuals in their environment. The study emphasises that the multidimensional strategies indicated in this study, if well understood, can be used to track multiple capabilities. Thus, this implies that if the strategies are multidimensional, they can be used to enhance the multiple capabilities of international students too.

Therefore, this study did not only use the agentic capability theory to understand international students but recognised the reciprocity of the influence of the diverse strategies to bring about further agency within the context of HIV and AIDS.

7.2.4. Photovoice agency and capabilities in the lives of international students in the context of HIV and AIDS

Chapters 5 and 6 as well as in the previous sections, 7.2.1, 7.2.2 and 7.2.3, showed international students' understandings and explored the strategies that the university could use in creating an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. In other words,

this section reveals how international students' agency was identified methodologically in this study. The findings in this section show how participatory visual methods such as photovoice can be used to explore international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment and to create one for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. This implies that creating an enabling learning environment requires multidimensional means of communication in order to produce rich results and enable the engagement and participation of international students. The acquisition of knowledge, understandings, and strategies is possible and can be explored using non-conventional methods. This is because the study engaged a diverse group of people who can draw on artefacts from their backgrounds to gain an understanding and meaning of an enabling learning environment.

The use of a participatory visual method such as photovoice is in line with the fact that an enabling learning environment can be created using multiple strategies and through approaches that are multidimensional and that can be used to access people's information, understandings, and knowledge. Meanwhile, in the previous study (see Chapter 4, section 4), literature indicated that we rely so much on written and verbal work and yet this group of people (international students) can remember their own artefacts and use it to express how they view their environment. For example, the study showed that international students connected with the artefacts and objects (photographs) through which they acquired knowledge and information.

The multiple understanding of an enabling learning environment resulted from not only one method, but from the use of photovoice as a further method, to give a visual understanding of the phenomenon. This created an opportunity for the participants to realise their agency, capabilities and see photovoice as an innovative method that contributes to this study.

7.3. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY: THE CONCEPTUAL, THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION

The voices of international students, who are more often than not missed from the dialogue or conversation on how an enabling learning environment could be created for them, has been brought to fore in this study. Moreover, there has been a dearth in research on how the use of a photovoice could enable agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. I, therefore, provide an account of the contribution of the study to the on-going debate on international student's education, mobility, learning experiences,

development and growth in their host environment at the conceptual, theoretical and methodological level.

7.3.1. Conceptual contribution to the study

As indicated in section 7.2, the findings vividly indicate that international students are articulate and have knowledge of what an enabling learning environment means. There are multiple understandings of an enabling learning environment by international students, which is due to their diverse ideas, knowledge, experiences, identities, values, and views. Hence, this finding disrupts the linear understanding of the phenomenon (enabling learning environment) and provides another level of understanding of the phenomenon from the international students' perspective. The international students had never been included or made part of the discussion about their learning environment, so in this study, they brought their contextual and international understanding of an enabling learning environment, which is vital to this study. This implies that international students perceive an enabling learning environment in South Africa differently from how international students in the USA perceive an enabling learning environment.

Therefore, this study conceptually contributes to the existing body of knowledge that an enabling learning environment does not have a linear definition that could be provided. An enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS is viewed as an environment that promotes a healthy lifestyle, provides academic and financial support as well as encourages social integration.

In addition, the understanding of an enabling learning environment in other literature in the South African context was only been derived from what the policy says and in relation to the teaching of mathematics and technology education. This study involves the voices of international students who have been silent or unheard especially from a different context which is from the higher education perspective. However, literature has shown an enabling learning environment as a positive and transformative environment (Iten, 2015), that promotes sustainability and enhances students' learning (Motsatsi, 2012). The findings of the study imply that including international students' voices is context-bound and relates specifically to a group of people situated within an environment in which their learning, development, and growth are been determined by their learning environment. This study gives voice and opportunity to

international students to express their views and make informed decisions about their lives and experiences.

7.3.2. The theoretical contribution of the study

The agentic capability theory was used as the lens to frame this study. This theory provided insight into the international students' lack of awareness of their self and learning environment, although, within the process of this study, international students grew and developed, and this paved a way for their human development. The study also showed that international students are not passive beings; rather they are active and critical beings who, through their interactions with other agencies and structures within their learning environment, develop self-realisation (Bandura, 2012). The study showed that international students demonstrated their agency personally and collectively as by using their skills or capabilities to discuss and suggest strategies that the university could use in building or creating an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa.

Furthermore, the study also revealed that international students became aware of their agency and capabilities through the act of taking photographs and using them to represent as well as question things that enabled them to grow cognitively and socially. This implies that the research process created a way for international students to become aware of their unawareness. In other words, international students' agency and capabilities paved a way towards human development by creating an enabling learning environment in a difficult and complex context such as that of HIV and AIDS.

Significantly, this study contributes towards the existing body of knowledge of research on international students' education and mobility on human development. The study showed that international students were amazed at their elevated personal development and growth as well as their contribution towards the growth and development of other people in their learning environment. In other words, this means that an enabling learning environment, through the lens of the agentic capability theory, is an important element for human development and it is not only concerned with promoting a healthy lifestyle, creating food security, providing financial and academic support and encouraging social integration. In this study, an enabling learning environment is therefore seen as a catalyst for human development (Walker, 2010). The next section discusses the methodological contribution to the study.

7.3.3. The methodological contribution of the study

This section gives a visual representation of what and how an enabling learning environment should be. In other words, this study shows how an unconventional approach such as photovoice was used to illustrate international students' multiple understandings of an enabling learning environment. The study further provided what an enabling learning environment should look like, rather than what we are used to hearing and reading on what and how an enabling learning environment is. The photographs or artefacts presented by the participants in the study revealed how an enabling learning environment looks.

Therefore, this study makes a major methodological contribution to the existing body of knowledge by providing the visual representation of what and how an enabling learning environment should look like and not only on what is written about an enabling learning environment. People such as the policymakers and university management could actually see what an enabling learning environment looks like and envisage how they will build it, having a visual representation of it through the physical structures. Consequently, for policymakers and university management, an enabling learning environment should promote a healthy lifestyle, be safe and secured, provide academic and financial support and encourage social integration. Providing a visual representation of how an enabling learning environment should look becomes a key factor in making a methodological contribution to the study. Drawing from existing literature, many studies have revealed that the phenomenon 'an enabling learning environment' is the only thing been studied by them, which focuses on the written word. This study makes a visual representation of what an enabling learning environment should look like and by imagining a creative enabling learning environment. Therefore, this is an iconic imagination that provides the readers with what an enabling learning environment is. In addition, this study provides broad principles and plans of how an enabling learning environment should look in the context of HIV and AIDS.

This methodology (photovoice) enabled the international students to express themselves freely and talk about things that could have been so difficult to say, just as people within the context of higher education are expected to be articulate and talk about the issues affecting them freely. In other words, this methodology (photovoice approach) was used to bridge the difficulty of language barrier experienced by international students who in this study are university students and are assumed to be able to talk and present their issues freely.

The study extends the existing literature on participatory visual methods such as photovoice as it shows that the photovoice approach is mostly used in communities with low literacy skills but in this aspect, it was used with people with high literacy skills (international students). This shows that the photovoice approach can be used to represent the voices of international students especially those in the context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa where they find themselves as being passive, very silent and unheard. In addition, the study shows that the photovoice approach employed in this study enabled the international students to practice their literacy and visual skills.

More importantly, the use of the photovoice approach in this research provided the visual representation of understanding and of all the strategies, including the significance and need of an enabling learning environment. Subsequently, the study shows that the understanding and knowledge of an enabling learning environment can be acquired not only textually but also visually. Hence Figure 7.1 below presents the visual representation of the multiple understanding of an enabling learning environment; the significance and need for an enabling learning environment and the multidimensional strategies of creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa,

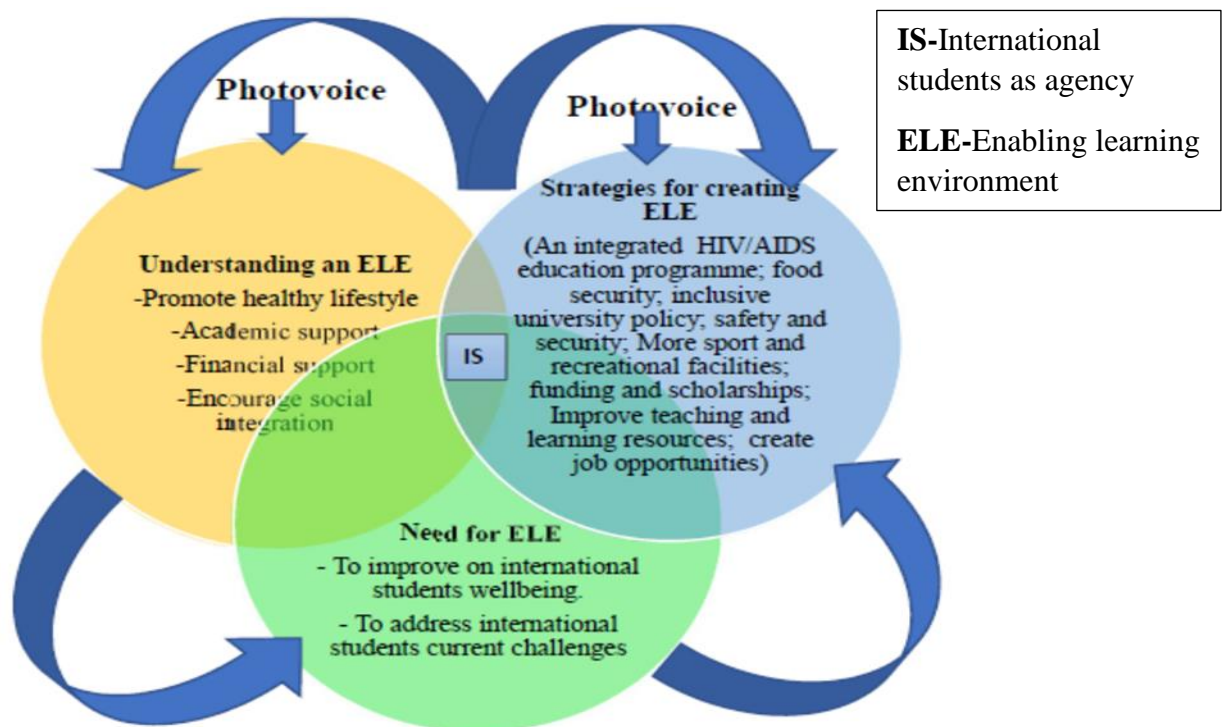


Figure 7.1 A visual representation of an enabling learning environment

The above diagram in figure 7.1 represents the visual representation of the understanding, significance, and strategies of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa. The diagram showed that the agency of international students is located in the middle of their environment. Through their agency and capabilities, they are able to enhance their learning as well as develop and grow personally and collectively within their learning environment. In addition, the environment is not static and can adapt to change. Hence, within the context, certain people are expected to develop policies and create an enabling learning environment for international students. International students are seen as creators of knowledge through their contributions of conceptualising what an enabling learning environment is, in the context of HIV and AIDS. In addition, through their diverse abilities and skills, they are positioned as active agents as well as change agents who can offer their diverse skills, ideas, and knowledge in making their learning environment enabling as well as identify several strategies that the university could use to create an enabling learning environment for students.

In addition, through their diverse abilities and skills they are positioned as active agents who can offer their diverse skills, ideas and knowledge in making their learning environment enabling as well as able to identify several strategies that the university could use to create an enabling learning environment for its students. The arrow in the diagram shows the reciprocity, interdependency, and interaction between the students and their environment. This indicates the bidirectional relationships that exist among the international students and their learning environment (meso, micro, and macro) that influence their learning, development, and behaviours as they also draw on all the other agents (university management teams and local community) within their environment to achieve their learning goals.

Figure 7.1 also shows how photovoice enabled knowledge production and international students' agency in creating an enabling learning environment (ELE) (see the diamond arrows and small arrows on top of the circles pointing down towards the multiple understanding of ELE and the multidimensional strategies of creating ELE). The international students understood the importance of engaging and participating in the photovoice process and believe that their photographs can be used in the university and within their learning environment to enable the discussion/dialogue about creating an enabling learning environment for themselves. The next section explains the implication of the findings in the study.

7.4. IMPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this research revealed several implications for teaching, training, and infrastructure which were drawn from the findings in this study and are provided below:

7.4.1. International students' multiple understanding of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS

The study showed the multiple understanding of an enabling learning environment and the multidimensional strategies that could be used by the university to create an enabling learning environment for its students. The findings also vividly showed that international students know what they want by being well equipped with diverse skills, due to their diverse identities, experiences, knowledge, ideas, and values. Therefore, drawing from the findings of the study, the university management and policymakers need to develop policies that support the use of visual methods (photovoice) to teach and engage their international students, although universities' policies are not inclusive and transparent (Rouhani, 2007). This implies that international students' needs and wellbeing are excluded from the policies of their host environment. Therefore, my study recommends that:

- International students should be allowed to participate freely in the teaching and learning process. More so, the lecturers need to employ different student-centered teaching strategies to socially and academically integrate international students into their learning environment. Using photovoice as part of the teaching and learning approaches will assist international students in contributing towards the transformation of their host environment and make them become autonomous and independent learners. I regard them as what Norton et al. (2013) call independent students and transformers of society.
- International students should be seen as highly skilled professionals and knowledge producers/creators (Adamu. 2012; Knight, 2008) and as a resource that can contribute economically, socially, politically and educationally to their host environment. According to Smith and Khawaja (2011), Munch and Hoch (2013) with Kelly (2012), they create a significant impact to the growth of their host countries and to the provision of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.
- International students could also provide input into university management meetings on how the university can create an enabling learning environment for all its students.

They can also make informed decisions concerning their challenges when being discussed. The international students emphasised their voices being included (Mitchell et al., 2006) and their issues discussed with them during the university management meetings. Meetings about them should not be done in their absence.

- Meanwhile, Government, DHET, stake holders and the university management need to reform its policies on how teaching should be done for international students and ensure that they create opportunities to enhance or disrupt the implementation of policies that do not serve the interest of international students. This could result in what IEASA (2005, p. 115) calls “a complete and transparent policy, rules and regulations on international students’ education”.

The implication of the findings is that university policies do not serve the needs and wellbeing of international students and this inhibits their learning and voices. Most policies on international students’ education and mobility in South Africa exclude international students from participating in making the decision concerning them. This study calls for a critical review of the university policies to ensure that they are culturally inclusive and addresses the need of their international students. DHET needs to also develop an all-inclusive national policy framework on internationalisation that will see that all the international students in their South African universities feel accepted, safe and welcome (Rouhani, 2007; Malaza, 2011). If this is not done, the international students will experience more difficulties in their learning and development.

7.4.2 Augmenting international students’ wellbeing in the context of HIV and AIDS

The main goal of this study is to consider why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. It is obvious that the present environment is viewed by international students as hindering/constraining to their learning, development and growth. This simply indicate that the environment is not conducive to the students’ learning. Therefore, I provide the following implications:

- The elements hindering the students’ learning and development within the meso, micro, and macro environment should be identified, and actions need to be put in place to mitigate these elements. This action needs to be planned and designed into the university policy and ensure that the roles of the academic staff and support staff in clearly defined, stipulating how they could help and support the international students.

- There should be a need for regular dialogue/discussion and interaction between international students, local community and university management committee to understand their challenges and encourage their involvement in making decisions that concern them.
- The university management team needs to ensure that they provide an enabling or conducive environment for international students and make their policies inclusive.
- The university needs to ensure that the wellbeing of their international students is augmented or enhanced through different policies, plans, social programmes, physical structures, psychosocial and emotional support programmes that will promote the learning and wellbeing of the students, promote the image of the university and enable the students to graduate on time.

The implication of the findings is that the challenges experienced by the international students could have an adverse effect on the school rankings and publications input and might also discourage potential students to come and study in this university. Ramachandran (2011) calls international students ‘catalysts’ and ‘goodwill ambassadors’ that enhance the image of their host university; increase the number of international students on their host campus and use their services to enrich local students’ knowledge, although international students are being stereotyped as ‘kwerekweres’ which means foreigners and people who come to compete or steal the local people’s jobs (Tran & Gribble, 2015). In contrast, Pandit (2007) also notes international students could help to destroy stereotypes and enable discussions that are regarded as taboo. Consequently, the university needs to ensure that they create an environment that is conducive and supportive to their international students by creating job opportunities for them in order to promote and enhance their learning and development. Providing an enabling learning environment will also enable the university to easily resolve and respond to international students’ needs and challenges as well as enable them to tap into the hidden potential and skills that they possess.

7.4.3 Multidimensional strategies for creating an enabling learning environment

It was obvious from the findings that international students possess some inherent potential and have the capability(ies) to suggest different multidimensional strategies in which the university could use in creating or providing an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS. This depicts that international students are active beings within their learning

environment and are also change agents. HEAIDS (2012) asserts that change agents help to reduce the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, the following implications are provided:

- The findings in this section showed how important it is to properly sensitise and orientate international students about the prevalence of HIV and AIDS and the impact of HIV and AIDS in their learning environment during their orientation programmes. Maundeni et al. (2010, pp. 82-83) urge that “universities need to create and implement comprehensive orientation programmes, expand support networks for international students, improve information dissemination about the available services inside and outside the campus and also empower students with knowledge and skills to cope with psychological challenges of adjustment.”
- It is also important that HIV and AIDS education is integrated into all modules at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, to enable all the students to gain more awareness of the prevalence and the influence of the disease in their learning environment.
- It is also very important that international students, as stipulated in the immigration policy, are given the opportunity to work in their host environment in order to sustain themselves. Although South African immigration policy stipulates that international students have up to 20 hours in a week to work in their host environment, this is not achieved within the micro and macro environment as most of the employers do not have the knowledge of what the policy entails. In addition, due to xenophobia and the limited job opportunities within the micro and macro environment, most organisations do not employ foreigners, most especially international students.
- There is also the need to promote international students’ health by ensuring that more social integrative programmes, as well as more sports and recreational activities, are provided for them. This will ensure that international students are socially integrated within their learning environment and encouraged to live a healthy and active lifestyle.

This wide range of strategies suggested by international students, comprising policies, plans, social and physical structures, with psychosocial and emotional support programmes, could be used by the university to enhance the students’ learning, growth, and development. Meanwhile, the university needs to ensure that their international students’ wellbeing is properly taken care of by promoting their health, protecting them against harm, by creating job opportunities for them within the university environment and by providing them with funding and scholarships to ease their burdens and pay their bills as well as sustain themselves.

7.4.4 Photovoice agency and capabilities in the lives of international students

The findings showed that international students' personal, proxy and collective human agency is revealed through their abilities or potential (Bandura, 2008; 2012). In most of the policy(ies) on international students, their voices are being ignored. Mostly, the voices of the university management, academic staff, international department officials, support staff, immigration officials and government bodies have always dominated concerning issues pertaining to international students. However, my findings show that engaging international students in the photovoice method can create an awareness of their self and environment and give them new perspectives and ideas regarding their learning environment. This could be what Black et al. (2018) imply to be a shift in policy. Therefore, I provide some of the following implications:

- The findings reveal that using photovoice methods in the university as a teaching method or as a research method would enable students to gain awareness (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006) of their lived environment (micro and macro) and experiences. International student's human agency enables them to become active and change agents as well as experts of their own world, thereby making a difference. In this study, gaining awareness helped the international students to realise how constraining their environment is to their learning and development.
- The university dialogue pertaining to creating an enabling and positive learning environment has to go past existing programmes and policies of using student-centered teaching and learning methods. It should also use photovoice and other participatory visual methods to understand students', most especially international students', concerns about their learning and conduct research in order to include several ways of illustration of an enabling learning environment. Knight and Schoole (2013) propose that infusing new relevant knowledge like ICT (photovoice) helps to enable learning.
- Photovoice could be used with international students to increase their knowledge, skills, and potential (Khanare, 2012; Nykiforuk et al., 2011), and to:
 - Increase international students' learning skills
 - Enhance their critical thinking skills
 - Acquire creative skills
 - Connect globally with people
 - Empower the less privilege or vulnerable ones
 - Encourage active participation by discussing, dialogue, arguing, and presentation of their works during conferences, seminars, cohorts, workshops.

International students' self-reflective essays on the use of a participatory visual method such as photovoice were diverse and meant different things to them, despite being conducted in the same context. The various self-reflective essays from the participants show that engaging international students in participating in the photovoice process assisted them to derive diverse meanings and enabled agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. The ability and skills of the participants to use different kinds of photographs/images (artefacts) to start a discussion or dialogue as well as form or inform policies that are student-driven and context-specific is revealed. The use of the photovoice method could help reform university policies regarding international students' education and mobility.

In this section, I have outlined the implications of my findings. The researcher has aimed to provide information to assist her readers to reflect on their understanding of an enabling learning environment, most especially in relation to international students in the South African university context. In the next section, I present the contribution of my study.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is evident from this research building an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS is both important and viable. Therefore, the following recommendations are outlined for impending research below:

- Further studies exploring building or creating an enabling learning environment for international students should be undertaken from the lens of Technology Education.
- Since the study was exclusively aimed at international students, it is vital to have a study that is aimed at local students in order to include their voices using the photovoice approach, so that we can have an all-embracing visual illustration of how an enabling learning environment can be created or built for university students.
- More advanced studies should also be conducted on how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in other contexts or countries, globally as well as in private institutions/university(ies).
- Further studies should specifically examine how international students' wellbeing can be enhanced, as well as include more participants and employ different participatory art-based methods such as video, drawing, collage, posters, sculpturing, painting, etc.

- Finally, this study supports the existing body of literature on using participatory visual methods such as photovoice in conducting research with university students as it makes them active and critical. This shows how paramount it is for further research to verify or examine the utilisation of photovoice as a research method as well as a pedagogical method in the universities in South Africa.

7.6 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Every study has its limitations just like this one. In other words, the limitations of this research apparently stem from the following reasons; my role as the researcher, sample size, research context, time factor, and using photovoice as a research method.

7.6.1 My role as a researcher

As a researcher who has participated in various photovoice projects and workshops in this university, the research site where the study was conducted was conveniently chosen and utilised due to my experiences of the university context and my relationship and interactions with the participants. In addition, my familiarity with the participants and their knowledge of who I am, made them feel relaxed with me throughout the research process. However, my experiences of this university could lead to bias, but being a qualitative researcher, I ensured that I was immersed in the participants' context. Furthermore, my personal experiences of being an international student in this university and experiencing so many challenges as well as positive learning experiences made learning here interesting and complex at the same time. These personal experiences might bring bias to the research, but the use of the self-reflective essay (Shields, 2010), the discussion with my supervisor as well as the checking of transcripts by the participants enabled me to identify any bias in my study (Scotland, 2012) and made me be very critical in my analysis.

7.6.2 The number of participants

This qualitative study was conducted using purposive and convenience sampling, limiting the possible generalisation of the findings. The sample size was limited to 12 international students in their undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study at one of the campuses of the selected university. In addition, the participants have been studying on this particular campus for more

than two years. In other words, the study did not engage with all the international students studying on this particular campus and in this university. On the other hand, the researcher does not wish to generalise the findings of the study but rather to engage in-depth with a small category of knowledgeable participants in ways that she could explore the issues or phenomenon, evoke questions and gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon ‘an enabling learning environment’ as well as of their reasoning for needing an enabling learning environment. Furthermore, I needed to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies that the university could use to create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS and lastly examine how photovoice could contribute to their agency.

7.6.3 Research context

Another limitation to this study was the research context where the study was conducted. The study was conducted in one of the five campuses of the university located within the Durban metropolis of KwaZulu-Natal and not in all of the campuses of the selected university in the KwaZulu-Natal province.

7.6.4 Research time

One other factor that limited the study was time, which negatively affected the research process. This was evident during the photovoice process in which the participants failed to keep to time as they scheduled and rescheduled several times before they could finally agree to a particular time. In addition, during the day of the photovoice process, while engaging and participating in the photo-shooting sessions most took long to complete, which affected the photo-interpretation session. So, they all reached an agreement to interpret their photographs at their homes with their self-reflective essays and send it to me via email, as I had previously uploaded their pictures on my laptop.

7.6.5 Research method

The participants’ experience in engaging and participating in the photovoice process was indicated as mentally tasking and draining. This is because it was the first time for most of the participants to engage and participate in the photovoice process. The study revealed that the

participants had to think critically before taking their photographs and that they had to make informed choices of which photographs made the most sense to them during the photo shooting and photo-interpretation session.

7.7 CONCLUSION

The aim of the study is to explore how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. International students' imagination of an enabling learning environment was made evident through the visual representation of their multiple understandings and multidimensional strategies based on their various experiences, ideas, knowledge, values, and identities of an enabling learning environment. The study also revealed that international students see an enabling learning environment as a space for freedom, learning and for human development and growth. It also revealed international students as assets, as active and critical agents and knowledge creators and experts of their own world, not as a deficit or vulnerable students just as literature has portrayed them to be. International students are a highly skilled group whose voices are vital in creating and recreating their learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. This indicates that international students possess some inherent abilities and potentials within them that could be harnessed by the university through their interaction with their environment. Furthermore, the personal and professional growth and development of international students were brought to the fore, using artefacts which provided a voice and opportunity for them to express their views as well as advance their knowledge.

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APPENDIX ONE:



5 May 2017

Peace Ginikwa Nwokedi (SN 213570660)
School of Education
College of Humanities
Edgewood Campus
UKZN
Email: Khanare@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Peace

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"An enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with currently registered students on the Edgewood campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely


MR SS MOKOENA
REGISTRAR

Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za


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APPENDIX TWO:



26 June 2017

Ms Peace Ginika Nwokedi (213570660)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Nwokedi,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0602/017D

Project title: An enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 22 May 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

pp

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Fumane P Khanare
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

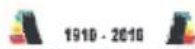
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Founding Campuses Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

APPENDIX THREE:

School of Educational studies
College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus.

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Peace Nwokedi, I am a PhD candidate at the school of education, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The research I am currently undertaking is for the fulfillment of my Doctor of Philosophy degree in the discipline of Educational Psychology.

I am interested in proposing ‘an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS’. This research also aims at exploring and understanding how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS; international students understanding of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS . It also looks at how can the use of photovoice enable agency towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, you are one of my case studies because you have been studying in this campus for two years. However, to gather the information for my research, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person but reported only as a population member opinion and by the use of a pseudonym.
- The focus group discussion session may last for about one and half hours and may be split depending on your preference.
- I cordially invite you to participate in a photovoice process. This will involve a session of a photovoice workshop in the use of cameras, ethics in taking photographs and what photovoice is all about which will last for an hour. The second session will be on photo shooting which will last for an hour and the last session will be on photo interpretation and discussion which will last for an hour too. In addition, you will be writing a self-reflective essay on the impact of engaging in the photovoice process after the photovoice sessions and will be engaging in a focus group discussion too.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research study only.

- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to participate in the photovoice process sessions and focus group discussion, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

| | Willing | Not willing |
|------------------------|---------|-------------|
| Audio equipment | | |
| Photographic equipment | | |
| Video equipment | | |

I can be contacted at:

Email: peaceginika@rocketmail.com

Cell: 0717448006

My supervisor is Dr. Fumane Khanare who is located at the School of Educational studies, in the discipline of Psychology of Education at the Bloemfontein campus of the University of Free state.

Contact details: email: Khanare@ufs.ac.za Cell &Phone number: 0834321772.

You may also contact the Research office through:

MS. P. Ximba

HSSREC Research office,

Private bag X54001, Durban,4000.

E-Mail: XIMBAP@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby provide consent to:

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Audio record my focus group discussion | Yes / No |
| Video record my focus group discussion | Yes / No |
| Use of my photographs for research purposes | Yes / No |

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

APPENDIX FOUR:

Photovoice process schedule

Data generation through Photovoice

You are invited to participate in this study which proposes an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, the aim of the study is to explore how the university could create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. It also explores the international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and examines why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Lastly, it also explores how could the use photovoice enable agency of international students towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, participation in this photovoice process is voluntary and you are free not to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with or to withdraw from participating at any time.

Title of study: An enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Introduction by Facilitator

Hello, my name is [Peace Nwokedi]. Thank you for taking your time to participate in the photovoice process in relation to the study mentioned above.

Introductions by the participants

Let's do a quick round of introductions. Can each of you tell us your name, nationality and what you are studying at Edgewood campus?

(NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: The following questions will guide the photovoice process).

Session 1:

Photovoice workshop: - This includes the photovoice process namely:

- Exploring what photovoice is?
- The use of camera (the different type of cameras example digital and manual cameras)
- Discussing ethics in photovoice (Wang & Redwood- jones, 1999)

Session 2:

Photo shooting: - In this session, participants will be given cameras to take photographs that will depict their understanding of an enabling learning environment and how can the university create an enabling learning environment for them in the context of HIV and AIDS using the following guiding prompts:

- Using a camera, take four (4) photographs of your understanding of what an enabling learning environment is.
- Using a camera, take another four (4) photograph of how the university can create an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS.

After the photo shooting, I will open a folder on my laptop for each of the participants and upload their pictures inside it.

Session 3:

Photo Description: Each of the photographs will be printed out on an A4 power point paper with content and caption design and the participant will be requested to interpret the reason they took photographs using guiding prompts to give a full detail of what the photographs is all about.

Using the SHOWeD Mnemonics: -

- Who is in the photographs?
- Why did you take the photographs?
- What is in the photographs?

The end of the session:

Thank you so much for your time!

APPENDIX FIVE:

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

You are invited to participate in this study which proposes an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. The aim of the study is to explore how the university can create an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS. It also explores the international students' understanding of an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS and examines why international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. Lastly, it also explores how could the use of photovoice enable agency of international students towards creating an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS. However, your participation in the focus group discussion is voluntary and you are free not to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with or to withdraw from participation at any time.

Introduction by Facilitator

Hello, my name is Peace Ginika Nwokedi. Thank you for taking your time to participate in the focus group discussion in relation to the study mentioned above.

Introductions by the participants

Let's do a quick round of introductions. Can each of you tell the group your name, nationality and what are you are studying at Edgewood campus.

(NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: The following questions will guide the discussion)

1. First, I would like to hear about why you feel or think that international students need an enabling learning environment in the context of HIV and AIDS?
 - a. How long have you been studying at this university/campus?
 - b. What is it like to study at this university/campus? Remember you can draw from the many experiences and roles you have played in making the environment enabling for your learning within and outside the university environment for example: lecture rooms, residences, library, LAN, sport fields, student union, bus stops; shops, malls etc.
 - c. In what ways do you feel/think that the learning environment, if enabling can enhance your development and learning?

- d. In what ways do you feel/think that these learning environments can inhibit your progress and development and also fall short in helping you learn?
2. At this point I would like to hear about how you feel or think that the university can create an enabling environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS.
 - a. What strategies can the university use in creating an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS? How can these strategies enhance the students learning?
 - b. Probe: Remember, this can be a wide range of strategies: (policies, plans, socially, physical structures, psychosocial, emotionally, support program)
 - c. Who should take part in enhancing these strategies?
 - d. How and why should they be involved?
3. Is there anything else we haven't discussed yet that you think is important in relation to how the university can build an enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS?

Thank you so much for your time!

APPENDIX SIX:

Self-reflective essay

The purpose of this self-reflective essay is to allow the participants to reflect on the impacts of engaging in the photovoice process; and on their experiences of doing the photovoice process that they participated in today.

Researcher:

You are given 30 minutes to reflect on your participation in today's session. I will use the following prompt: **“What have you learnt today while participating in this photovoice process”**.

The following questions will also be used to guide the participants:

- Write about today's session
- Write how you felt
- Write about your experiences

APPENDIX SEVEN:

Permission to use the photographs.

I, _____ (print name), give my permission for a photograph to be taken of me for use in the project: **An enabling learning environment for international students in the context of HIV and AIDS .**

This photograph will be used for research purposes and I will be consulted, and further permission sought if my photograph is to be used for exhibitions and/or other dissemination purposes. No further use of this photograph will be made without permission my express. In addition, I have the right to withdraw the use of the photograph if the need arises.

Signature

Date

I can be contacted at:

Email: peaceginika@rocketmail.com

Cell: 0717448006

My supervisor is Dr. Fumane P. Khanare

Contact details: email: Khanare@ukzn.ac.za

Cell &Phone number: 0834321772 Or 031260354.

You may also contact the Research office through: MS. P. Ximba

HSSREC Research office,

Private bag X54001, Durban,4000.

E-Mail: XIMBAP@ukzn.ac.za

Thanks for your time and help

APPENDIX EIGHT:

Participant's biographical data:

| Socio –demographic data | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|------|--------|-------|
| 1. | What is your gender | Male | Female | Other |
| 2. | Age | | | |
| 3. | Race | | | |
| 4. | Nationality | | | |
| 5. | Degree | | | |
| 6. | Area of specialization | | | |
| 7. | How long have been in studying at this university? | | | |
| 8. | What are your hobbies | | | |

LETTER FROM EDITOR

Crispin Hemson
15 Morris Place
Glenwood
Durban
South Africa 4001

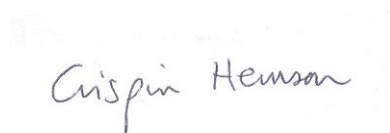
hemsonc@gmail.com
C: 082 926 5333
H: 031 206 1738

15th August 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to record that I have carried out a language editing of a doctoral thesis by Peace Ginika Nwokedi entitled **AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND AIDS.**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Crispin Hemson". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Crispin Hemson



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AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF
HIV AND AIDS

By

PEACE .G. NWOKEDI
(Student number: 213570660)

This dissertation is submitted in fulfillment of the academic requirements
for the Philosophy of Education Degree in the discipline of Educational

Psychology,
School of Educational Studies,
Faculty of Education,
University of KwaZulu-Natal

SUPERVISOR: Dr FUMANE PORTIA KHANARE

DATE OF SUBMISSION: 2019

Ms Nwokedi P

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