

**ACADEMIC (INSTITUTIONAL) SUPPORT TO FIRST YEAR STUDENTS WHO HAVE
LIMITED PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH AS LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING
AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY: LECTURERS' EXPERIENCES**

By

Joseph Tchatchoueng

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Supervisor: Prof Gregory Kamwendo

Co-supervisor: Dr Sithabile Ntombela

DEDICATION

To Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Rebecca Massa and Henri Kouchou

Gone but forever alive in my heart

To all the people of good will

You are the wind beneath my sails

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would never have been a success without the strength, the resilience and the wisdom that have generously been given to me by God and by the giants on whose shoulders I stand.

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DECLARATION

I declare that 'academic institutional support to first year students who have limited proficiency in English as language of learning and teaching at a South African university: lecturers' experiences' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

This thesis has not been submitted for degree purposes at any other university.

Signature -----

Date -----

Supervisors' authorisation to submit

We hereby give authorisation to submit for assessment purpose, Joseph Tchatchoueng's master dissertation entitled '(Institutional) academic support to first year students who have limited proficiency in English as language of learning and teaching at a South African university: lecturers' experiences.

Prof Gregory Kamwendo

Date.....

Dr Sithabile Ntombela

Date.....

EDITOR'S CONFIRMATION LETTER

May Bingham

Senior editor, proofreader and overwriter

LETTER OF CONFIRMATION

12 December 2013

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I have edited Joseph Tchatchoueng's master dissertation, 'academic institutional support to first year students who have limited proficiency in English as language of learning and teaching at a South African university: lecturers' experiences'

May Bingham

Language Centre, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Pietermaritzburg Campus

Email: cavan@interkom.co.za

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study was carried out in the School of Education, Edgewood Campus, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa. The study had two objectives: firstly, to understand lecturers' experiences of how first year student-teachers' abilities in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) affect their learning outcomes. Secondly, to explore lecturers' evaluations of the academic support that is available on the Edgewood Campus to improve students' LoLT abilities. Data were collected from consenting participants through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Three concepts comprised the framework informing the analysis of data: inclusive education, epistemological access and the concept of the Whole School approach to the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The findings indicate that students with limited proficiency in the LoLT tend to withdraw from participating in class discussions; often refrain from seeking lecturer assistance; are likely to plagiarise during assignments; and tend to perform poorly in examinations. Overall, the six participants found support provided to students with limited English language proficiency on the Edgewood Campus of UKZN to be negatively affected by an unplanned mass-enrolment. The participants also argue that the designated support is insufficient because it is not cross disciplinary and it is not sustained beyond the first year of study.

Keywords: Language proficiency; academic institutional support; Higher education

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ALE: Academic Literacy in English

APS: Admission Point Score

B.Ed.: Bachelor of Education

BICS: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

CALP: Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

CHE: Council of Higher Education

DBE: Department of Basic Education

DHET: Department of Higher Education and Training

DMI of UKZN: Division of Management of Information of the University of KwaZulu-Natal

DoE: Department of Education

ELC/IELC: an Integrated English Language Communication

ESL: English Second Language

FET: Further Education and Training

HEI: Higher Education Institution

HESA: Higher Education South Africa

LoLT: Language of Learning and Teaching

MoE: Ministry of Education

NFF: National Funding Framework

NPHE: National Plan for Higher Education

NSFAS: National Students Financial Aid Scheme

PIRLS: Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study

RSA: Republic of South Africa

STAR: Student At Risk (of academic failure and exclusion from the university)

TIMMS: Trend in International Mathematics and Science Study

UKZN: University of KwaZulu-Natal

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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Chapter 1

Background, context and location of study

1.1 Introduction

Despite 20 years of laudable efforts to redress past imbalances within the South African Higher Education landscape, “less than 5% of African youth are succeeding in higher education” (Scott, 2013, p. 26) in South Africa. As many researchers, including Hlalele (2010) and Fraser and Killen (2005) have revealed, one in three South African students registering with a local university will have dropped out before the end of his/her first year of study. Many of those more likely to drop out are the so-called Black African and Coloured students (Scott, 2013). The majority of these students are English Additional Language students from impoverished rural, semi-urban and township schools, which, to a greater or lesser degree, lack human and material resources (DHET, 2012). Many of these schools were dysfunctional both prior to and after 20 years of democracy in South Africa (Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014; Hlalele, 2010).

High dropout and low throughput rates (less than 5%) among black South African undergraduates exists, despite the fact that so far, “only a small portion of 12.6 *percent* of the black African population and 13.4 *percent* of the Coloured population participate in higher education” (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2013, p. 7). By ‘Black’ students, South African literature refers to those whom Statistics South Africa (2012) called black Africans, Coloureds and Indians. According to Scott (2013), Hlalele (2010) and Fraser and Killen (2005) some of the present day causes of the massive dropout of black South African students from tertiary institutions are: low socio-economic status and low cultural capital in most of the families of origin; a poor schooling system; a lack of competence in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT); the inefficiency of some student support systems; and the failure of the curriculum to move beyond a Eurocentric paradigm.

Academic support for first year students struggling with the LoLT at the Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) is the focus of this study. Two specifics were investigated: firstly, lecturer experiences of how student LoLT abilities impacted student

outcomes; and secondly, lecturer evaluations of the academic support meant to assist first year students in acquiring English language proficiency for LoLT. This introductory chapter provides the background and the context of this study. The chapter also states the problem that has motivated this study, the objectives, the relevance and the key research questions. The chapter further elaborates on the scope and the delimitation of the study and before the conclusion, it provides an explanation of key concepts and a brief structural outline of this thesis.

1.2 Background to the study

In South Africa, both colonial and apartheid education were designed “to restrict the productivity of black people to lowly and subservient tasks, and to render them economically non-competitive” (Letseka, Breier & Visser, 2010, p. 32). Blacks and women had restricted access to quality education and to university studies so that they could permanently take-on unskilled manual workplace tasks. To this end, these two systems entrenched and reflected social inequalities and the systematic exclusion of blacks and women in many spheres. According to Badat (2010, p. 4), as a result of these exclusions, “social, political and economic discrimination and inequalities of a class, race, gender, institutional and spatial nature shaped and continue to shape the South African Higher Education sector”. Thus, the overall literary production within the South African Higher Education sector is dominated by the writings of white males (CHE, 2010).

After the political shift from apartheid to a constitutional democracy in 1994, in an effort to dispose of the inherited discrimination, neglect and systematic marginalization of the majority of the South African population from participation in higher education, the new democratic government committed to the transformation of South African Higher Education and by implication, the inherited social and economic structures. This section will briefly situate the current problem of student access and retention at South African universities within the context of the post-1994 reform of the South African Higher Education sector. Doing so will enable the researcher and the reader to gain some essential insights into the major changes, imperatives and goals currently prioritised in the South African Higher Education sector.

1.2.1 Post-1994 reform of the South African Higher Education sector

According to Badat (2010, p. 7), one of the most important changes in the post-apartheid South African Higher Education sector is the establishment of “a comprehensive agenda and policy framework for higher education”. This defines the core principles of equity and redress, democracy, social justice and development that government and the majority of civil society would like enacted within the Higher Education sector and the socio-political and economic domains. This transformative agenda borrows from the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, the *Bill of Rights* and is presented in different policy documents, including the 2001 *National Plan for Higher Education*. Four of the reforms resulting from this agenda are: the establishment of a single, co-ordinated and differentiated Higher Education system; the increased enrolment of previously disadvantaged students; the re-envisioning of the National Financial Aid Scheme; and the promotion of inclusive education in the current Higher Education sector. These reforms are examined under the three sub-sections that follow.

1.2.2 The establishment of a single, co-ordinated and differentiated system

One of the immediate consequences of the new agenda and policy framework for Higher Education in South Africa has been the establishment of a single, co-ordinated and differentiated system encompassing universities, universities of technology, comprehensive institutions, contact and distance institutions and various kinds of colleges (CHE, 2013). Of the 21 public universities, 15 technikons, 120 colleges of education, 24 nursing colleges and 11 agricultural colleges that comprised the segregated South African Higher Education landscape in 1994, only 23 universities now comprise this sector. These 23 institutions have resulted from mergers and incorporations based on various criteria and consist of: 11 universities, six (6) comprehensive universities (one of which is distance) and six (6) universities of technology (CHE, 2013).

1.2.3 Increased enrolment of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds

Another consequence of the democratic government vision for inclusive Higher Education committed to social justice and redress of past imbalances is a rapid increase in the enrolment

at South African universities of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds: from 473 000 student enrolments in 1993 to 799 388 in 2008 (DHET, 2010). There has also been an extensive deracialisation of the student body at all institutions. Whereas in 1993, “African students constituted 40% (191 000) and black students 52 % of the student body, in 2008 African students made up 64.4% (514 370) and black students over 75% of overall enrolments” (Badat, 2010, p. 7).

Besides the continuing de-racialisation of the Higher Education sector, there has also been an increased de-gendering or, increase in the de-masculinisation of inherited intellectual places. The noticeable progress in gender equity within the student population translates into the following: between 1993 and 2008, the percentage of female students enrolling at South African universities increased from 43 % (202 000 women students out of 473 000 students in 1993) to 56.3% (450 584 female students out of 799 388 students in 2008) (Badat, 2010, p. 8). South African tertiary institution staffing, which in 1993 was still mainly composed of white males has also, to a great extent, been de-racialised and de-masculinised (DHET, 2010).

1.2.4 Re-envisioning of the National Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)

Implementing drastic changes within the South African Higher Education landscape has included shifting its focus from serving a white middle class society only (elitism) to opening its doors to all South African students, who meet the academic requirement to enrol at a local university (universalism). This has required and still requires huge state funding. This is so given that, “50% of South Africans lived below the R430 per person a month poverty line and 65% of working people still earned less than R2500 per month” (Letseka, Breier & Visser, 2010, p. 26). Faced with the poverty of the majority of the population, the rising unemployment and the rising income inequality, the South African government in 1999 decided to establish a financial scheme to foster and extend its equity agenda to reach academically able black students too poor to meet the cost of Higher Education without substantial help. That financial scheme is the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which existed prior to 1994 but was officially established in 1999 by Act (No. 56) of Parliament to finance capable students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Jackson (2002) quoted in Letseka, Breier and

Visser (2010, p. 37) argues that “the creation of NSFAS as a legal entity was a clear indication of political will on the part of the South African government to address past inequalities and backlogs in higher education”. Table 1 below indicates yearly NSFAS allocation to Higher Education institutions increased between 1991 and 2005 (Letseka, Breier & Visser, 2010, p. 37)

Table 1: Total NSFAS allocation to Higher Education institutions, <i>in millions of Rand</i> , 1991-2005 (Source: NSFAS, 2009)												
Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Amt	70	154	333	350	394	441	511	605	713	834	970	1120

Table 1: Total NSFAS allocation to Higher Education institutions, in millions of Rands, 1991-2005
(Source: NSFAS, 2009)

In Table 1, the amount of money invested by NSFAS to effect redress of past imbalance in the Higher Education sector has not stopped growing since the early 1990s. The state contributes 78% of the NSFAS fund, 18% comes from international donors, 3% from South African Higher Education and 1% from the private sector (Letseka, Breier & Visser, 2010). It is important to note that despite having substantially increased the student numbers benefitting from financial support, NSFAS still does not cater for 70% of students identified as being financially needy, by virtue of their low socioeconomic background (Letseka, Breier & Visser, 2010).

1.2.5 The promotion of an inclusive education system in the Higher Education sector

The promotion of social equity and inclusive education at all educational levels officially began with the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994. Since then, the Higher Education sector has undergone a profound transformation that is geared towards challenging

past exclusionary practices. This reform agenda is fostered in a number of official documents including but not limited to: the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, the *Higher Education Act* of 1997, the *Language in Education Policy*, the *Language Policy for Higher Education*, the *Education White paper 3*, *The National Plan for Higher Education* and the 2001 *Education White paper 6* which speaks of “maximising the participation of all learners in the culture of the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning” to allow all students to be successful in academia (DoE, 2001, p.16).

The thinking behind the inclusive vision fostered in these official documents is that the key to meaningful student participation at tertiary just as at any other level of the education system is creative thinking by student support teams (Prinsloo, 2011). Thus, the academic community and both the administrative and the managerial staff have the responsibility to create an environment for every student to develop their potential to the full (DoE, 1997a). This has brought about a shift from seeking the causes of underachievement in the student often labelled ‘poorly prepared for higher education’ or ‘poor achiever’ to scrutinizing the education system for answers (Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014). As a result, in higher education, the responsibility for failing to achieve academic success is no longer blamed only on the student, or any physical, mental and intellectual challenges the student may be facing. That responsibility is primarily attributed to the schooling system and to the Higher Education system, both of which often fail to provide adequate support to cater for unique scholastic needs of those at risk of academic failure and exclusion because of factors often beyond their control (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013a & 2013b; DoE, 2001).

1.3 Increased student enrolment and inadequacy of traditional support systems

The rapid increase in enrolment of previously disadvantaged group of students, notably those Statistics South Africa (2012) refers to as ‘Black African, Coloured and Indian’ is a substantial change that democracy and an inclusive Higher Education sector vision have brought to the South African Higher Education landscape. This increase in enrolment came “as one of the means of reducing the highly stratified race and class structure of the country” (Fraser & Killen, 2005, p. 26). Despite the positive deracialisation and demasculinisation of this education sector, a negative impact on increasing student enrolment is the gap between student readiness levels and the high-level demands of independent research and self-directed

learning (Hlalele, 2010). A minority of students have acquired sufficient knowledge to function effectively at any rigorous Higher Education institution globally, whereas, most students from previously disadvantaged background, especially those from dysfunctional high schools usually enter universities with a “lack of reading and writing skills; lack of fluency and proficiency in the LoLT” and limited academic abilities necessary to function effectively in institutions of higher learning (Ngwenya, 2012, p. 2). They encounter many learning barriers, find South African institutions of Higher Education a challenging milieu and require proficient and inclusive academic support to facilitate access to the skills to achieve academic success at university level (Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014; Dhunpath & Vithal, 2013).

There is thus, a real and growing need for establishing efficient academic support to include and assist students in their transition to university study (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2013; Badat, 2010; Fraser & Killen, 2005). In response to this need, many South African universities, including the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) have developed access programmes as alternative ways to university admission. They have also developed “foundational courses to bridge knowledge gaps, curriculum extension to allow some students more time to complete their studies, and both co-curricular and academic literacy programmes” to help students develop literacy and academic reading and writing skills (Hlalele, 2010, p. 98).

1.4 Statement of the problem

The problem that motivated this study could be expressed through the following question: Is the enrolment of first year students with limited proficiency in the LoLT followed by the provision of adequate academic support on the Edgewood Campus? In answering this question, the researcher examined lecturer experiences of how Edgewood Campus as an institution of higher learning is including and supporting the designated group of students. It is important to note that this research is not about promoting one language over the other; that is, it is not about determining whether students would have done better in their studies if they had been taught in an African language, such as IsiZulu or Afrikaans. The researcher is merely interested in whether adequate academic support is provided to support students in the use of the LoLT, in this case English.

The above statement of the problem was formulated by the researcher based on the results of a number of recent research studies suggesting that beside the lack of financial means to pay for their studies at South African universities, the LoLT is one of the major barriers to learning for many students from backgrounds where, the only time they really engage with English is when they are writing tests and examinations (cf. Mgqwashu, 2013; Brock-Utne, 2012; Badat, 2008 & 2010; Hlalele, 2010; Foley, 2010; Steyn, 2009; Frazer & Killen, 2005). In a study investigating the extent of learning barriers black students at the University of Pretoria experience, Steyn (2009, p. 616) found that as a result of not engaging often with the LoLT, “the majority of black students read slowly and do not understand study material”. As a result, they are in danger of failing, dropping out or of being excluded from the University because “their competence in reasoning skills, organizing skills and mathematic skills is low” (*ibid*). Steyn (2009) is supported in his conclusion by a number of researchers including Brock-Utne (2012), Morrow (2009) and Boughey (2005; 2010).

The above researchers have also found that university students with a rudimentary proficiency level in the LoLT are more likely to experience limited access to knowledge contained in reading materials. This proficiency level is necessary to acquire knowledge and to perform effectively at a tertiary level (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013b; Graf, 2011; Rose, 2005). From these studies, the need had emerged to investigate on the Edgewood Campus of UKZN: firstly, lecturer experiences of how students’ abilities in the LoLT impact students’ academic outcomes; secondly, lecturer evaluations of the academic support to address student ability in the LoLT on the selected Campus of UKZN. Central to this study is the inclusion of first year students for whom the LoLT has the potential to be a barrier to learning at the Edgewood Campus.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The study was undertaken to meet the following objectives:

1. To find out lecturers’ experiences of how their first year student abilities in the LoLT impact on these student learning outcomes
2. To explore lecturers’ evaluations of the existing academic support meant to improve students’ ability in the LoLT on the Edgewood Campus of UKZN.

1.6 Research questions

The following research questions were formulated to help the researcher realise the above objectives:

1. According to lecturers, how do first year students' abilities in the LoLT impact on these students' learning outcomes?
2. What are lecturers' evaluations of the existing academic support on the Edgewood Campus to address students' proficiencies in the LoLT?

1.7 Location of the study

1.7.1 Brief historical background and demographic changes at Edgewood Campus

This study was conducted within the School of Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal; more specifically on the Edgewood Campus. The selected University and its School of Education are located within the province of KwaZulu-Natal, where, according to the 2011 census, 81% of the population speaks isiZulu as a home language and 14 % English (Republic of South Africa, 2012). According to Wassermann and Bryan (2010), Edgewood Campus, now home to the School of Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal started in 1966 as a College of Education for the training of teachers, classified by the apartheid government as White. From 1966 to 1970, the College had an intake of white middle class girls only (Bryan, 2010; Le Roux, 2010). In 2001, Edgewood was incorporated into the Natal University. In 2004, there was a merger between Natal University and the University of Durban Westville to create the University of KwaZulu-Natal, for which Edgewood became home to the Faculty of Education (Vithal, 2010).

From the time of its creation in 1966 to its establishment as the new Faculty of Education of UKZN in 2004, Edgewood had had minor student enrolments and the racial representation of its students remained predominantly white. Samuel (2010, p. 191) holds that "Edgewood Campus of UKZN was conceived to accommodate a maximum of 1800 students all together". This arrangement gave students a preferential face-to-face model of intensive staff – student interaction. After the 2004 merger, Edgewood Campus saw a rapid change, both in the enrolment rate of first year students and in its racial demography. Table 2 that follows

indicates the rapid change in the racial demography at Edgewood from 2003 to 2010 (Samuel, 2010, p. 192). Table 2 also gives an indication of the increase in first year student enrolments and that of the total number of year one to year 4 students within the same period.

Changing UKZN B.Ed. 1st year Enrolment Trends: Race (2003-2010)								
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
African	93	231	103	118	261	354	481	440
Coloured	39	33	11	19	13	10	23	16
Indian	61	111	119	126	114	156	164	143
White	163	135	97	70	43	29	24	17
First year	356	510	330	333	431	549	692	616
Total across 4 yrs	898	1260	1474	1529	1578	1661	2044	2221

Table 2: Changes in 1st year B.Ed. student Enrolment Trends and changes in racial demography on the Edgewood Campus (2003-2010). Source: Samuel (2010, p. 192)

In Table 2, Edgewood Campus is shown not to have been spared the rapid increase in student enrolments happening at most South African higher institutions of learning. The total number of B.Ed. students from year one to year four tripled over the period of time 2003 – 2010 on the selected campus. This number grew from 898 enrolments in 2003 to 2221 in 2010.

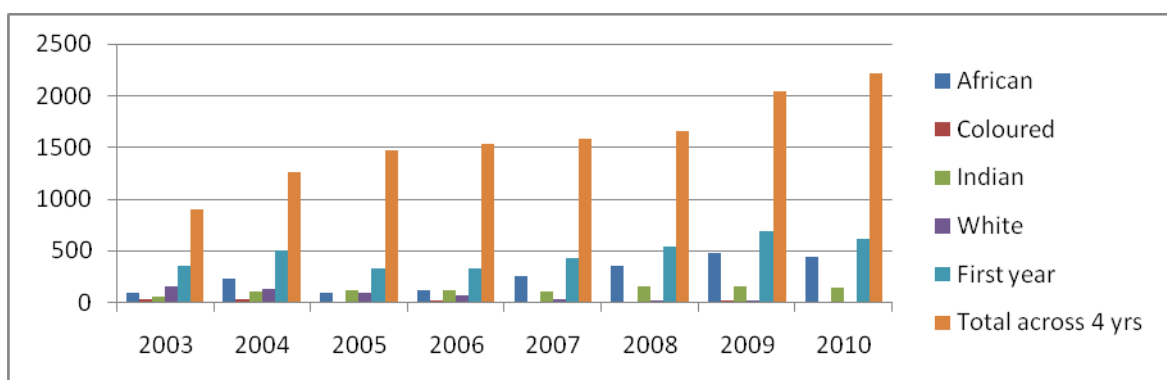


Figure 1 Change in the racial demography within the B.Ed population at UKZN (2003-2010)

According to the Division of Management of Information of UKZN (2013), the number of enrolment of B.Ed. students as shown in Table 3 below has further grown at Edgewood over

the past three years; from 2489 enrolments in 2011, to 2792 in 2012 and to 3139 in the year 2013.

Changing UKZN B.Ed. 1st year Enrolment Trends and total number of students from year one to year four (2003-2013)											
Academic year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
First year	356	510	330	333	431	549	692	616	678	822	1178
Total across 4 years	898	1260	1474	1529	1578	1661	2044	2221	2489	2792	3139

Table 3: Changing UKZN B.Ed. 1st year Enrolment Trends and total number of students from year one to year four: (2003-2013). Source: Adapted from Samuel (2010, p. 192)

Taken holistically, the total number of enrolments within the B.Ed. cohort across the four years has almost quadrupled over the past 10 years on the selected campus; from 898 enrolments in 2003 to 3139 in 2013. That is, an increase of 2241 students in the B.Ed. cohort over 10 years (41.33 % increase in 1st year B.Ed. student enrolment from 2010 and 249% increase in first year B.Ed. student enrolment from 2003). Figure 2 that follows is a graphic representation of the subsequent increase in the first year cohort and in the number of students across the four years of study at Edgewood over the past 10 years.

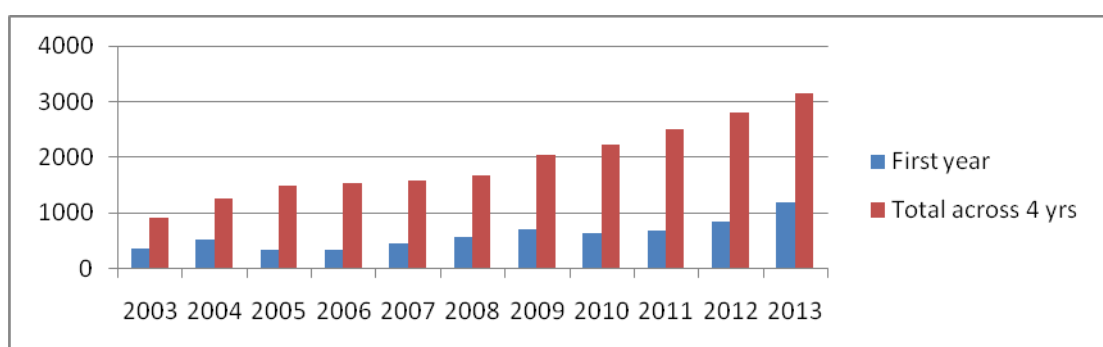


Figure 2: Enrolment trend in the first year B.Ed. cohort and in the number of students across the four years of study at Edgewood Campus over 10 years (2003 – 2013)

As Bryan (2010, p. 33) has it, “Edgewood has mutated into a huge, gloriously colourful mini-nation”. However, both the first Dean of the Faculty of Education after the merger, Vital

(2010) and her successor Samuel (2010) contend that this rapid increase in first year B.Ed. student enrolments in recent years has created a situation whereby the numbers of students enrolled often outgrow the available accommodation and teaching facilities. Despite constant efforts to increase these facilities, many lecture theatres are still overextended during the delivery of professional courses. This compels students to sit on the floor inside lecture venues, or to stand for the duration of the lecture outside overcrowded lecture venues.

Table 3 also indicates that the racial representation in 2003 remained predominantly White. In 2004, the majority were African students, followed by White students. From 2005 to 2013, the majority have been African students, followed by Indian students, many of whom are from working class families, originating in rural, township and semi urban contexts (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2012a; 2012c). As Morrow (2009) would argue, in view of: recent increases in student numbers (Table 3) and both racial and class composition of student populations (Table 2), there is a need for constant evaluation of the available academic support at the School of Education, UKZN. It is necessary to ensure students are assisted in the identified transition studies and progress is monitored until graduation. One of the goals of this study is to realise such an evaluation.

1.7.2 Student academic literacy development programmes on the Edgewood Campus

To reduce the high undergraduate dropout rate and in keeping with the national agenda for both past imbalance redress and implementation of inclusive university education, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (2006) has urged the creation of effective support programmes in all its Schools. The purpose of these support programmes is to enable access to Higher Education for academically underprepared students (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2013). In response to this call, the Edgewood Campus, home to the School of Education of UKZN has both adopted and continuously readapted a number of academic literacy programmes previously introduced by the University of Natal in 1999. The Academic Literacy in English for undergraduate students (ALE) and the Integrated English Language Course (IELC or simply ELC) are two such programmes that were adopted from the previous institution to support current students who are at risk of academic failure because of the poor schooling system (Mgqwashu, 2013; Boughey, 2013 & 2010). As a foundational course, ALE is primarily designed and offered at university entry point to help students develop proficiency and basic

academic reading and writing skills in English. Rose (2005) observes that emphasis on developing reading ability is often a missing link in language programmes designated to assist students in developing proficiency in the LoLT.

Mgqwashu (2013) agrees with Rose (2005) and actualises her assertion by noticing that within the School of Education, UKZN, teaching students reading skills has often proven to be a critical missing link in the offering of the ALE course. He further argues that despite the many attempts to redesign and to continuously adapt the ALE course to suit the needs of current generations of student-teachers at the School of Education, UKZN, the purpose that was attached to ALE in 1999 by the then University of Natal has not changed significantly. Maybe it is because the purpose of ALE as stated in 1999 has not changed that it was omitted from the 2013 version of the ALE course material. In the absence of the purpose and of the objective of ALE in the 2013 *Academic Literacy for UG Students* course pack, the researcher provides here the purpose of the ALE course as specified in the 1999 template for the internal approval of the modules by the then University of Natal:

This module aims to help learners to use writing as a means to become effective learners in the University environment, providing learners with foundational skills which are transferable across modules, disciplines and programmes. The module aims in particular to introduce learners in an explicit way to the process of academic essay writing, developing their capacity to produce coherent, cohesive and well-polished texts within the context of an intellectually challenging examination of themes which are of contemporary academic interest across disciplines.

Mgqwashu (2013) clarifies that ALE was primarily designed as a foundational module for the Bachelor of Art (B.A) students of the former University of Natal. During the process of incorporation of the former Edgewood College of Education to the University of Natal, ALE was adopted by the new Faculty of Education to help Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) students at university entry point to develop this academic writing level. As will be explained in chapter 5 of this dissertation, many of the participants hold that the ALE programme was suitable for the small group of adequately prepared students the Edgewood Campus hosted ten years ago but that in the current work conditions, the ALE course is no longer fulfilling its purpose. Many lecturers and different co-ordinators of the support programme at Edgewood have felt this lack of effectiveness of the support programme over the years and have tried to adapt it. To this end, ALE has undergone many revisions in an attempt to meet the needs of student teachers for whom it was not originally designed.

The review of the ALE course material has been designed as a compulsory foundational module to: provide student teachers with both academic reading and academic writing skills; equip them to access educational epistemology; and ease subsequent participation in academic practice. What has not changed is the purpose of the course, which seems to have been well conceived from its beginnings in 1999. ALE in its 2013 format is still intended to convey academic reading and academic writing skills to students and to enable them to use these skills to produce coherent, cohesive and well-informed texts across their modules (Mgqwashu, 2013). The overcrowded learning environment, according to research participants, is a major challenge to the realisation of the purpose of ALE. This challenge is detailed in chapter 5, where the researcher presents and discusses the findings of this study.

The Integrated English Language Course (ELC) is designed to convey more basic literacy skills to students than the Academic Literacy in English course does. It is designed primarily to support students whose poor matriculation results in English language testify to their insufficient English competence. After completing the ELC, students then embark on the ALE course to acquire academic reading and writing skills. Despite many attempts to reform the Integrated English Language Course to suit the need of student-teachers, its initial purpose has also not changed from what it originally was. As indicated in the internal approval template of the ELC at the then University of Natal on the 30 October 2000, the course is still designed to: firstly, introduce students with limited English proficiency in basic grammatical concepts; and secondly, to encourage the development of grammatical competence with specific reference to writing academically in English (Ralfe, Young, Balfour & Bruynse, 2013). To indicate this goal, the specific outcomes of ELC read that on completion of the ELC module, learners are expected to be able to: comprehend a range of grammatical concepts and terminologies; display evidence of basic operations in English grammar and recognize the importance of language structure, lexicon and semantics in constructing meaning in writing. In the introduction of the year 2013 course-pack of the *Integrated English Language Course*, Ralfe, Young, Balfour and Bruynse (2013, p. i) add that “This course is not a ‘quick fix’ for language problems; it provides a foundation on which to build in the future”. As these authors further explain, “No twelve weeks course can claim to give a student complete proficiency in a language and this course is no exception” (Ralfe, Young, Balfour & Bruynse 2013, p. i).

What ALE and ELC have in common is that they are academic literacy courses approved by the then University of Natal and in constant adaptation to suit the changing academic literacy needs of generations of student-teachers. The two purposes are: to improve the literacy preparedness of first year students so the LoLT can be used appropriately; and to improve academic reading and writing skills. As many of the research participants have reiterated, these two academic literacy courses were conceived for a 'homogeneous student group'. By this expression is meant students who attended functioning primary and secondary schools, so reaching university with similar levels of appropriate linguistic preparedness (Boughey, 2010; Mgqwashu, 2013). Complementing these two courses is a course known as Computer Literacy, one of the aims of which is to teach students how to use a computer to process academic assignments.

Finally, there is the Student At Risk programme (STAR), which is one of the components of the Academic Monitoring and Support (AMS) programme on the Edgewood Campus. The AMS programme is anchored in strong mentoring and tutoring programmes and plays a great role in widening participation on the Edgewood Campus and at UKZN in general. The Student-at-risk programme (STAR) is a remedial programme, originally designed to identify and provide support to students failing to achieve a 50% pass in their modules. These students are easily identified by UKZN data monitoring office, on a protected university system, where on entering a poor mark, the name is highlighted in red and classified as an 'at risk of academic failure' student. The system also automatically notifies students of their at-risk status, by displaying a red background on the student's private results webpage. Once identified, these students are then invited, via email and telephonic communication to the STAR programme. Through a survey or a one-on-one interview with the programme co-ordinator, or with the Academic Development Officer, the causes of the student's poor achievement are investigated and an academic support designed to help him or her overcome difficulties and reverse their 'at-risk' status.

The STAR programme support involves assigning a mentor to each one of the 'at-risk' students in an attempt to reduce the gap between school and first year university experience. This programme also caters for second, third and fourth year B.Ed. students who are at-risk of academic failure or at risk of losing either their scholarship or bursary because of poor performance. The two criteria for selecting mentors are: a strong academic record and appropriate moral conduct. The potential mentors are asked to comment on their own moral

conduct in a letter they write to motivate why they should be selected to support and mentor at-risk students. The mentor support offered by the STAR program is also in the form of academic advice around issues of time management and peer pressure. In addition, to the best of their ability, mentors assist students in developing academic reading and writing skills and an understanding of curriculum material. The STAR program also provides at-risk students with other services, such as academic counselling referrals, motivational workshops and help with securing financial support and nutrition. A research conducted by Mngomezulu and Ramrathan (2012, p. 123) suggest that students were mostly satisfied with the services of the STAR programme but that they also indicated that a more “pro-active approach combined with continuous monitoring and support” were necessary to reverse the reactive nature of the STAR programme at Edgewood Campus.

1.8 Scope of the study

This study was conceived to: firstly investigate lecturer experiences of how their first year students’ English abilities as LoLT impact on these students’ learning outcomes; and ascertain through lecturer evaluations whether the academic support to improve student abilities in the LoLT on the Edgewood Campus is effective. The academic support this study was primarily interested in consists of courses and programmes the School of Education of UKZN has adopted to support students at university entry to improve English speaking, reading and writing proficiency. To comprehend adequately participant answers to the two critical research questions of this study, it was necessary to extract the profiles of students with limited LoLT proficiency. It was also necessary to identify why and what participants thought provide support to students with limited proficiency in the LoLT on the Edgewood Campus. For clarity and unambiguous understanding, the answers the participants gave to these preliminary questions were provided in addition to the answers given to the two critical research questions.

With regard to the delimitation of the study, this research was conducted on the main campus of the School of Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal only, that is, the Edgewood Campus only. The 6 participants are lecturers who in the past four years have taught at first year level on the selected Campus for a minimum of two years. Although some of the participants lecture both on the Edgewood and on the Pietermaritzburg campuses, the

research questions of the study only targeted support to Edgewood students. In view of the limited number of participants and in view of the limited number of institutions the study covers, the findings of this study cannot lead to statistical generalisation but can inform other researchers to engage in similar research in their respective institutions. In addition, it was not the goal of this study to generate solutions to all student problems. The study only focused on meeting the objectives the researcher formulated in the previous paragraph namely: investigating lecturer experiences of how first year students' abilities in English as LoLT impact on these students' learning outcomes; and identifying lecturer evaluations of the academic support for students with limited proficiency in the LoLT on the Edgewood Campus.

1.9 Rationale of the study

Two rationales had drawn the researcher to this study; the first one derives from academic drive and the second from personal drive. The academic rationale for this study is the well-pronounced need for educational and pedagogical discourses examining the changing nature of academic support both within the South African context and globally. Many factors fuel the discourse around the changing nature of academic support in higher education; one such factor is the shift from elitism to universalism in the global Higher Education landscape (UNESCO, 2009). The massification that has happened globally during the last century in secondary education is now happening at university level as more and more people are claiming and exercising their right to university education. In South Africa in particular, the demand to exercise this right to Higher Education has been made acute by the promise of equity, social justice, redress of past imbalances and the hope of getting both a professional career and financial freedom. Another factor fuelling the discourse around the changing nature of support in Higher Education is that the world is experiencing a period of unprecedented globalisation. Within this new global village, the number of students for whom the LoLT is an additional language is growing and with it, the need for more academic discourses reflecting on the provision of academic support to adequately include all additional language students.

On a personal level, I have embarked on this study in an attempt to improve the quality of service that I render as a tutor and as a peer mentor to students at risk of academic failure and

to those who are at risk of exclusion from the School of Education, UKZN. I have been serving within the Students At Risk programme on the Edgewood Campus for the past six semesters. Within this period of time, both the number of students identified as being at-risk of academic failure and that of the mentors recruited to assist them have more than doubled. It is a cause of concern that from one year to the next, more first year university students appear to need more help than previous generations of students to succeed academically (Hlalele, 2010). Vithal and Dhunpath (2013) contend that the lack of substantial success at tertiary level in South Africa is attributable to students' lack of readiness for university studies but also to universities under-preparedness to cater for the current need of students. Mgqwashu (2013) and Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa and Mkhize (2014) add that the delivery of education through a medium of instruction that is foreign to students is also a non-negligible factor for the poor throughput at South African universities. Thus, the need of a study such as this one is well pronounced.

1.10 Significance of the study

For the School of Education, UKZN, this study is of capital importance for identifying and evaluating available academic support to students with a limited LoLT proficiency. The study is also of major importance in determining the causes of the discrepancy between the available academic support and the poor academic achievement of some of the first year undergraduate students who, despite having been exposed to the available institutional academic support, still fail to achieve academic success. Within the South African Higher Education landscape, the question of retention of students whose prior schooling has inadequately prepared them for university studies is an ongoing battle for which researchers are not close to finding a final solution (Boughey, 2013; Dhunpath & Vithal, 2013; Hlalele, 2010). It could therefore be anticipated that at the national level, this study will inspire academics and researchers to engage in similar research. Doing so, could help to identify and evaluate existing student support at various higher institutions of learning and to encourage them to be more responsive to present student academic problems. Finally, at the international level, the trend is toward the establishment of international universities hosting academics and students from various cultural backgrounds, implying a demand for studies that attempt to evaluate and then tailor the available academic support to today's student

population in South Africa (Tchatchoueng, 2014; Ntombela & Raymond, 2013; Clarence, 2012; Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014).

1. 11 Limitation of the study

The study is a qualitative small scale case study and one of the chief limitations of a small scale case study is that it cannot lead to statistical generalisation (Samuel, 2009). So, the findings of this study are limited in terms of extrapolation and generalization. This is the more so given that the study was conducted on one campus of the School of Education, UKZN only. Also, the study targeted a limited sample of six permanent lecturers with experience in teaching undergraduate students on the Edgewood Campus for a minimum of two years over the past four academic years. Finally, this research was positioned within the interpretive paradigm, acknowledging that each individual is subjectively involved in their own experiences (Rule & John, 2011). So, it is likely that as the sole collector and analyst of data, the researcher may have had assumptions and biases that might have influenced the collection and analysis of data in this study (Maree, 2007). To prevent the problem that the researcher's subjective view was likely to create, I have requested second opinions from experienced researchers when analysing the data. These experienced researchers have guided me through the process of data analysis and have helped me to identify mistakes that I could have overlooked during this data analysis process.

1.12 Definition of key words

The following key words and expressions are important for understanding the study and need to be defined in this introductory section.

Disadvantaged and under-prepared students: According to Kioko, Barnsley and Jaganyi, (2013), in South Africa in particular, the notion of disadvantaged and under-preparedness, although wide, complex and contested are often used together to designate students affected personally and/or academically by political events that can be traced to the apartheid era. These terms were first used by the so-called liberal South African universities in the early 1990s to refer to the student group ill-prepared for tertiary education by poorly resourced

schools reserved for the black population (Kioko, Barnsley & Jaganyi, 2013). Today just as in the early 1990s, students identified as disadvantaged and underprepared for university studies are mainly English second language speakers from schools with few qualified teachers, especially in the English language and scientific subjects. Up to now, many of these schools still have inadequate or non-existent physical facilities (DoE, 2011). It is important to note that recent research (e.g. Niven, Jackson & Tyson, 2013; DHET, 2012; Niven, 2011) suggest that many students deemed to be disadvantaged do not understand themselves as such because “it is more likely that they see themselves as the survivors of a poor educational system and thus as high achievers deserving of respect and honour, and not as victims to be pitied or remediated” (Niven, Jackson & Tyson, 2013, p. 135).

Access: This refers to the range of measures taken to broaden participation in Higher Education to more people than in the past, including those who would traditionally have been excluded from tertiary learning institutions. Access entails enabling participation in Higher Education to students from: previously disadvantaged racial groups; the working class; ethnic minority groups; and students with disabilities. Access is thus inclusive of vulnerable sectors of the population. According to Dhunpath and Vithal (2013, p. viii), access has two related but distinct meanings: “the first relates to making Higher Education accessible, the second relates to the provision of programmes that provide preparation for entry to higher education”. The word ‘access’ in this study has these two meanings: the shift from elitism to universalism in the South African Higher Education landscape; and the effort to include and support students so every individual can meaningfully participate and benefit from tertiary education.

Epistemological access: This refers to the exposure of students to teaching practices, academic discourses and learning strategies enabling them to learn the kind of things universities teach. As Morrow (1993, p. 3) has it, epistemological access is “access to the good that the university distributes” or “access to the ways of constructing knowledge in various disciplines”. Epistemological access involves not only self-study but also expert facilitation. So, it has to do with both including and empowering students for knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination (Bouhey, 2010; Clarence, 2012). Morrow (1993) initiated the shift that has occurred in recent years from mere ‘physical access’, meaning the current practice of admitting more students to universities than traditionally; and ‘epistemological access’ meaning equipping students for meaningful

participation in academic practice. It is important to highlight that access to Higher Education is a current, global phenomenon driven by the quest for social equity and social justice.

Retention: This is the provision of adequate and supportive conditions to maintain within the education system at-risk students. By the expression at risk students one should understand students who are vulnerable to academic failure, exclusion and dropout because of circumstances beyond their control (UNESCO, 2003; DoE, 2001; UKZN, 2012a, b & c). The at-risk status of students who are seen as needing retention strategies is often related to their stage of physiological development (e.g. puberty), their socioeconomic background, their cultural capital and their physical and intellectual abilities and disabilities (DoE, 2001).

Inclusive education: This originally referred to admitting and catering for disabled students in the mainstream or ordinary public classrooms. Today, the meaning of ‘inclusive education’ has grown and points to the greatest degree of match or fit between individual learner requirements and the provision made for these students in regular public schools (Prinsloo, 2011). Inclusive education, thus is the practice of welcoming everyone in supportive mainstream schools and classrooms, irrespective of talents, disabilities, socio-economic background, sexual orientation or cultural origin and ensuring all student needs are met. So understood, inclusive education could be seen as an ongoing process of school reform beneficial to all students: bright, average, not so bright, and those among the learners with exceptional or special educational needs (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010).

Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT): This refers to the recognised language through which formal learning and scholastic instruction are implemented within a given context, within a given locality.

English Second language learner: This refers to a learner who is learning English and studying through the medium of English, while living in a community where English is spoken as an additional language (Graf, 2011).

Home language or first language: This refers to the language customarily spoken in the home and which the child learned first (Nagy & Townsend, 2012).

Academic monitoring and support: This refers to a wide range of student-focused support systems and learning environments meant to ease student transition to the learning environment, enabling the completion of studies in the minimum time period, or enabling

students to remain in the system until successful completion of their studies (Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2012). In the literature, researchers often use the terms ‘Academic Support’, ‘Academic Development’ and ‘Higher Education Development’ to designate the shift in student support programmes, dating as far back as the mid-1980s, when historically black campuses such as the University of Bophuthatswana were first established (see for example Volbrecht & Boughey, 2004). As Boughey (2013) insists, the phases of support that the terms ‘Academic Support’, ‘Academic Development’ and ‘Higher Education Development’ designate are differentiated for the sake of convenience only and should not be understood as being distinct from each other, or, as having any marked transitions from one to the other.

At-risk student; The expression ‘at-risk students’ is commonly used within student support programmes to designate students with barriers to learning or at-risk behaviours exposing them to possible failure or dropping-out before graduation. Hlalele (2010) and Fraser and Killen (2005) suggest that while research has established that at least one in every three students enrolling at South African universities will have dropped out before the end of their first year of study, the number of South African students who could be classified as being at-risk of academic failure is much higher. This is so because within the South African context, at-risk students include students from: dysfunctional schools, broken families; rural and semi-urban areas where students have little exposure to English language. Students with some form of learning disabilities are also considered at-risk. This includes students with visual impairment as well as those with auditory and behavioural challenges.

1.13 Structure of the dissertation

This study report is presented in six chapters. In chapter one the researcher has presented the background, the context and the location of the study. The researcher has also presented the objectives and the two research questions that the study sets out to answer. In chapter two, the researcher will review and discuss the relevant literature on academic support to South African students in the post-apartheid Higher Education landscape. In chapter three, the researcher will explain how the concepts of inclusive education, epistemological access and the notion of Whole Schoolapproach to the development of cognitive academic language proficiency are grouped together under the umbrella of the philosophy of inclusion to provide

the conceptual framework that informs the analysis of data collected for this study. In chapter four, the researcher will describe the methodological approach and present reasons for this methodological choice. In chapter five I shall analyse and present the findings of this study; and discuss and explain them according to the different themes that have emerged during the analysis of data. In chapter six the researcher will make recommendations and conclude the study. In concluding the study, the researcher will critically assess the relevance and implications that the findings have in the context of Edgewood and in the wider context of higher learning in South Africa. I will attempt also to link the findings of my work to present academic discussion on the topic and suggest what aspect of the study needs further investigation.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction:

The body of local and international literature dealing with the issue of access, student support and retention at South African universities, has grown considerably over the past two decades (Badat, 2008 & 2010). In South Africa, the growth of this body of literature is attributable to at least three factors: the first, explained in chapter one is twofold: (1) the commitment of the post-apartheid governments to educational reform intended to correct the exclusionary measures enforced by the apartheid government; and (2) the commitment of current educational stakeholders to establish an inclusive education system dedicated to non-discrimination, human rights, social justice, and to the provision of quality education and equal educational opportunities to all South Africans (Swart & Petipher, 2011; DoE, 1997a & 2001; Republic of South Africa, 1996). The second factor is the increase in awareness among educational stakeholders of the complex nature of barriers to learning in the South African context; and of the unique approach that ought to be adopted in implementing inclusive education in South African institutions of learning (Ntombela, 2011; Badat, 2010; DoE, 2001 & 2002; Prinsloo, 2001). The third factor is that the entire world is undergoing a period of unprecedented globalization in which English continues its expansion as an international lingua franca with global characteristics and local consequences on the South African educational system (Taylora & Sidhub, 2012; Ingvarsdóttir & Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010; Coleman, 2006).

In this chapter, the researcher starts by presenting recent literature dealing with the issue of access, support and retention of students at South African universities. Then some of the available literature on types of barriers to learning at South African universities will be reviewed. In doing so, specific emphasis will be made on studies addressing the issue of the LoLT as a barrier to learning. Then, the researcher will look at local studies dealing with university student LoLT experiences as a barrier to learning as well as the different suggestions that South African academics put forward to cater for such students within the university environment. In concluding this introduction, the researcher wishes to

acknowledge funding as the most tenacious barrier to student success in South African Higher Education sector.

2.2 Recent literature on academic support for South African university students

A large body of research has recently been done on the question of access, support and retention of students at South African universities. One proof of this assertion is a most recent publication entitled *Alternative Access to Higher Education: underprepared students or underprepared institutions?* In this book edited by Dhunpath and Vithal (2013), twenty-one (21) local researchers reflect on the continuous increase in student enrolments that has taken place at South African universities since the advent of democracy in 1994; and with even more revitalization since the introduction of the new school curriculum in 2009. Besides the increase in student numbers, these researchers consider other challenges, such as financial constraints that some of the 23 local universities currently face. Furthermore, there is concern for the capabilities of these institutions to effectively cater for the large mixed-ability first year groups currently enrolled at these tertiary institutions. They also express their apprehension about the effectiveness of South African universities to cater in the near future for the growing student numbers from rural, township and semi-urban high schools who will soon claim and exercise their right to university education (Dhunpath & Vithal, 2013).

Researchers in the above mentioned book all observed that while most South African lecture theatres were predominantly mono-racial and some of them monolingual during the apartheid era, almost all of them now welcome students from a variety of cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds (Boughey, 2013; Scott, 2013; Dhunpath, 2013). Many academics, including Scott (2013) and Mgqwashu (2013) stress that in South Africa, around two thirds (2/3) of the current university student populations speak English, the main LoLT, as second or as third language. As they duly remark, most of these students who have not yet developed sufficient competency in English find it difficult to achieve success at tertiary level, even with the presence of traditional forms of support, needing additional support to experience academic success (Mgqwashu, 2013; Scott, 2013). Elsewhere, Hlalele (2010) also notes that both the growth in student enrolments and the diversity within the new population in South African universities pose new types of challenges to the present South African Higher Education sector. These challenges as Hlalele (2010) further argues, can only be addressed through the conception and implementation of new forms of academic support.

2.3 Common themes in the available body of literature

The existing body of literature on institutional academic support for students at South African universities deals with themes such as: (1) the question of physical access versus epistemological access (Morrow, 2009 & 2007; Mgqwashu, 2013); (2) the relationship between the South African tertiary funding mechanism and the registration of students in masses (Ntshoe, Higgs, Wolhuter & Higgs, 2010); (3) the effects of mass enrolment on the effectiveness of teaching strategies but also on the effectiveness of academic support and on student learning outcomes (Scott, 2013; Hlalele, 2010); (4) and the effect of the poor schooling system on university curricula (Dhunpath, 2013; Fraser & Killen, 2005). A considerable number of research have also been done on the question of academic support to speakers of English as a second language (see for example Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014; Mgqwashu, 2013; Brock Utne, 2012; Tchatchoueng, Ntombela & Kalenga, 2012). However, there seem to be no studies that have specifically examined both lecturer experiences and their evaluation of institutional academic support to first year undergraduate students with a limited proficiency in English as a LoLT. This study will contribute to filling this gap in the literature.

2.4 Types of barriers to formal learning at South African universities

South African literature on academic support for first year university students is to a great extent fuelled by the national agenda on the redress of past imbalances; and on the adoption of an inclusive education system which, it is hoped, will help in addressing the large number of barriers to formal learning among the new population of students. As Prinsloo (2001) has it, barriers to formal learning are factors that are likely to hinder both the acquisition of knowledge and the holistic development of students during the process of learning and teaching. Within the South African education context, reference is often made to two types of barriers to formal learning: intrinsic barriers and extrinsic barriers. Intrinsic barriers to formal learning are cognitive or learning difficulties located within the student, two examples of which are visual impairment and dyslexia (DoE, 2002). Whereas, extrinsic barriers to formal learning are factors outside the student in the broader economic, social, political and educational context that still have an influence on student success (Brock-Utne, 2012). While the origin of some extrinsic barriers to formal learning can be traced to discriminatory

policies, decrees and laws endorsed by the apartheid regime, some of them are either caused or perpetuated by the current inequity in provision of human and material resources to schools. According to Walton, Nel, Hugo and Muller (2009), examples of extrinsic barriers to formal learning within the current South African context of education include but are not limited to: poverty, inflexible curricula, inaccessible environments, illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, inadequate support services, lack of parental or guardian involvement, single-headed families, child-headed families and the lack of proficiency in the LoLT, the subject of the present study.

2.5 The LoLT as a barrier to learning in the South African Higher Education context

In South Africa, the available literature on the LoLT as a barrier to formal learning focuses on black South African and Coloured students. These two groups now account for more than 72% of the Higher Education student populations. Because of under-preparedness in previous grades and because of both historical and socio-economic factors, most of these students enter universities with a rudimentary level of proficiency in reading and writing English but also with a limited ability to read and write their home languages (Wolf, 2011; Foley, 2010; Kamwendo, 2006 & 2010; Steyn, 2009; Brock-Utne, 2005; Prah, 2002; DoE, 1997b). They come from environments where they have very little exposure to English both inside and outside the classroom. As Mqgwashu (2013) has it, they come from backgrounds where speaking, reading and writing in English are not presented as skills they should be sufficiently exposed to during their early schooling experiences. This lack of adequate exposure of students to English, prior to and during their early schooling experience is attributed to many factors; one of these factors is the high level of illiteracy among black South African parents from township, semi-urban and rural areas. Another factor is subtractive bilingualism during the early years of schooling: the shift from mother tongue instruction to English (or to code-switching) instruction from Grade 5 at most rural, township, and semi-urban schools (DoE, 2005a).

2.6 Subtractive bilingualism and its effect on student linguistic development

Dempster and Reddy (2007) suggest the delay in English language development that many black South African students experience is to a great extent caused by the four years of mother tongue instruction many have to undergo before switching to English instruction in Grade 5 (subtractive bilingualism). As Dempster and Reddy (2007) further explain: by the time many black South African students start receiving instruction in English (mainly code-switching) in Grade 5, they are faced with a curriculum that requires them to have 7000 words in their English repertoire to be able to manage it properly; the most literate of these students tackle such a curriculum with a vocabulary repertoire of no more than 700 words. In other words, they tackle the curriculum with a vocabulary repertoire that has 10 times fewer words than what is required in Grade 5 to engage meaningfully with the curriculum. This delay in linguistics development is often not diagnosed and therefore not timeously addressed by subsequent educators. This delay accumulates and is perpetuated into the following grades (Mason & Galloway, 2012). This perpetuation of poor LoLT proficiency continues until some students eventually brave the poor schooling system and find themselves at the doors of universities.

This paradoxical linguistic situation in which Black African students find themselves has resulted in a good number only engaging with English when they have to: write an assignment in English; or communicate with lecturers and people from a different linguistic background (Brock-Utne, 2012). As a result, most African students discuss their scholarly work and express themselves as well as their feelings, their queries and their lived experiences through the medium of their home languages. Even after they have embarked on tertiary education, many black South African students have little chance of practising the LoLT. As a result, they struggle to develop English fluency and proficiency (Zuma & Dempster, 2008; Taylora & Sidhub, 2012). The fact that black African students often use an African language instead of English in daily conversation have lead many researchers including Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa and Mkhize (2014), Mgqwashu (2013) and Brock Utne (2012) to argue that academic concepts will make more sense to these students if they were taught through the medium of their home language. For this group of researchers, it comes as no surprise that the Department of Education (2002) has identified the LoLT as a major barrier to learning for the majority of black South African university students. In its

Language Policy for Higher Education, the Department of Education (2002, p. 4) notes the following:

Language has been and continues to be a barrier to access and success in higher education; both in the sense that African and other languages have not been developed as academic/scientific languages and in so far as the majority of students entering Higher Education are not fully proficient in English and Afrikaans.

In agreement with the above quotation, the present Minister of Higher Education, Nzimande (2012), his predecessor Pandor (2007) and other writers such as Ngwenya (2012) have observed that because of the failure of the schooling system serving the average South African, many black students enter universities with basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) that is not in line with their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1999). They tend to be fluent in speaking the LoLT but their writing is poor. Three central questions at the heart of this body of literature are: “Why are black students at South African universities, to a great extent, prone to failure?” (Steyn, 2009, p. 614). What are the dynamics of the LoLT in including or excluding English second language South African university students? (Tchatchoueng, Ntombela & Kalenga, 2012). What can be done to guarantee black students the right of access to the language of power, English, while at the same time ensuring the development of African languages to the stature of fully functional academic languages (Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014; Mgqwashu, 2013; Brock Utne, 2012; Wolf, 2011; Kamwendo, 2006 & 2010).

2.7 Studies on university student experiences of the LoLT as a barrier to learning

As Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa and Mkhize (2014), Ngwenya (2012), Dempster and Reddy (2007) observe, the lack of language competence, particularly when that language happens to be the LoLT can serve as a barrier to learning and development among students; and subsequently can become a means of exclusion determining who succeeds and who does not. A failure to be proficient in the LoLT makes it very difficult for many South African students to access the knowledge that they need to acquire to succeed in institutions of higher education. As a result, underachievement, exclusion and dropouts soon follow access to universities (Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014; Brock-Utne, 2005; Prah, 2002; DoE, 2005a).

Many other researchers have established that a failure to be LoLT proficient is a major challenge affecting South African university student learning and academic results. For example, in a study conducted at the School of Education, UKZN in 2012, 66% meaning 8 out of 12 black South African student-teachers in the final year of the Bachelor of Education programme revealed that they still lack adequate proficiency in reading and writing English, but also in writing their home language (Tchatchoueng, Ntombela & Kalenga, 2012). They acknowledge that as a result of the lack of proficiency in the LoLT, having to study through English had been psycho-emotionally draining and had impacted negatively on the quality of the education that they had received. Over the period of four years that they had spent at Edgewood, they had study just to get the minimum mark required to pass; and, they blame this situation on the lack of inclusive support structures at university level (Tchatchoueng, Ntombela & Kalenga, 2012).

In a similar study investigating the extent of learning barriers black students at the University of Pretoria experienced, Steyn (2009, p. 616) found that as a result of not engaging often with the LoLT, “the majority of black students read slowly and do not understand study material. They are in danger of failing, dropping out or being excluded from the University because their competence in reasoning skills, organizing skills and mathematical skills is low”. Through the formulation of the above conclusion, Steyn (2009) validates a number of studies that have proven that students with a rudimentary level of proficiency in the LoLT are more likely to experience limited access to the knowledge contained in reading materials necessary to acquire to perform well. Some recent literature on the development of linguistic competence among South African students attempts to address the problem and to foster the development of academic language as a prerequisite for epistemological access in Higher Education (Morrow, 2009). Two of such literatures include Mqgqwashu’s (2013) article “*On reading for epistemological access*” and Boughey’s (2005) research entitled “*‘Epistemological’ access to the university: an alternative perspective*”.

2.8 Gap in the literature

There are many researchers who have explored university students’ language experiences for whom the LoLT is a barrier to formal learning. Some of these researchers are: Boughey (2005 & 2010), Batibo (2009), Brock-Utne (2007 & 2012), Steyn (2009), Badat (2008 &

2010), and Foley (2010). Most of these authors have recommended alternative methods of supporting learners for whom English is a second language. There are however, a less significant number of studies that have investigated lecturer experiences and evaluations of institutional support to first year undergraduate students lacking LoLT competence. Two studies that have attempted to do so are: the reflexion on the relevance of learning skills acquired by students through university access programmes by Hlalele (2010); and the perceptions of students and lecturers of some factors influencing academic performance at two South African universities by Fraser and Killen (2005). The present study will contribute by lessening this gap in the literature.

2.9 Poverty as the main barrier to learning among South African university students

The limited proficiency in the LoLT is not the most devastating barrier to learning among South African university students, as it seems to be poverty. Steyn in a 2009 study investigating barriers to learning among University of Pretoria students found the majority of African students who value university qualifications as a means to escape traditional black working-class labour have few financial assets to pay for tertiary education. In a similar study entitled *Poverty, race and student achievement in seven Higher Education institutions*, Letseka, Breier and Visser (2010) found that financial deprivation was the primary cause of withdrawal from tertiary education among African and coloured students. The seven universities where the study took place were: the University of Fort Hare, Stellenbosch, the Western Cape, Witwatersrand, the North, Peninsula Technikon and Pretoria Technikon. As the researchers report, “Overall, Africans were most likely to have left for financial reasons, coloureds for a combination of academic and financial reasons, and whites and Indians for academic reasons” (Letseka, Breier & Visser, 2010, p. 36). These researchers note that most academically able African and coloured students are too poor to meet the cost of higher education, without substantial assistance from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), bank loans and other sources of bursaries and scholarships. They consider this phenomenon to be a legacy of apartheid: “a historical factor that has given birth to a South African society in which there remain a clear correlation between being black and being poor” (Letseka, Breier & Visser, 2010, p. 37).

With regard to the correlation between being Black and being poor in South Africa, Mbeki (1998, p. 71-72) is well celebrated in the field of Development Studies to have observed that:

South Africa is a country of two nations. One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economy, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure (...). The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor (...) it lives under conditions of grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility to exercise what in reality amount to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, with that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realization.

Mamdani (1999) agrees with Mbeki's image of the unequal distribution of wealth in the South African society and observes that if whites South Africa were to be a country on its own, its per capita income would be 24th in the world, equal to that of Spain. If black South Africa were to be a separate country, its per capita income would rank 123rd globally; "just above the Democratic Republic of the Congo" (Letseka, Breier & Visser, 2010, p. 25).

One may argue that these remarks were made in 1998 and 1999, respectively and that the socioeconomic situation of the different race groups in South Africa has now changed. Unfortunately, the 2011 census shows that there have not been many changes; it is 20 years into democracy in South Africa and most black Africans are still seeking ways to escape traditional black working-class labour and the constraints derived from the heritage of oppression during both the colonial and the apartheid era (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013a). One cannot help but observe that on the one hand, there is still opulence and opportunity for a small group of people, part of which is a small group of black elites, while on the other hand, most of the population from which the great majority of South African University students now come experiences "gross underdevelopment, poverty, unemployment and homelessness" (Letseka, Breier & Visser, 2010, p. 26). As Steyn (2009) notes, the lack of financial resources creates not only a physical void but is also an emotional void. This is so because the lack of financial assets creates anxiety and stress. This is true for the majority of South African youth for whom university education is an expensive commodity involving expensive fees, accommodation, study materials and groceries. Most of those who overcome poverty as a barrier to learning, then have to cope with the LoLT (Hlalele, 2010; Brock-Utne, 2012).

2.10 Summary and conclusion of the chapter

In this chapter the researcher has presented recent literature dealing with issues of access, support and retention of students at South African universities. One resource from which information was borrowed considerably is the 2013 publication, *Alternative Access to Higher Education: Underprepared Students or Underprepared Institutions?* In this book, 21 leading South African researchers reflect among other topics, on the current question of the adequacy of institutional support structures in multi-cultural, post-apartheid, South African universities. The researcher then moved on to review literature on the types of barriers to learning at South African universities. In this section of the chapter, the notion of intrinsic barriers to learning and that of extrinsic barriers to learning are explored and examples of these different types are given. In doing so, specific emphasis on studies addressing the issue of the LoLT as a barrier to learning within the South African context was laid. The researcher also looked at local studies dealing with university students' experiences of LoLT as a barrier to learning, as well as different suggestions South African academics put forward to cater for such students within the university environment. Finally, literature was reviewed that suggests that funding is the most daunting barrier to learning for most South African university students. In the next chapter, the conceptual framework for this study will be presented.

Chapter 3

Conceptual framework

3.1 Introduction

Three pedagogical concepts have been chosen by the researcher from reflective second language teaching to provide a framework for this study. These three concepts are: the philosophy of inclusion; epistemological access; and a Whole School Intervention to Second Language (SL) student linguistic needs. Taken together, the three concepts constitute an attempt to respond to Second Language student linguistic challenges in a way that foster the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency in an additional language that also serve as LoLT for those who are still learning it (Graf, 2011; Farrell, 2007). In this chapter, each one of these concepts will be explained and it will be shown how together, they provide the framework through which the collected data were analysed.

3.2 The philosophy of inclusion

The philosophy of inclusion started in first world countries towards the end of the twentieth century, as a challenge to exclusionary practices in social, economic, political, educational and the socio-cultural domains (UNESCO, 1994). Because of the commitment to promoting the right of every person to equally belong to the human community, the philosophy of inclusion has quickly won favour globally among human rights advocates (UNESCO, 2009). It has in recent years taken a central place in the field of education. The growing international appeal to establish inclusion as a philosophy to inform both educational discourses and educational practices was officially recognized at the UNESCO World Declaration on 'Education for All' in Thailand in 1990. In 1994, the UNESCO Salamanca Statement formalised this concept by declaring that inclusive education is a student right and should be promoted by governments and education stakeholders in all the countries (UNESCO, 1994).

In an attempt to address the social inequalities created by the apartheid regime, the first democratically elected government of South Africa quickly made inclusive education a priority in its social and educational agenda, particularly at universities. Swart and Pettipher

(2011, p. 1) however have observed: “the word inclusion has become something of an international and national buzzword” and “it can easily become a cliché if individuals do not possess an in-depth understanding of its meaning and examine closely the underlying values it is based on”. So, what is inclusive education? And how is inclusive education relevant to this study?

3.2.1 Definition of inclusive education

Originally, ‘inclusive education’ referred to admitting and catering for students with challenges in mainstream institutions of learning. Over time, the meaning of the concept of inclusive education has expanded, now designating “a high level paradigm shift for education systems to include and serve all students effectively” (Taylora & Sidhub, 2012, p. 47). ‘Inclusion in education, thus refers to the greatest degree of match or fit between individual student requirements and provisions made for this student in a mainstream institution of learning (Ntombela & Raymond, 2013b). So understood, inclusive education could be seen as the practice of welcoming students into supportive mainstream classrooms where all educational needs are met, irrespective of: talents, physical and learning challenges, socio-economic backgrounds, and linguistic and cultural origins (DoE, 2001).

Inclusive education, therefore, implies the existence of an adequate support system to assist those needing substantial help to access the required knowledge to succeed both academically and socially (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). Further, a willingness of education stakeholders to restructure curricula in response to student educational needs if necessary. It is for this reason that Ntombela (2010, p. 76) defines inclusive education as a “school taking responsibility for addressing the needs of all students’ learning”. Schools often achieve this objective by differentiating and by adapting the curriculum and teaching techniques in line with the varied needs and capabilities of individual students in the classrooms. This way of understanding inclusive education being mandatory for both student learning and academic results has influenced thinkers like Graf (2011, p. 11) to write that “removing barriers to learning and giving all students the opportunity to learn as well as they can are fundamental aims of an inclusive education system”. An important goal of an inclusive education institution is to tailor methods and teaching strategies to ensuring that every student, regardless of physical and learning challenges, socio-economic status, linguistic and cultural background, or

competency in LoLT acquires as much knowledge as is possible and, experience educational success, friendship and a genuine sense of belonging to the learning community (DoE, 2001 & 2005).

3.2.2 Inclusive education within the realm of this study

Within the context of this study, inclusive education is taken as a beneficial process in university reform. It is the philosophy that informs both the design and the implementation of structures of support to empower gifted, average, below average and special educational needs students, such as those having the simultaneous task of using the LoLT to study content knowledge, while still in the process of learning this LoLT. Given the central place of English in university curricula to instruct and communicate, capital is increased if it is ensured that its use does not exclude learners without adequate proficiency in the language. Reducing barriers to learning and maximizing opportunities to participate in academic practice and to belong to the university community is a principle of both inclusive education and epistemological access (Mgqwashu, 2013; Ntombela & Raymond, 2013b). The notion of epistemological access as the main goal of any genuinely inclusive education system will be discussed. Also of interest is how the conceptual framework of inclusive education informs the notion of epistemological access and a holistic approach to academic language development.

3.3 Epistemological access or student participation in academic practices

Epistemological access was originally popularised in South Africa by the late South African Professor of Education, Wally Morrow (1993, 1994/2009 & 2007) and subsequently by researchers such as, Boughey (2005 & 2010), Clarence (2012), Bozalek, Garraway and McKenna (2012). Morrow (1993) first formulated the notion of epistemological access while teaching within the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. At that time, the university management had adopted a flexible admission policy to admit students with very different levels of tertiary education readiness.

Faced with the fears, profound uncertainties and under-preparedness of some of his students who did not understand what was expected of them at tertiary level, Morrow (1993, p. 3) posits that granting physical access across racial and socioeconomic lines to tertiary institutions should be followed by the support that would help all these students to develop the skills for “access to the good that the university distributes” (epistemological access). By the expression ‘epistemological access’ or ‘access to the good that the university distributes’, Morrow (1993) means preparing students to have deeper academic engagement with their foundational modules, so they could be empowered to be successful in subsequent, more advanced modules.

In his well cited book *Bounds of Democracy: Epistemological access in Higher Education*, Morrow further explains that central to his argument is the notion of “epistemic values” which he argues “are the grammar of the practices of disinterested enquiry” (2009, pp. 36-37). Using a language learning analogy, he explains that just as those interested in learning a new language start by learning its rules, vocabulary, syntaxes and the grammar providing the “generative frame” to engage with the new language, so should it be for South African students embarking on a new field of study at university. These novice researchers should be taught, in a sequential way, the vocabulary and other basic skills necessary to understand both the way of thinking and the way of creating and disseminating knowledge in their chosen field of study. This could enable them to become proficient in subsequent more complex aspects of their modules (*ibid*).

The notion of epistemological access just like that of inclusive education is about enabling all students to meaningfully participate in academic practices (Morrow, 2009). Both notions advocate for the removal of exclusionary paradigms and segregationist practices in education and their importance for this study can therefore not be overlooked. As Boughey (2005) argues, there is no better way of practicing inclusive education, than to ensure all students are granted the necessary critical reading and academic writing skills enabling them to access the curriculum and the knowledge tank of their chosen field of study. She contends that within the South African university context, many students have not yet developed sufficient LoLT proficiency. Fostering epistemological access should therefore start with the adoption of a holistic response to the limited LoLT proficiency and the LoLT teaching across curricula. Lecturers in different disciplines should see it as their responsibility to teach students how to use the LoLT more appropriately. This could be done by allocating a small portion (around

10% of the time) of every lecture to addressing language issues and to building discipline-specific vocabulary (Bouhey, 2005).

3.3.1 Students as agents of their own epistemological access

The notion of inclusive education and that of epistemological access are linked because both advocate for meaningful student participation in academia. Advocates of both concepts also point to the fact that students' participation in academic practices depends considerably on the efforts that each one of them deploy toward addressing his or her linguistic challenges. Morrow (2009) says that epistemological access includes a process requiring students at university entry point to take responsibility for their transition toward becoming successful participants in academic practice. He holds that learning how to become a participant in academic practice is not a commodity that can be given to students. Instead, it means an immediate start in acquiring a number of scholastic skills and a commitment to practice these skills until they become a habit. It is a door that is shown to students but that no one else but these students can unlock for themselves. Here is how Morrow (2009, p. 40) explains the matter:

Epistemological access is not a product which could be bought or sold, given to someone or stolen, nor is it some kind of natural growth, such as growth of plant or bodies. Epistemological access cannot be supplied or delivered or done to the learner, nor can it be automatically transmitted to those who pay their fees and even to those who collect the handouts and attend classes regularly.

The reason why Morrow insists that epistemological access is the responsibility of the student is that it involves 'learning', which no one can do for a student. Hlalele (2010, p. 100) explains this when he says: "In the same way in which no one can do my running for me, no one else can do my learning for me. Amongst others, epistemological access is determined by the degree of acquiring and applying the skills to construct knowledge and produce meaningful learning". It could therefore be said that epistemological access as Morrow (2007) thinks of it involves individual commitment to knowledge acquisition and to knowledge construction. It further involves: learning how to read, learning how to learn from reading, learning how to write academically or simply learning how to make effective use of the LoLT (Clarence, 2012).

3.3.2 Epistemological access for university students with limited proficiency in the LoLT

As Boughey (2005) advises, there are ways of reading, writing and speaking that underpin knowledge production at tertiary level. Lecturers and support staff should foster these ways when preparing students at the university entry point, so that they can progressively assume their position as meaningful participants in academic practices. Boughey (2005) quoted in Hlalele (2010, p. 100) puts the matter this way:

As long as lecturers and support staff continue to instruct students in ways that do not differentiate school instruction from academic learning, we will not succeed in providing what Morrow (1993) terms epistemological access to the values and ways of knowledge production which underpin ways of reading, writing and speaking in higher education.

Mgqwashu (2013, p. 239) agrees with the above remark and insists that: “given the demographic changes experienced by South African universities in the past twenty five years, it would be suicidal to maintain [at university level], a teaching practice that is essentially content-centred and oblivious to the urgency to facilitate epistemological access”. Mgqwashu (2013) further contends that if the South African university open door policy of admitting disadvantaged students is to bear fruit, it can only be through the adoption of a reflective pedagogy enabling lecturers to reduce misunderstandings arising from unfamiliar code usage. In the same article, using the frame of epistemological access and that of reflective teaching, he shows that at university level, students are asked to do more than just regurgitate what they have read: they are expected to critically engage with the content and take informed positions based on “values and attitudes related to what count as knowledge and how it can be known in various disciplinary discourses” (Mgqwashu 2013, p. 238). To achieve this goal, students need multiple skills in reading academic text. These skills include: assessing textual details, making inferences and drawing informed conclusions from prescribed texts. Mgqwashu (2013) joins Benson and Kosonen (2013) in arguing that the development of student linguistic proficiency should be seen as a cross-disciplinary endeavour and a responsibility of every lecturer. Because of many school system shortcomings, a considerable number of South African students from historically black schools have not developed the abilities to: learn independently by reading; nor are they able to use these readings to inform their writing, making Mgqwashu’s suggestion pertinent and accurate (See similar remark in Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014). As Mgqwashu (2013) and Rose (2005) observe, both language proficiency and language use are special skills requiring pedagogies

and curricula that are both language-development-oriented and epistemologically-access-oriented to help student develop.

3.3.3 The scope and limitations of epistemological access

Bozalek, Garraway and McKenna (2012) contend that before he died in 2009, Morrow had not fully elaborated what was meant by epistemological access or what an epistemological access focussed pedagogy might involve. Neither did he articulate in a comprehensive way the major curricula implications of epistemological access. This complex enterprise is still in progress and has to date been assumed by researchers such as Boughey (2005, 2010), Clarence, (2012), Bozalek, Garraway and McKenna (2012) some of whom have contributed to writing the book *Beyond the University Gates* in an attempt to give insight into ‘epistemological access’.

So far, the above researchers have broadened Morrow’s notion of epistemological access to include “the interpretation of knowledge within the academic field as well as the production of knowledge” (Bozalek, Garraway & McKenna, 2012, p. 4). One of their main tasks at the moment is to suggest pedagogical models of epistemological access for use in the classroom situation and across disciplines. Morrow’s followers have kept to the idea of epistemological access as referring to access to the key concepts and procedures of an academic practice; and to refer to the exposure to the ways of acting and communicating authentically in a given field of study. They suggest that within the present diverse South African Higher Education landscape, most students will only gain epistemological access if pedagogies, teaching methods and curricula are conceived with the aim of making the implicit academic practices and underlying knowledge systems of the chosen field of knowledge more explicit (Clarence, 2012; Boughey, 2010).

Despite the widespread acceptance of the notion of epistemological access among educational practitioners, it has still not been explained how it could be made transparent in the classroom. An important question raised by authors such as Boughey (2010) and Clarence (2012) is: what are approaches that could be used to introduce students into ways of doing and thinking in a given field of knowledge? The implementation of epistemological access as a reality in a class environment has triggered a series of philosophical questions around the essence and nature of knowledge, questions, methodologies and global concerns dominating

local academic reading, thinking and writing. Here is how Badat (2010, p. 20) formulates two of these questions:

There is often reference to providing students with epistemological access rather than just physical access, but to which epistemologies? What are the prevailing conceptions of epistemology and ontology and to what extent have these been or are being deracialised, degendered and decolonised?

As he sees it, any serious agenda of inclusion in Higher Education entails using the powers conferred by academic freedom to “substantively decolonise, deracialise and demasculinise the inherited intellectual spaces” (Badat, 2010, p. 20). Boughey (2005 & 2010) reformulates the question in this way: whose epistemologies are we empowering students to access and develop? In other words, whose perspectives and whose worldviews are fostered in the knowledge tank students are encouraged to enter? Could it be that the dominant perspectives and worldviews fostered in learning material are too foreign to students, sometimes constituting a barrier to learning? To this last question, Hlalele’s (2010) answer is ‘yes’. He thinks many of the programmes and curricula of local universities have not yet avoided, nor moved beyond Eurocentric paradigms, this being a cause of underachievement among first year English second language South African students. For him and for many other authors, including Jansen (2005) and Fraser and Killen (2005), many South African university programmes are the same as before the collapse of the apartheid regime. They have not changed to accommodate the new diversity among the student population. All the above questions are pertinent in a South African society where as a consequence of apartheid, knowledge production has been predominantly, the preserve of white males. Badat (2010, p. 24) contends that today, “the democratisation of knowledge requires special measures to induct previously excluded social groups such as black and women South Africans into the production and dissemination of knowledge”. The invitation to the new generation of students to take part in knowledge construction should be followed by the provision of means to equip them to critically engage with the available knowledge reserves.

3.3.4 Epistemological access within the realm of this study

For this study, epistemological access is taken to designate any effort to empower students to participate effectively in academic practices. It thus follows that the notion of access in the current South African Higher Education landscape should be associated with more than

quality input. Quality outcomes and output should match the increasing student numbers in tertiary institutions. Adequate support should be provided to all students entering universities with limited LoLT proficiency, so they do not remain uninformed observers or ignorant reproducers of knowledge production but grow into well-versed academics in their chosen field of study (Clarence, 2012; Bozalek, Garraway & McKenna, 2012; Morrow, 2009).

In formulating the epistemological access model, Morrow (1993) had in mind serving those who historically have lacked access to South African higher education: Black South African university students. Morrow (1994, p. 43) duly reminds Higher Education stakeholders of the following: “The guiding ideal of universities is to constitute the realm of academic learning; to provide an institutional home for academic practice and access to students”. To realise this goal, there are skills and competencies universities and educational practitioners should develop in students through: access programmes, foundation courses, curricula extension and co-curricular and academic literacy programmes. These skills and competencies are: self-efficacy, academic behavioural confidence, autonomy of learning, achievement-goal orientations and the formation of learning communities (Hlalele, 2010). The concept of a holistic response to the linguistic challenges of English second language students and how it contributes in providing a framework for this study will be discussed in the next section.

3.4 A Whole School approach to the development of academic language proficiency

For most English Second Language (ESL) students in South Africa, getting an education entails learning a new language and more importantly, having to learn in a new language, usually English. Cummins (1999) makes a distinction between two stages in second language learning: on the one hand there is Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), the stage where the person has acquired the capacity to use a new language for everyday communication only. The vocabulary repertoire of a student who has reached BICS is context embedded providing useful prior knowledge that English second language instructors could make use of when assisting students in acquiring advanced academic writing proficiency (Nagy & Townsend, 2012). The other stage of Cummins (1999) language proficiency development is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). This is the use of the new language to engage effectively in academic activities, such as critical reading. That is, adequately using learning from reading to write academic essays. What is important in this

instance is that the content is not necessarily context embedded making CALP more difficult for students to acquire (Benson & Kosonen, 2013).

According to Cummins (1999), while ESL students take between two to four years to develop BICS in the new language, they need about seven years to develop CALP in that same language. To help second language students to adequately develop proficiency in the new LoLT, linguists such as Graf (2011) and Farrell (2007) advocate holistic and Whole School responses to the linguistic challenges of second language students. A holistic response to limited proficiency in the LoLT speaks to the capability of a language development programme to equip students with a set of skills including: listening, speaking, critical reading and both informal and formal writing. A Whole School response speaks to the capability of a learning institution such as the School of Education of UKZN to provide a language rich environment to students who still have to develop proficiency in the LoLT. A holistic response, a Whole School approach and how these notions are relevant for this study will be explained in the next section.

3.4.1 Provision of optimum English second language learning conditions

A holistic approach to the development of CALP and a Whole School approach in the provision of support to students with limited proficiency in the LoLT are rooted in the observation that second language students are faced with a challenging set of tasks needing optimum teaching and learning conditions to build the new language. All academic programmes in which ESL students participate need to provide optimal conditions for learning English. That is the provision of a language rich environment with the benefits of intensive, full-time language programmes integrated within mainstream programmes to develop listening skills and significant speaking, reading and writing proficiency in the LoLT (Graf, 2011; Farrell, 2007).

Graf (2011) and Farrell (2007) further note that the development of a holistic ESL programme implies the development of an informed view of ESL learning and teaching. This entails providing all academic staff members with opportunities to develop a number of skills such as: understanding: how a second language is learned; the type of teaching and learning environment that maximises the learning of a second language as LoLT. Academic staff also need skills in identifying the language and literacy demands of classroom activities and

developing an awareness of the range of ESL teaching strategies; recognising the stages of English second language learning as well as the particular learning needs of the ESL students. Regarding the particular needs of ESL university students, Steyn (2009), Brock-Utne (2012) and Mgqwashu (2013) have established that in South Africa, these needs vary depending on factors such as the quality of prior education, age, time spent out of formal schooling, stage of English language development and access to ESL support.

In an attempt to adopt a holistic and systemic response to ESL student needs for LoLT proficiency, ESL policies should prioritize learner needs and identify for example, which students are in need of a specialised ESL program and which students could adequately be supported in mainstream classes (DoE, 2005a). To maximise student learning outcomes, the institution of learning, which in this case is the School of Education of UKZN, should also identify and make use of staff with ESL qualifications, extensive professional development in ESL and some experience in teaching ESL students. The School also needs to determine what additional funds could be allocated to support ESL students; what teaching spaces are available; what resources, such as books may need to be purchased and what the professional development needs of both staff and caregivers are. It could therefore be said that the success of an ESL development program is very much dependent on the School management ability in assessing the range of the School linguistic needs and improving on the range of its linguistic resources (Benson & Kosonen, 2013).

3.4.2 Staff roles in ESL programming and provision

The most important components of the Whole School ESL programming, provision and maintenance are the roles allocated to individual staff members, from the administrator to the ESL specialist. An example from Farrell (2007) is the role of school administrators in ensuring that accurate data are collected through enrolment procedures and that statistical information about the student population and other important influencing factors are collected and made available to academic staff. In effective programmes for ESL students, it is also the role of administrators to provide opportunities for professional development of staff and to ensure an increased awareness within the school community of the implications for learning and teaching second language. Awareness can be raised by ensuring educators can access the latest ESL methodology and resource information. Administrators also set the tone in

promoting a culture valuing diversity and multi-cultural perspectives. Finally, they strengthen home-school partnerships (Graf, 2011).

Regarding the role of curriculum co-ordinators in an ESL development program, Farrell (2007) thinks they should ensure that policies and learning programmes in all learning areas are formulated and implemented with the language learning needs of all students in mind. They should also ensure that all teachers are informed about teaching strategies for making the mainstream curriculum accessible to all students, including ESL students; and that they incorporate multicultural perspectives in all learning areas. Finally, curriculum co-ordinators should ensure that literacy assessment strategies are appropriate for students learning English as a second language (Nagy & Townsend, 2012).

Graf (2011) looks at the role of ESL educators and argues that in a Whole Schools support project, they should keep abreast of the latest information in the ESL field and update general educators in matters related to issues of second language acquisition, ESL teaching methodology, classroom organisation and selection of suitable texts and resources for ESL learning. Graf (2011) further argues that through professional learning opportunities, ESL educators should be given opportunities to share their expertise with general staff, as appropriate. Similarly, general educators are to: consider the language learning needs of all students when planning activities across all areas of the curriculum; support ESL students in learning through the use of English, while they are still learning the language; use assessment strategies enabling all students to express the understandings they have gained across the curriculum; provide opportunities for all students to share the diversity of their experiences; develop classroom activities that relate to and build on the experiences students bring to the learning situation; ensure that multicultural perspectives are incorporated in all aspects of the classroom social and learning environments and attend relevant ESL professional learning opportunities (Farrell, 2007; Graf, 2011).

The librarian or resource co-ordinator is to provide a range of accessible resources for ESL learners at different stages of ESL development. Such resources include: classroom units of work, a range of factual and fictional materials in the targeted language; materials reflecting the diversity of the society in which the students live and up-to-date materials on both second language acquisition and on ESL teaching methodology. Similarly, it is the specialist subject educator's role to use strategies enabling all students, including ESL students to participate fully in their learning area; to consider and build on the background experiences of all

students as a starting point for presenting new information or materials; to use assessment strategies enabling all students to express the understandings they have gained; and the exploitation of the potential of their particular learning area to teach English. Finally, it might be necessary for the school to have a multi-cultural education aide whose role it is to support ESL students in their learning. They do so by explaining concepts or directions in the learners' first languages and by facilitating the participation of ESL students in group work (Nagy & Townsend, 2012).

3.5 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, the broad framework that will be used to analyse the data collected for this study was formulated. This framework consists of three pedagogical concepts from the realm of reflective second language teaching. These three concepts are: the philosophy of inclusion, the concept of epistemological access and the notion of Whole School approach to support for the development of academic language proficiency. Each one of these three notions seeks to overthrow exclusionary paradigms and segregationist practices in education; as such, they blend well in providing a conceptual framework for this study that looks at institutional support to first year students who are at risk of being excluded from classroom practice due to their limited proficiency in the LoLT.

It transpired from this chapter that catering for the language and literacy development of ESL students is a long-term and a shared school-community commitment that ideally should include elements in the strategic plan and a detailed annual implementation plan. It also includes targeted ESL program components, inclusive classroom programmes and the planning, teaching and assessment practices to support ESL learners in all learning areas. Finally, the ESL program as a whole should be integrated into the curriculum across all learning areas, so that all programmes in which ESL students participate provide them with optimal conditions for learning the LoLT (Benson & Kosonen, 2013).

Chapter 4

Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted for this study and provides a clear description of the process followed in conducting the research. The chapter will start by discussing the basic design of this research project, then it will present the sample, the data collection instruments, the procedure of analysis of the collected data, the issue of trustworthiness and crystallisation, the ethical considerations and the study limitations.

4.2 Research design

This project was a qualitative case study within the interpretive paradigm. The reason being that the researcher's aim was to understand reality from the participants' standpoints, through a dialogic and in-depth explorative method, so they could tell the story themselves (Creswell, 2009). Using the same principle, the researcher intended to explore six UKZN lecturers' experiences and evaluation of the current support on the Edgewood UKZN campus to assist student-teachers lacking LoLT competence. This was an attempt to uncover whether adequate inclusive measures were in place and were being implemented to facilitate student access to the knowledge they need to acquire to achieve success at a university level. The choice to align this study within the interpretive paradigm was also motivated by multiple interpretations being equally valid in this paradigm. In other words, there is no one reality or one truth in the interpretive paradigm but rather a set of realities or truths depending on the experience of each individual (Rule & John, 2011).

This research was designed to be a qualitative case study. This type of study as Yin (2003) explains, refers to any research involving a practical and detailed investigation of a real life phenomenon. The qualitative researcher uses various means of verification and draws inferences from textual or verbal data for an in-depth exploration of single or multiple case(s), and for a better understanding of the case that is being studied. Such a case study could be an event, a person, an organisation or a decision (Creswell, 2009). It is significant to

concur with Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) that in pursuing a qualitative approach, my interest as a researcher was not firstly to uncover the truth but to mediate understanding and deliver insight about a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants. I sought to capture the reality of each participant's lived experiences and report on these to the best of my ability, without interpretation or alteration. To this end, data for this study were collected and interpreted within a natural setting and the voice of the researcher was muted to allow participant voices to be heard.

According to Stake (1995) and Yin (2003), studies such as this seeking to address a 'what' and a 'how' questions are said to be exploratory in nature. The first key question this study sought to answer was a 'How' question; it reads: How, according to lecturers, do first year students' LoLT abilities impact their learning outcomes? The second research question was a "What" question and reads: What are lecturer evaluations of the academic support that is available on the Edgewood Campus to improve student LoLT abilities? The type of questioning formulated for this study was used to explore a situation in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear and no single set of outcomes. This last aspect also contributed to making the study an exploratory case study (Yin, 2003).

4.3 Site of the study

The study was conducted on one of the two campuses of the School of Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, namely the Edgewood Campus. The selected School, as already mentioned, covers two campuses: one in Pietermaritzburg and one at Edgewood in the vicinity of the Pinetown suburb and 30 kilometres away from the city of Durban on the way to Pietermaritzburg. Even though the research only took place on the Edgewood Campus, it has benefitted from the insight of some of the participants who have been lecturing both on the Edgewood and on the Pietermaritzburg campuses for more than four years. According to the Division of Management of Information of UKZN (2013), Edgewood Campus has a student population of 4838, with 3139 (65% of the student population) having registered for the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme. More than 2/3 of these students are originally from the province of KwaZulu-Natal and speak IsiZulu as their home language.

4.4 Sample

The sample was 6 permanent lecturers (3 male and 3 female lecturers) who have had at least two years of teaching experience as permanent staff at undergraduate level on the Edgewood Campus of UKZN. The choice of permanent lecturers as participants in this study was decided based on two factors: firstly, that UKZN as an institution tends to mainly employ professional and experienced lecturers in permanent positions. The second factor is that UKZN offers its permanent staff more opportunities to be exposed to the facilities and ways of dealing with student challenges through workshops, conferences and other pedagogical meetings than it does with its contract staff.

The sample was both quota (50% male and 50% female lecturers) and purposive as lecturers were selected following the criteria that they had to be permanent staff members teaching at undergraduate level on the Edgewood Campus for at least two years. A combination of quota and purposive sampling has proven to be a good choice for this study as both have provided a set of criteria in identifying participants deemed to be excellent informants for this study that had a specific orientation, or that targeted a particular group of people (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). There were three secondary criteria in the selection of the participants for this study: identification of English as primary or secondary language, race and teaching experience in local schools. The researcher found it necessary to have a diverse linguistic and racial representation so that different perspectives and different experiences around the same phenomenon could be collected (Rule & John, 2011). To this end, an effort was made to have a diverse linguistic and racial representation consisting of three Black African lecturers, one of whom is not a South African citizen, one White, one Indian and one Coloured lecturer. For anonymity purpose, much information needs not to be given about the participants.

For the sake of credibility and relevance of their answers to the research questions, all the participants were selected from those who obtained a teaching qualification from a South African institution of teacher education. Four of the participants have had at least six years of teaching experience in the South African primary or secondary school system. That all the participants have taught in the South African schooling system adds credibility to their experiences and to the comments they made with regard to the phenomenon under investigation. The permanent lecturer who is not originally from South Africa, got a teaching qualification from UKZN, did postgraduate study at the same institution and became a tutor in different first year modules, including ALE and ELC. Below the researcher carefully

provides detail of each one of the participant’s current workload as these are important to understand some of the findings. It is however important to mention that certain aspects of the participants’ backgrounds are omitted deliberately by the researcher, in an attempt to preserve their anonymity.

4.5 Brief biographical background of the participants

Besides the information provided in the previous paragraph, the participants also provided information about their highest academic qualification, their years of experience in teaching at first year university level and their current responsibilities on the selected campus. These background details are presented in Table 4. For the sake of preserving the anonymity of the participants, the researcher has chosen to refer to them as L1, L2, L3, L4, L5 and L6 for Lecturer 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively. This way of referring to the participant will be maintained throughout the dissertation.

	Gender	Academic Qualification	Years of teaching at 1st year level	Outline of actual workload
Lecturer 1 (L1)	F	PhD (Held for more than 5 years)	9 years	Lecturer and Coordinator of two modules, supervisor of 3 Master and 2 PhD studies; Researcher
Lecturer 2 (L2)	F	Master of Education (M.Ed) (PhD student)	7 years	Lecturer and coordinator of two English modules, Supervisor of Independent Research Project at Honours level. Researcher
Lecturer 3	F	M.Ed. (PhD student)	4 years	Support staff; Lecturer and Researcher

(L3)				
Lecturer 4 (L4)	M	PhD (Held for less than 5 years)	7 years	Lecturer and co-ordinator of modules at three different year levels; co-ordinator of a module at Master's level, Lecturer on an Honours module, Co-supervisor of 2 PhDs, Supervisor of 3 Master's studies and of multiple Independent Research Projects at Honours level; Researcher
Lecturer 5 (L5)	M	M.Ed. (PhD student)	4 years	Lecturer and co-ordinator of English module at three different year levels; supervisor of Honours Independent Research Projects and English lecturer
Lecturer 6 (L6)	M	PhD (held for more than 5 years)	9 years	Head of Discipline, Researcher on Foundational Academic Literacy modules and Supervisor of 5 Masters and 4 PhD's studies. L6 has recently stopped lecturing to focus on administrative duties and supervision

Table 4: Brief participant profiles: (gender, highest academic qualification, years of teaching experience at first year level on the Edgewood Campus and current responsibilities)

Table 4 shows that three of the six participants hold a PhD qualification and three a Master of Education qualification (M.Ed.). Those who hold a M.Ed. qualification are all registered for a PhD qualification, as strongly recommended by the Council of UKZN. All the participants are involved in the co-ordination of first year modules. Four of them have had some experience in teaching or in co-ordinating Foundational Academic Literacy modules (ALE and ELC) on the Edgewood Campus. Two of the participants have contributed to re-designing ALE and ELC after these foundational courses were adopted from the Bachelor of Art programme of the former University of Natal, to suit the literacy needs of B.Ed. students.

One of the participants is a support staff and a researcher on the Academic Monitoring and Support programme at the College of Humanities at UKZN.

Table 4 also shows that two of the six participants have 4 years teaching experience at first year level, two have 7 years and two 9 years. Except for Lecturer 6, these years of teaching experience at first year level also represent the number of years that the participants have already spent as permanent staff on the Edgewood Campus. The participants' workloads and responsibilities vary slightly depending on whether they have been a PhD for up to five years, for less than five years and whether their highest qualification is a Master degree only. The two participants who have been PhDs for at least five years have, beside their teaching load, the responsibility of supervising PhD and Master studies. The participant who has held a PhD qualification for less than five years has the responsibility of co-supervising two PhD students and of supervising three Master's studies and multiple Independent Research Projects for students enrolled for the Honours programme.

Besides being PhD students, two of the three participants whose highest qualification is a Master degree have the responsibility of co-ordinating modules at undergraduate and at Honours level. They also lecture at Honours level and supervise Honours research projects. All the participants assert that they have more responsibility than they can efficiently cope with and that they have greater workloads than were initially allocated to them by UKZN. They hold that the extra workload was once that of senior lecturers and professors who have retired or have decided to move to other universities and have not yet been replaced. The participants also mentioned that some of the extra workloads they have are those of Professors and Senior lecturers, who have given up teaching at undergraduate level to focus on conducting research projects, supervising Master and PhD studies, or performing managerial duties.

4.6 Data collection instrument

Data was collected from 6 participants using a one-on-one semi-structured interview. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) an interview is a conversation with a purpose. In this study, the purpose of the in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interview was to explore and to probe, through appropriate questioning, participant experiences regarding the nature and the efficiency of the institutional support to students who have

limited competence in the LoLT on the Edgewood Campus, UKZN. A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions has been recommended for a study of this nature by Creswell (2009), because it is a less formal way of gathering data, making it a better tool of getting insider information. This method of data collection has allowed revision, reformulation and development of prompt questions to collect more data from the participants, or request clarity on collected data.

With participant consent, I was able to record all the interviews. Recording the interviews has had many advantages: important information during interview sessions was not missed; more time was available to focus on probing for substantial information; I could check as many times as necessary my verbatim transcript against the recorded interview to ensure accuracy. For the sake of fidelity to participant voices, every participant was given the chance to comment on the transcript produced from the one-on-one interview; furthermore, participant feedback was considered during the data analysis and in writing the final report. In appendix A, the questionnaire used during the process of data collection is provided.

4.7 Analysis of data generated by interviews

The electronic interview records were transcribed and the verbatim transcript has undergone both coding and thematic analysis for the purpose of organising and simplifying the complexity of the data into meaningful and manageable themes or categories. As Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 16) have it: “thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning”. In practice, I have gone through the following steps in analysing the data: one: I have read the verbatim transcript many times to familiarize myself with data; two: I have generated initial codes; three: I have searched for themes among codes; four: I have reviewed the themes, defined and named them; and five: I have produced the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In producing the final report, I have considered how the feedback the participants provided on the verbatim transcript and how my field notes have influenced the findings that have emerged from the analysis of data generated from the interviews.

4.8 Ethical issues

To avoid any physical or psychological participant harm and to protect myself as a researcher, a variety of ethical considerations have been pertinent during data collection and during data analysis (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). These include respecting the following ethical principles: ensuring participant understanding of the purpose of the research, the right to privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, possible withdrawal or termination at any stage of the research; access to information and benefits as a result of participation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). To adhere to the ethical principles to conduct this study, I have obtained: ethical clearance from UKZN where I am registered as a student; and permission from the Dean and Head of the School of Education as gatekeeper (see Appendix B). At the beginning of the study, the participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research process, as well as in the thesis and the publications that are likely to follow (see Appendix C). Fourth, informed consent documents were signed by the participants based on their understanding of the purpose of the study; and their willingness to participate in it (see Appendix D). Fifth, participant anonymity has been maintained during the writing of the thesis by using pseudonyms. Finally, interviews were only recorded with participant permission and the assurance that the contents of our conversations, whether recorded or not would be used solely for the study; and after five years in a secure place as recommended by UKZN, these will be destroyed. All procedures used adhere to the current UKZN data collection and handling policies.

4.9 Summary and conclusion

This qualitative case study was located within the interpretive paradigm to provide the platform to six lecturers on the Edgewood Campus of UKZN to provide their experiences of the support that is in place on the selected campus for students who struggle with the LoLT. The brief biographical background of the participants suggests that the sample is made of three participants who have a PhD qualification and three others who hold a Master of Education qualification. The data were collected through a one-on-one semi-structured interview with each one of the participants and the verbatim transcript has undergone a thematic analysis. All procedures used to handle ethical issues adhere to the current UKZN data collection and handling policies. Chapter 5 will deal with data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings

Chapter 5

Data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the qualitative display and analysis of the data, organised and discussed under the concepts of inclusion, epistemological access and the Whole School approach to the provision of linguistic support to additional language students. The above listed concepts constitute the conceptual framework for this study. The study targeted six lecturers within the School of Education, Edgewood Campus, UKZN and had two objectives: the first was to explore these lecturers' experiences of how their first year students' abilities in the LoLT affect these students' learning outcomes; the second was to explore these lecturers' evaluations of institutional academic support to students with insufficient LoLT proficiency. Findings are presented here in the order of the question items in the interview schedule and according to the different themes that have emerged from the thematic analysis of the verbatim transcript (see Table 5 below for the different themes). For the sake of anonymity, the six lecturers who participated in the study are referred to as L1, L2, L3, L4, L5 and L6.

Table 5: Organiser of findings

1st research question	How do first year students' abilities in the LoLT impact on these students' learning outcomes?
	Inclination to surface learning as opposed to deep or in depth learning
	Delay in the development of basic academic skills (critical reading and formal writing)
	Plagiarism
	Students' apparent fear of lecturers and apprehension toward tutors
2nd research question	What are lecturers' evaluations of the existing academic support to address student proficiencies in the LoLT on the Edgewood Campus?
	Enrolment factors and their impact on academic literacy support delivery
	Staffing factors and its impact on academic literacy support delivery
	Time factor and its impact on academic literacy support delivery
	Model of support and its impact on academic literacy support delivery (i.e. absence of a Whole School response and its impact on academic literacy support delivery)

5.2 Impact of limited students' proficiencies in the LoLT on these students' learning outcomes

To get an adequate understanding of participants' experiences of how their first year student limited proficiencies in the LoLT impact on these students' learning outcomes, it was necessary to first find out the profile that these lecturers drew from this group of students. To this end, at the opening of the semi-structured interview, each lecturer was asked to say who among their first year students exhibited limited proficiency in the LoLT? In the section that follows, I present and discuss participants' answers to this preliminary question.

5.2.1 Participants' profiles of first year students who struggle with English as the LoLT

In answering the question: 'who are those among your first year students who exhibit limited proficiency in the LoLT?', all the participants found it necessary to distinguish between two student groups. On the one hand, the majority of students from rural and township schools, who display limited proficiency when speaking, reading and writing the LoLT; and on the other hand, students from urban schools, who tend to speak and read the LoLT fluently yet show limited proficiency when required to use this language to express their knowledge in formal, academic writing. L2 summarised the answers of the six participants to this question by stating:

My experience is that many black African students from rural, township and semi-urban schools that are classified by the Department of Basic Education under quintile 1, 2 and 3 display critical levels of limited proficiency when speaking, when reading and when writing English. However, across racial lines, students from urban schools that are classified by the Department of Basic Education under quintile 4 and 5, tend to speak and tend to read the LoLT fluently but fail to use it appropriately in writing. So, the majority of our students tend to be fluent speakers but poor writers of English as the LoLT.

According to Benson and Kosonen (2013), there is a growing global trend among students to speak the LoLT fluently and fail to use it appropriately in writing. This new global phenomenon has different causes and different manifestations, depending on the context one investigates. In some global contexts there is an over-reliance on social media and on computerised technologies, with tendencies for critical levels of both misspelling and poor sentence construction among students. This is, for example the case in the United Kingdom where a study commissioned by Mark Goldring (quoted in Clark, 2012) on the impact of computerised technology on British students' spelling reveals that over two-thirds of Britons

rely on computer spell-checks to spell words correctly. The same study also reveals that the majority of participants rely on computer auto-corrects to build adequate sentences. The research concludes that with the growing over-reliance of people across the world on computerised technologies to get both word spelling and sentence construction correct, we are heading towards an auto-correct generation (Clark, 2012).

In developing countries and in former colonies, such as South Africa, the access to computerised technology is still mainly widespread among the middle class. In such contexts, besides the computer factors mentioned above, other factors are manifested when exploring the causes of student inclinations to speak English well and write it poorly. Certain home factors, such as the poor cultural capital of households and the limited exposure of many black students to the spoken and written versions of the LoLT from their early childhood (Ntombela & Mhlongo, 2010; Rose, 2005, De Klerk, 2002) are limiting. In South Africa like everywhere else in Africa, one must also take account of primary schooling factors, such as the discrepancy between student home languages and the adoption of foreign languages as the LoLT (Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014; Mgqwashu, 2013). Also of importance, are secondary schooling factors, such as the adoption of Eurocentric curricula and tertiary schooling factors, such as the lack of adequate academic literacy support, that could help to close the increasing literacy gap accumulated over previous years of studies (Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014; Mgqwashu, 2013; Brock-Utne, 2012; Graf, 2011; Farrell, 2007). With regard to the effects of student limited proficiencies in the LoLT on these student learning outcomes, the participants say some of these effects are: an inclination to surface learning, as opposed to deep or in depth learning; apparent fear of lecturers and apprehension toward tutors; an inclination to copying from previous fellow students' work, or from internet websites (plagiarism); a critical lack of participation in class discussions and the tendency for educators to lower their academic expectations of students who originate from poor rural background and from townships. I will now look at each one of these in turn.

5.2.2 Surface learning as opposed to in depth learning

A negative impact the limited written LoLT proficiency has on students' learning outcomes emerges from the data as a complaisance some students have to in depth learning or

“learning just to pass” as L3 puts it. The expression ‘learning just to pass’ is used by some students to designate their intention of meeting the minimum grade requirements (50%) for the next stage of their formation. For lecturers however, ‘learning just to pass’ implies surface learning. Surface learning, is for many students a survival strategy often adopted when negotiating major academic challenges (Tchatchoueng, Ntombela & Kalenga, 2012). The concept ‘surface learning’ is not new in the literature: Biggs (1987 & 1991) has differentiated three approaches to learning among students: these different approaches he terms surface, in depth and achieving approaches to learning. As he explains, each approach to learning comprises a motive for learning and an associated strategy. In other words, for students who embrace the surface approach, the motivation is extrinsic, because students perceive education as a simple means to some other ends (Biggs, 1987). In this study, the participants say that the end for them is to secure a professional career and escape from traditional blacks-only jobs and from the poor salaries attached to these jobs. The corresponding strategy is to study just enough to meet the grade (50% of the marks), with the result that most of these students tend to focus on rote-learning the concrete and literal aspect of the learning material, rather than understanding the meaning (Gow, Kember & Chow, 1991; Tchatchoueng, Ntombela & Kalenga, 2012).

What the participants and most modern educators expect from their students is that they should use an in depth approach to learning. According to Biggs (1987 & 1991), the in depth approach to learning is based on intrinsic interest in the subject matter of every discipline students are required to study. Seen through the lenses of the concept of epistemological access, the corresponding strategy to the in depth learning approach is students’ search for the underlying meaning, rather than focusing on the literal aspect of learning (Clarence, 2012; Boughey, 2010). So understood, a in depth approach to learning should result in a meaningful participation of students in academic practices (Morrow, 2009; Clarence, 2012).

Finally, the participants also realise their students’ approach to learning is mainly what Biggs (1987, p. 7) refers to as “the achieving approach to learning”. The achieving approach to learning is based on “enhancing one’s ego through succeeding academically” (Biggs, 1987, p. 7). Students, thus use different means to strive towards success, to reach a sense of self-fulfilment and to feel good. For L2 and L5, it is usual for their first year students to combine the achieving approach to learning with the surface approach to learning. L2 explained:

Our students want to succeed academically because they know it is their only way out of a poor socio-economic background from which most of them originate. For them, academic success is a must and succeeding enhances their self-esteem.

According to Benson and Kosonen (2013), it is usual for students with limited LoLT proficiency to combine an achieving approach to learning with either a surface or an in depth approach to learning. Students thus may see the way to obtain top marks as consisting of rote-learning in a very ordered way; or of reading widely and seeking meaning in a systematic way (Gow, Kember & Chow, 1991; Biggs, 1987). It also emerges from the data that most first year students struggling with the LoLT tend to move through assessments just by copying previous students' work, or from various internet websites, without any acknowledgement of these sources, so committing plagiarism. I will discuss the phenomenon of plagiarism among students with limited LoLT proficiency under section 5.1.4.

5.2.3 Slow development of critical academic skills: critical reading and formal writing

The participants, through marking students' written assignments, say they have experienced that those with limited LoLT proficiency display an inability to read broadly and lack a sound understanding of academic material. They also fail to use their reading to inform their writing; and cannot yet write coherently. Another challenge they say these students face is that they are slow in understanding the structure of academic essays and do not know how to support their assertions with relevant literature. Here is how L2 puts the matter:

Many of our students, not only the first years, are inclined to making vulgar generalisation and unsupported line of argumentation when writing assignments. You will often see that their academic work displays a strong lack of evidence of research and a lack of wide and critical reading that one would expect students to be showing at this level of education. This is even worse when they are users of English as an additional language.

From the above quote, it is clear that lecturers expect students to display a certain level of structural and linguistic competence at entry to higher institutions of learning. The ability to read broadly and critically as well as the ability to write coherently are some of these skills that students are expected to have mastered at high school. However, as Steyn (2009) has it, in many schools, mostly previously Blacks-only schools, there still remain remnants of a past characterized by social deprivation and mediocrity in the provision of education. These shortcomings of the education system lead to most students speaking English as an additional

language, entering universities with what Steyn (2009, p. 616) refers to as “inferior language skills”. In other words, these students have what is called ‘everyday literacy’ rather than the ‘technical and critical’ literacy required at university level (Graf, 2011, p. 34). In practice, inferior language skills translate into university students reading slowly and not understanding study material. “Their competence in reasoning skills, organizing skills and mathematical skills is low” observed Zulu (2004, p.37). Ultimately, the lack of language skills renders more complex these students’ academic difficulties.

Several global research studies have investigated the relationship between the language ability of second language speakers of English and these students’ academic performance (see for example: Brock-Utne, 2012; Ingvarsdóttir & Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010; Gow, Kember & Chow, 1991; Biggs, 1991). In general, these studies revealed that while second language students’ proficiency in English alone does not determine their educational outcome, a certain level of English is a prerequisite for effective learning through the medium of English (Ingvarsdóttir & Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010; Gow, Kember & Chow, 1991).

5.2.4 Plagiarism among students who have limited LoLT proficiency

In the local and in the international literature, copying from other’s work without acknowledging the source is a recurring accusation made against ‘lazy’ first year students, some of whom struggle with the LoLT (see for example: Batibo, 2009; Björkman, 2008; Ingvarsdóttir & Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010; Gow, Kember & Chow, 1991). Plagiarism is also, but only occasionally, presented as a consequence of extrinsic barriers to learning. Two of such extrinsic barriers are: the Language of Learning and Teaching and the lack of preparedness of educators to address learning issues that novice university students may encounter during their first year of study at a university. In this study, the participants acknowledged that plagiarism among their first year students is most of the time strongly connected to these students taking on an achieving approach to learning. For many participants, first year students who struggle with English do not necessarily adopt the related strategy that according to Biggs (1991 & 1987) consists of organising learning efficiently and effectively in the temporal and spatial context to perform the best in assessments. Instead, many of these students engage in the fraudulent act of copying from the unpublished work of those students

who did the course before them, or they plagiarise works from various internet websites. The phenomenon of plagiarism as experienced by L5 was that:

Because there is a need to pass, these students come up with different means to achieve a pass. One way they do this is to purchase a copy of previous written assignment from students who did the course before them. They copy the answers from these papers and present them as their own. What makes this even more evident is that we often come across students who ignore the new set of questions put to them, formulate their own questions similar to those given to students the previous year and provide identical answers to these questions.

Many researchers have attempted to explain why a high level of plagiarism could be recorded among students who struggle with English in learning contexts similar to the Edgewood Campus where a good number of students have limited LoLT proficiency. Gow, Kember and Chow (1991, p. 9) for example argue that “students who are struggling to understand the language are more likely to try to remember small sections of the assigned readings rather than seek a global understanding of these”. One could infer from this quotation that because rote learning is the way students are taught how to learn from primary through to secondary school, many first year university students engage in acts of plagiarism through mere habit and not necessarily knowingly. They memorise entire paragraphs and reproduce them just as they did in high school, where they were generously rewarded for being able to remember their lesson. Similarly in writing tasks, students weak in the LoLT tend to rely on verbatim reproduction and very little on an original turn of phrase (Ingvarsdóttir & Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010). They have no proper academic writing skills, are unsure of what adequate academic writing means and need to be taught methodically how to phrase, rephrase, paraphrase and write academically (Boughey, 2010). L1 who is also familiar with acts of plagiarism among her first year students suggests that:

Some intelligent students who struggle with English or with the LoLT as you call it, try to use the skeleton and the steps in reasoning followed by the original author of the work that they have consulted. In doing so, the temptation is huge for many of them to just copy chunks of information from the original work and present it without acknowledging the source and that constitutes plagiarism (...). I strongly believe that if you improve their language ability, you will also get rid of lots and lots of such acts of plagiarism.

The above explanations and justifications of first year student inclinations to copy from other’s work without acknowledging the source finds resonance in the literature. Boughey (2010), Mgqwashu (2013) and Ndimande-Hlongwa and Wildsmith (2010) are among researchers who argue that plagiarism among first year students from poorly resourced

schools could be seen as a result of Higher Education being a huge step away from secondary education most specifically within the South African context. This is so with regard to the curriculum and in terms of the approach to teaching and learning in these two different educational contexts. This remark is true for both first language speakers of English and more importantly for those who speak English as an additional language. The conclusion often reached by the above authors is that there is a pressing need for more innovative and individualised support structures to help novice university students from impoverished backgrounds, to improve their LoLT proficiency and their formal academic writing ability.

Batibo (2009) goes further to argue that the adoption of more individualised support is of utmost importance, because students who are newly admitted at local universities cope differently when faced with new information and with challenging concepts. He shares the view that the high occurrence of acts of plagiarism among students from under-resourced schools is an indication that institutional support structures are failing to build student abilities to think for themselves and more importantly, their capacity to use the LoLT to express their thoughts. For Batibo (2009) and for Mgqwashu (2013), the onus is on inclusive institutional academic support structures to empower novice university students and to capacitate them by teaching them critical literacy skills.

5.2.5 Debatable student academic successes

Participants who took part in this study also noted that the limited LoLT proficiency students display do not always translate, as they would have expected, into a massive failure of first year students in assignments and examinations. Not as many students as they had predicted fail because of their limited LoLT proficiency in writing. For the participants, there are many possible reasons why there is no record of massive failure in the courses offered. One of these is the plagiarism and both tutors' and lecturers' leniency to this act, exclusively among first year students who are still learning how to avoid plagiarism. However, it also emerged from the data that lecturer and tutor lack of rigor in assessment is mainly blamed on an overcrowded learning environment and on the resulting heavy workload. In other words, for the six participants, increasing student numbers in most lecture venues and tutorial groups has negatively affected the attention lecturers and tutors give to student assignments and

examination scripts during the process of marking. L2 elaborates on the realities of the situation:

On the course that I coordinate, each lecturer is responsible for lecturing to at least 200 students. Lecturers also see these students in tutorial group because the university says it has no money to employ more tutors to help us. Each tutor has on average 80 students in tutorial groups. With these numbers, I can tell you, marking is the worst nightmare you want to wake up from. Come exam time, before you finish the first pile of scripts, the second one is waiting. Even when your passion is reading, you just can't read all these scripts. In fact, on many scripts that I moderate, assessors just give a big tick and pass the student.

The six participants share the view expressed in the above L2 quote that the marking of student assignments as well as the marking of their exam scripts is negatively affected by the huge number of students that lecturers and tutors are responsible for. A similar experience shared by L4 is that: *“because of the heavy marking workload, lecturers and tutors focus on assessing key words and not on the entire answer to the question”*. So, if the answer to the question is around “sedimentary rocks” and the students in his or her response has mentioned “sedimentary rocks” somewhere, many lecturers and tutors immediately tick this key expression “sedimentary rocks” as correct and give the student full marks for the answer. There is therefore no rigor as to whether student responses are thoroughly sound and there is no help given on how they could improve their LoLT use. *“Just to have mentioned an element of the answer, students sometime get full marks”* says L4.

Poor language use and the way it negatively affects the appropriateness of student answers were common in participants' responses to interview questions. In general, all participants are of the view that students who are able to demonstrate enough grasp of the content knowledge should be given good marks for their attempt to adequately answer questions. They discard the idea that there should be too much stress on sentence construction and on other challenges that students with limited LoLT ability face. However, what worries the participants is that because of the huge student numbers tutors and lecturers have to cater for, there is not enough constructive feedback on assessed papers. There is furthermore, an increasing lack of commitment to the type of assessment that has the potential to help students to improve the quality of their work and their academic writing skills. Ultimately, there is a lack of both proper avenues and opportunities to practice critical reading and writing skills that students are expected to have learned in ALE and ELC classes. I will dwell more on the question of the overcrowded learning environment when presenting the participant evaluation of the academic support provided for students at the Edgewood Campus, UKZN.

Arguing from a different perspective, L5 further blames the discrepancy between poor student writing abilities and the arguable academic success rate on educator workloads. He explains that:

The university expects me to do research and publish papers. They actually tell us unashamedly that publishing papers should be our first priority. The “publish or perish” motto. I am also expected to get my PhD and if I want to maintain my position as a lecturer here at UKZN, getting my PhD should be my second priority. It is a matter of self-preservation and I have no choice but to be selfish if I want to protect my job. The students come last.

The issues raised in the above quote are linked to the expectation that the university has formulated for all academic staff. UKZN expects its academic staff to be committed to teaching, to research and to community engagement. These are the three pillars that academics of world class universities are expected to respect and UKZN in its aspiration to be and to remain the premier university of African scholarship advises staff to meet the standards set for them. The participants find however, that by admitting more students than its staff can actually adequately cater for, the University of KwaZulu-Natal seems not to provide the foundation to support its dream of being an institution for leading academics, excellent teachers and committed staff. As indicated in Table 5, lecturers at the School of Education of UKZN have a number of tasks and responsibilities. These include but are not limited to: lecturing to large classes at different year levels, co-ordinating programmes at different year levels; supervising Honours projects; supervising on average two to four Masters and/or two to four PhD studies. Such a heavy workload necessarily does have a negative impact on the way students are supported and taught. It also has implications for the general learning outcomes at the end of student formation at the Edgewood Campus, UKZN (Tchatchoueng, Ntombela & Kalenga, 2012). If students pass simply through a huge amount of superficial marking and not on the basis of actual good performance, then, the current problems in the South African education system are at best being postponed to the next generation (Boughey, 2010; Clarence, 2012; Tchatchoueng, Ntombela & Kalenga, 2012).

5.2.6 Students’ apprehensions towards lecturers and tutors

According to L6, student apprehensions toward lecturers and tutors are manifest in their reluctance to seek help from these educators. L6 is unclear as to the reasons for this apprehension:

For some reasons, those among our students who need our support the most are also those who tend not to come for consultation. Apparently, they do nothing to get help. It is those who are already doing pretty well who forced themselves unto us and benefit as much as they can from the support that we are supposed to be providing to all students.

It is common in the literature to come across authors suggesting that institutions of learning are frightening places for most first year students (See for example: Batibo, 2009; Morrow, 2009; Boughey, 2010; Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014). Uncertainty among first year students regarding what behaviour is expected of them at tertiary institutions is more pronounced among students who get to tertiary institutions without adequate LoLT proficiency. As Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa and Mkhize (2014, p. 7) explain, most students for whom the LoLT is not the primary language avoid seeking help not because they do not need help but because the education process they have undergone has constructed them to be passive and lacking in confidence. They said that:

Where a non-primary language is used, the young learners will lack the supportive tool for proper comprehension, deepening their grasp of ideas and their articulation of issues. These young people will grow up visibly inarticulate, passive, timid and lacking in confidence. This is clear when you observe students, in many (of) (sic) African tertiary institutions, discussing topics or issues, using a non-primary language, like English. They usually lack fluency, confidence or depth in their articulation of ideas. This is because there is a direct relationship between language proficiency and intellectual performance (p. 7).

From what has been said above, it appears logical that students with limited LoLT proficiency and not knowing what to expect of the curricula will find it psycho-emotionally and physically draining to succeed in Higher Education without adequate support (Boughey, 2005 & 2010). Failure to provide such support could lead students to adopt plagiarism as a survival mechanism in harsh academic conditions (Tchatchoueng, Ntombela & Kalenga, 2012).

5.3 Lecturer evaluations of institutional support to challenged LoLT students

5.3.1 What constitutes institutional language support to first year students at Edgewood?

To understand the participants' evaluations of the institutional academic support that is in place on the Edgewood Campus of UKZN to assist students with limited LoLT proficiency, it

was necessary to first find out what are the educational structures that for these lecturers could constitute language support. Four of the six participants, namely L1, L3, L5 and L6 consider ALE, ELC and the STAR programme to be the three components that constitute institutional academic support for students lacking LoLT proficiency in English on the selected campus. They argue that ALE and ELC are support courses, because students who have had adequate English instruction in high school can revisit and practise the necessary academic literacy knowledge. ALE and ELC, furthermore provide students from dysfunctional schools with an opportunity to learn and acquire academic literacy skills, which they would have acquired already if they had the opportunity to attend functional schools. Because ALE and ELC are on offer at Edgewood to address the well pronounced need for academic literacy support among students whose prior learning has not equipped them adequately with proficiency in English, L6, L1, L3 and L5 see these as language support courses.

As for the STAR programme, L1, L3, L5 and L6 see it as a remedial programme which in the absence of what they refer to as '*effective language support*' has proven to be useful to students who know how to take advantage of it. The STAR programme is to a certain extent a language support programme and a complement to ALE and ELC. Participant L3 mentioned that in the academic year 2013, this programme adopted a drop-in centre, where mentors were available every school day during working hours to provide students with different types of language support. This included understanding tasks and proofreading assignments before submission. Just like L1, L3, L5 and L6, both L2 and L4 find that the STAR programme could be made less remedial than they have experienced it to be. They also wish that the purpose of the STAR programme could be made more specific. L2 alludes to concerns about the STAR programme:

The academic monitoring and support programme, also know as Student at Risk programme on this campus, is unfortunately a late response to students' failure; and I really am not sure what the focus of this programme is. They tend to do everything and want to assist students with all their needs. I admire this zeal but still think that it is too idealistic.

The concern that is raised by L5 with regard to the STAR programme that has no specific focus and that "tends to do everything" for students is shared by most participants. Four of the participants argue that the STAR programme would be more efficient if its specific aim was clarified and channelled towards preventing and pre-empting failures.

L2 and L4 have a different stance with regard to what constitutes institutional language support for first year, Edgewood Campus students with limited LoLT proficiency. Neither participant sees ALE and ELC as being unambiguously part of institutional academic support, because there are marks attached to these two courses. They argue that any course including ALE and ELC for which students have to write assignments and examinations and be given marks that will reflect on their academic record, cannot be seen without reservation as academic support. So, for them, an academic support should not carry marks and should not have the potential to contribute to students failing to achieve success. They also argue that appropriate academic support should be available to boost student confidence in writing English and not to instil fear of failure, which ALE and ELC instil in some of their students. From L2's and L4's perspectives, institutional academic support should be structured like a language laboratory or writing space to provide support even to students taking courses such as ALE and ELC. L2 just like L4 concluded thus: *'apart from the STAR programme catering to a certain extent for the language problems of students identified as being at risk of academic failure, there is no other proper institutional support to students on the Edgewood Campus with limited LoLT proficiency'*. These two participants (L2 and L4) also found the STAR programme to be more of a remedial programme than a preventive and developmental one. This is how L4 perceives the programme:

You can call the STAR programme a support but a support of a different kind. The idea is to identify those who are in trouble with their studies and play the fire-fighters. I strongly think that this programme needs to be redesigned and be made more preventive.

The six participants thus show various levels of reservation with regard to the effectiveness of the Students at Risk programme to solve student language problems. These doubts stem from three main factors: the first, is that the STAR programme as an academic monitoring and support programme was primarily designed and still functions as a remedial programme, rather than a more proactive or preventive programme (Mngomezulu & Ramrathan, 2012). The second is that the STAR programme is not a functional language remedial programme, because it is not handled by language specialists, so is not subject specific. It welcomes students not necessarily only struggling with English as LoLT but also with IsiZulu, Mathematics, Physics, Life Orientation, Geography, History and other courses on offer within the Bachelor of Education programme on the Edgewood Campus (Mngomezulu & Ramrathan, 2012). The STAR programme is able to reach such a wide range of subject specialisations, because an effort is made within this programme to pair at-risk students with

peer-mentors enrolled in the same subject specialisation (Mngomezulu & Ramrathan, 2012). The third factor is that most students chosen to serve as peer-mentors to at-risk students are also undergraduate students likely to be struggling with the LoLT themselves. The combination of these three factors is what led L4 to say:

My great worry however is with the peer-mentors who are undergraduate students themselves and who are obviously still sorting out their own language issues. How efficient can they be in helping other students with language problems?

Having gone through what the participants see as institutional academic support to students who have limited proficiency in English on the Edgewood Campus, I will now present their evaluation of this support in relation to its ability to effectively help students to become more proficient in English as LoLT.

5.3.2 Participants' evaluations of institutional language support at Edgewood Campus, UKZN

Overall, the six participants found that the support that is provided to students who have limited proficiency in English on the Edgewood Campus of UKZN is insufficient. Below I present an analysis and an extract of each participant's evaluation of the support to students with limited LoLT proficiency; and the justification each gives for their evaluation. My discussion of these extracts will be given at the end of this brief presentation.

L1 finds that the support to students who have limited proficiency in English as LoLT on the Edgewood Campus is not working as it should. She identifies the very flexible admission criteria at Edgewood and the sudden mass-enrolment of students as being the two major causes for the failure of this language support. The following is an extract from her evaluation:

Our whole support system is not working, left alone the support to students who struggle with English. I attribute this malfunctioning to two things: the first one is that in comparison to Medical and Engineering Schools, the School of Education has weak admission criteria. The "prestigious Schools" with their strict admission criteria select the top performing students and we end up with students who are more likely to struggle academically (...). The second reason why our support is not working is that we welcome more students into our first year programmes and into our support programmes than we are able to satisfactorily cater for them. Remember that Edgewood is build to comfortably accommodate 800 students yet in 2013 we have enrolled 1200 B.Ed. students at first year level alone. Our total

enrolment across the Bachelor of Education programme is well above 3000 students. With these numbers, attention to student support is the last thing anyone here can think of.

L2 is also of the view that the support provided to students on the Edgewood Campus with limited LoLT proficiency is lacking in many ways. One of the reasons she evokes for this shortcoming is that the enrolment of students en masse have taken away from ALE and ELC some very important features that once gave these two courses their foundational academic language-support attributes. Here is her evaluation:

There are no more elements of academic support attached to ALE and ELC. For me, they have stopped being language-support courses. Look at it this way: tutors who help in these language courses are now selected on the basis of their availability and no longer on the basis of their experience in teaching English language. On the other hand, class sizes have swollen from 15 students for one tutor to between 30 to 40 students per tutor. Worse still, tutors are allowed to take charge of up to three language tutorial groups in one semester. So, tutors end up being responsible for more than 100 first year students in a course that was originally designed for a ratio of fifteen (15) students for one tutor. This workload obviously does not allow the rich one-on-one interaction that students who struggle with the LoLT, need in order to acquire more proficiency in that language. For me, ALE and ELC have now become simple modules that first year students have to do for a semester, pass an examination and either succeed or fail it just as they do with all other modules.

L3 also thinks that the structures of institutional language support on the Edgewood Campus have stopped fulfilling their support purpose. For her, these structures of support are failing because the university has a reputation to protect. She argues that it is the desire to protect this reputation that is stopping the university from objectively diagnosing and building support structures to address the problems that the current generation of students face with the LoLT. It is her experience that the current language support is detached from the needs of the new generation of South African students. This is an extract from her evaluation:

We have on this campus, structures of support for students who have difficulties with English; but are they effective? My answer is no! We fail and you know why? We fail because we want to maintain the status quo and we are afraid to change. Hear me well. I have nothing against ALE, ELC and the STAR programme per say (sic), but my experience is that through these structures we are sending out a wrong message and the wrong message that we are sending out is the following: “the system is fine; only a couple of our students need help; we will fix them here and there, exclude couple of them in the process and things will come back to normal”. Let me tell you right now my friend: the system is not fine and our institutional support to students who need help with the LoLT is null. Today, we deal at university level with a very complex kind of population: we have kids who head homes because parents are dead and we still behave as if we are a Faculty for kids who come from homes where they have parents who are experts in their fields. Yes, we behave as if we are

dealing with kids who have everything at home from private tutors to internet access where they can learn the things that we fail to teach them and get the support that we fail to offer.

L4 reminds that there is a lack of: a Whole School approach to providing language support to students who need it; cross-disciplinary intervention; and adequate time allocation for language support. The above are three major reasons why for L4, institutional supports are failing to students who, at Edgewood, still have to acquire LoLT proficiency. In L4's words:

In terms of institutional support to students who struggle with English, we as lecturers are too territorial: each one does his or her own things on his or her own corner. No one says: "wait a minutes, what are you doing within the ALE or ELC that I could enforce when I am teaching my own modules". If anything, most of our colleagues behave as if twelve (12) weeks of ALE and ELC are enough to undo the literacy damages done to these students over 12 years of schooling. Check well and you will see that the duration of the first semester is twelve (12) weeks and not six months as it appears to so many minds. Now do you think that in 12 weeks you will solve the language problems that these students have accumulated during 12 years of schooling?

L5 finds a lack of consideration around students' prior learning; and a lack of an effort to meet students halfway in their linguistics struggles, as the main reason why the institutional support to those who struggle with English is falling short of the expectations attached to it. Here is what he had to say:

I do not think that the university curriculum and the high school curriculum speak to each other. We are trying to assist students but my experience and my research tell me that we are not meeting students who battle with the LoLT halfway into their challenges. We blame the students but have we actually gone back where they come from to find out what they know so that it can help us to adjust our curriculum to meet them halfway? As academics and researchers, we know well that our schooling system has so many shortcomings and that most of the students who make it to the university are ill-prepared for tertiary education but we still allow a situation where there is no qualify staff and no professional English Second Language workforce to support students and see them through.

Similarly, L6 finds that the problem of the language support to first year students on the Edgewood Campus is to be found in the lack of professional development of some of the academic staff. L6 reminisces:

When I was first year student on this campus, I had Professors as my lecturers. Full professors teaching me as a first year student!!! I am talking of very secure individuals standing in front of us to help us with whatever language and other academic difficulties that we could encounter. But now, we do things like giving tutorial and lecturing positions to postgraduate students that if an intelligent first year student challenges, he or she will feel very offended because he or she knows not what to do.

L3 added a comment about the Student at-risk programme that is pertinent for this study and that I have chosen to conclude lecturer evaluations of institutional language support to first year students who need it. She says:

In the absence of adequate language support programme, there is the STAR programme that provide student with some form of informal and remedial language support. My concern however is that, students-mentors are still developing their own proficiency in English and have no basic training on how to help other students develop proficiency in a second language. It is the same with students that we choose to tutor on the ALE and ELC modules: At most one (1) out of five (5) of them knows what he or she is supposed to be doing in a second language support programme. Our contract academic staffs need adequate professional developments.

5.4 Analysis of participants' evaluations and discussion

Participants' evaluations of the support to students who have limited LoLT proficiency raise a number of issues that could be organised under the following themes: enrolment; staffing; time; and the lack of Whole School approach to Edgewood Campus language support. These factors will now be discussed.

5.4.1 Enrolment factors and their impact on academic literacy support delivery

Data reveal that two enrolment factors hinder the viability and the efficiency of any institutional language support to students at Edgewood Campus, UKZN. These are: flexible admission criteria and a spontaneous massification that has resulted in the overcrowding of learning spaces on the designated campus and in an increase in lecturer and tutor workloads. I will look at each one of these in turn.

5.4.1.1 Flexible admission criteria

L6 who is now involved in the selection and in the enrolment of students in the B.Ed. programme observes that more than 70% of first year students enrolled in 2013 in the Bachelor of Education programme did not choose Education as their first option when applying to study at UKZN. Data Monitoring Information (DMI) of UKZN (2013)

corroborates this information. The majority of the current population of first year B.Ed. students, as L6 further explains had chosen to enrol in the B.Ed. programme, because '*they had failed to meet the high admission points required to be accepted into their preferred field of study*'. Research that is carried out in other institutions both nationally and internationally indicates that teaching is a less favoured option among university students in many contexts not only at UKZN (See for example: Moin, Dorfield & Schunn, 2005). Among the reasons that are often advanced to support why university students avoid making education their first choice of study are: the heavy workload of educators and the poor salary that is reserved to them in most countries (Moin, Dorfield & Schunn, 2005).

The participants know that most of their first year students failed to qualify for enrolment in disciplines offered by other Schools at UKZN. It is possible that being aware of this enrolment detail could be one of the reasons why the participants tend to perceive first year B.Ed. students as being less prepared for university study, than those admitted to other UKZN Schools, including the Medical and Engineering Schools. L2 observed for example, that students choosing to enrol in the B.Ed. programme do not necessarily have to have done a specific set of courses at high school level to be admitted into the B.Ed. programme. This is so because the teacher-education programme offers students the possibility of being admitted into a range of areas of specialisation accommodating all teachable subjects. By teachable subjects, I refer to subjects such as History, Art and Culture, Life Orientation, English, Afrikaans, IsiZulu, and all the exact sciences such as Physical science, Mathematics, Chemistry and Natural Sciences. The teacher-education programme offers these options to students, so it is relatively easy for those who have met minimum admission criteria in any teachable subject to gain access to the Bachelor of Education programme.

What concerns the participants is that admission criteria for the teacher-education programme tends to be lower than that for other Schools at UKZN; and that in an attempt to extend participation to students from rural backgrounds, some students are still enrolled with the minimum admission point score of 28. This implies that more work is expected to be done and more support is needed to close the gap in preparedness for university studies for some Bachelor of Education students. Participants' dissatisfaction about admission criteria on the Edgewood Campus comes from the thinking that matriculation results are often inflated and do not reflect the real performance and the real level of readiness for university studies in students applying to enter the teacher-formation programme (Govender & Moodley, 2012). It

could be deduced from the above presentation that the admission point scores required of students to embark on a programme also has an impact on the expectations that lecturers have towards their first year students: the higher the entrance point requirement is, the higher lecturer expectations of students seems to be. Because of this situation, the participants also tend to be more convinced of the necessity to develop new language support programmes to address the challenges facing students with poor readiness for Higher Education and limited LoLT proficiency.

The Department of Education (2005a) notes that an intelligible inflation of students' results is an acceptable practice as it helps to account for the language challenges and for the under-preparedness of most students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. However, according to Govender and Moodley (2012), one danger with inflating students' results is that it is difficult to strike a balance between doing justice to these students and doing them an injustice in suggesting they are ready for tertiary education when they are not. Another challenge with this practice is that inflating students' marks could also be used solely to serve political interests: in which scenario, matric results will give a wrong reflection of successful student preparedness for university studies (Govender & Moodley, 2012).

Researchers such as Borden, Vithal and Dhunpath (2013, pp. 122-123) have sufficiently demonstrated "the strong correlation between matriculation points and the probability of students graduating" within the minimum period of time at UKZN. They show that students who produce excellent matric results are also among those who tend to successfully complete their studies within the time period allocated for completing a particular degree. This is unsurprising as students with excellent results often come from well-resourced and well-functional schools with the potential to prepare them adequately for university studies (UKZN, 2012a). There are however, many examples of students who despite producing what is regarded as poor matric result have brilliantly succeeded in Higher Education when given the chance to study at that level. These success stories have led Hlalele (2010), Scott (2013), Dhunpath and Vithal (2013) and Ndimande-Hlongwa and Wildsmith (2010) to recommend alternative access routes to Higher Education for students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. I will now look at another hindrance to student support and to student success at higher institutions: the sudden overcrowding of learning spaces.

5.4.1.2. Sudden and continuous massification

Besides poor admission criteria, another reason why the language support for students is not well-functioning is the admission of too many students in the first year Bachelor of Education programme. As L1 puts it: *“The School of Education welcomes more students into the first year Bachelor of Education programme and into the language support programme than the available staff can satisfactorily cater for”*. The reality that L1 is trying to capture in the above quote is that for the past four years, Edgewood Campus has seen an unprecedented increase in the enrolment of first year B.Ed. students. Table 6 depicts an increase in first year student enrolment in the Bachelor of Education programme; and the increase in the total number of B.Ed. students on the Edgewood Campus from the year 2010 to the year 2013.

Academic year	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of 1 st year enrolled	616	678 (10% increase from the year 2010)	822 (33.44% increase from the year 2010)	1178 (91.23% increase from the year 2010)
Total number of B.Ed. students per academic year	2221	2489 (12% increase from the year 2010)	2792 (25.7% increase from the year 2010)	3139 (41.33% increase from the year 2010)

Table 6: Bachelor of Education student enrolment trends between 2010 and 2013 at UKZN; adapted from DMI of UKZN (2013)

As noticed in Table 6, there has been a 91.23 % increase in the enrolment of first year Bachelor of Education students on the Edgewood Campus over the past four years (2010 – 2013). This increase in the number of first year students enrolled has also contributed to the 41.33% increase in the total population of Bachelor of Education students over the same period of time as shown below in Figure 3.

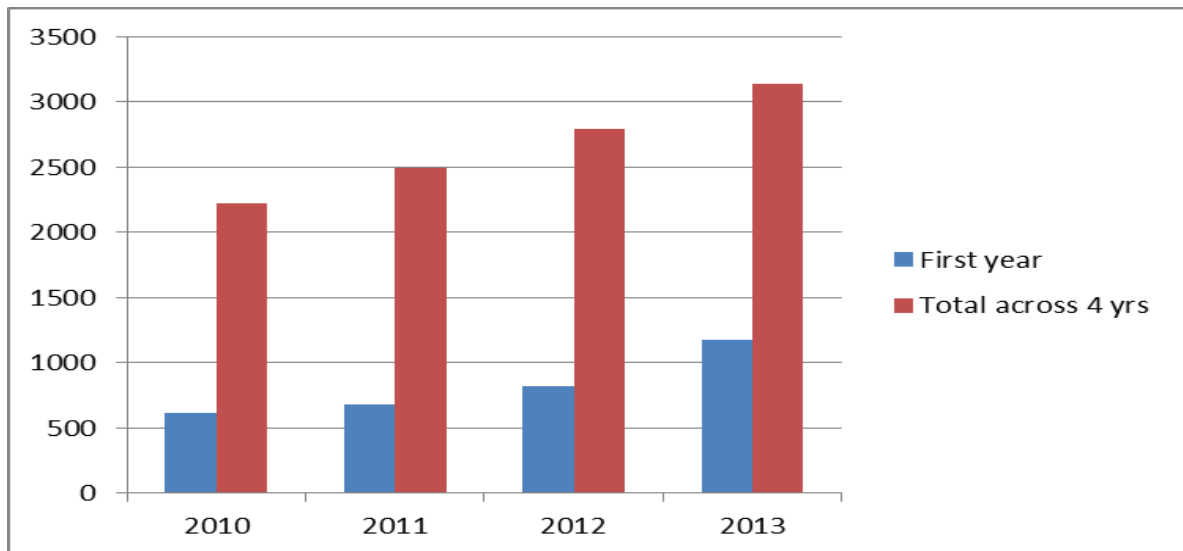


Figure 2: Increase in B.Ed. student enrolment on the Edgewood Campus between the years 2010 and 2013

According to the study participants, this major increase of 91.23 % in the enrolment of first year students on the Edgewood Campus has not been followed by a substantial increase in the available human and material resources. The School has adopted both intermittent and contract staff to deal with the shortage of permanent staff. In this instance, intermittent or contract staff are recruited among postgraduate and undergraduate students to assist with the delivery of some courses. In 2013 for example, half the tutors recruited to help with the delivery of ALE and ELC were among the full time fourth year B.Ed. students. This lack of correspondence between the increase in student enrolment and the lack of adequate human and material resources has contributed to considerably weakening the available structure of language support on the Edgewood Campus, UKZN.

5.4.2 Staffing factors and its impact on academic literacy support delivery

Data point to a number of staffing and human resource factors contributing to the inefficiency of the institutional support for students with limited LoLT proficiency. These staffing factors include: the poor criteria for the selection of ALE and ELC tutors; the lack of opportunity for the professional development of ALE and ELC tutors; the short four month employment contract of ALE and ELC tutors; the choice of casual staffing alternatives that inhibit the transferability of both experiences and skills; the lack of official co-ordinators for ALE and ELC; the lack of accountability; poor financial rewards for tutors; and an unbalanced staff-

student ratio. Some of these factors and how they interconnect to render the institutional support to students inappropriate will be examined.

The participants noted that on the Edgewood Campus there are also poor criteria for the selection of ALE and ELC tutors. Their experiences suggest that because of the large number of approximately 800 students catered for per semester on the two language support courses (ALE and ELC), approximately 20 tutors are recruited each semester to help in these courses. These tutors are recruited from full-time Honours and Master's students and fourth year B.Ed. students. Tutors are however, not subject to adequate admission criteria prior to their employment; and are mainly employed on the basis of their availability because few postgraduate students have expertise in English second language instruction. Furthermore, most tutors are hired and given full responsibility for about 100 students (between 35 and 40 students in each ALE and ELC tutorial group) without prior knowledge in teaching English and without any expertise in teaching English to additional English language students. Graf (2011) and Farrell (2007) suggest that an academic literacy programme for learners of English as an additional language be handled by people who fully understand the challenges of such students and are aware of how the process to acquire proficiency in the LoLT should be managed.

Besides poor staffing and the overcrowding of learning spaces, another factor that two of the participants (L1 and L5) attribute to the malfunctioning of the academic support is the absence of official co-ordinators for ALE and ELC as foundational academic literacy courses. When the data for this study were collected, both L1 and L5 revealed that there had not been any appointment of official co-ordinators for ALE and ELC on the Edgewood Campus for the entire first semester 2013. These foundational academic literacy courses were being unofficially handled by a volunteer staff member, despite this staff member's already heavy workload. As L5 has it, '*with no appointed ALE and ELC co-ordinators, there is also no tutor accountability*'. Therefore, besides not being well-skilled to assist in the language support courses, tutors also seem to have no necessary guidance and no external pressure to motivate them to work professionally. L1 worried that: "*with little supervision, tutors do what they want*".

5.4.3 Shortage of English Second Language instructors and academic literacy support-experts

Also of concern to the participants is the critical lack of permanent experts in English Second Language (ESL) support courses on the Edgewood Campus, UKZN. As L2 observed: *“Expert English Language staff have been promoted to managerial positions, some have left for other institutions and others have retired. The replacement of these experts is taking a long time to materialise and the remaining members of staff have to share their workload”*. From time to time, contract or intermittent staff are hired to help in carrying part of these workloads. From L2’s experience, the intermittent road taken by the School of Education, UKZN, when appointing tutors, does not favour any long-term planning. *“You cannot plan for a period of two years with people who are employed for four months without any guarantee that their contracts will be renewed”* said L2. The intermittent choice of appointment of tutors also does not allow for the accumulation of experience, or for the transfer of acquired experiences and skills to another group of tutors. As a result, inexperienced tutors are not given the opportunity to be mentored by experienced tutors, so they try as best they can to assist students with different levels of LoLT challenges. All the above factors contribute to the malfunctioning of the institutional support to students who have a limited proficiency in the LoLT.

Another limitation of the language support on the Edgewood Campus is that its delivery is not differentiated; it is offered on an one-size-fit-all model. So, despite tutors being faced with a mixed-ability group of students in the various tutorial groups, the material of instruction is the same for everyone; and so is the mode of delivery. In practice, students from well-resourced schools who also tend to be at a more advanced stage in LoLT acquisition are catered for at the same level as those who are still in the initial stages of English language acquisition. This is a challenge that has its root in the shortage of experts and in the poor staffing on the selected campus.

5.4.4 Time factor and its impact on academic literacy support delivery

All six participants said that the time allocated for helping students with language problems is very short. ELC and ALE run for the duration of a semester. Students who choose to do ELC before embarking on ALE have two semesters of foundational English course: ELC in the

first semester and ALE during the second semester. Students who choose to embark immediately on the ALE course have only a semester of foundational English course. But, as L4 duly observed, one should be careful not to assume that a semester of ALE on the Edgewood Campus equal six months of continuous English instruction. On the contrary, within this particular context, a semester offers at most 12 weeks of contact sessions during the first semester and approximately 8 weeks of contact sessions during the second semester. In view of this short period of time, the participants suggest that English language support be offered to students across the four years that the Bachelor of Education programme lasts.

5.4.5 Model of support and its impact on academic literacy support delivery

One recurring observation participants made is that the model of academic support adopted on the Edgewood Campus for students with limited LoLT proficiency does not promote a cross disciplinary approach/response to language support. The experience of L4 is:

As lecturers, we are too territorial: each one does his or her own things in his or her own corner. No one says: "wait a minutes, what are you doing within the ALE or ELC programme that I could enforce when I am teaching my own modules".

This remark around what should be an ideal academic language support programme is consistent with what was said in Chapter 3: a holistic approach to the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) has to be rooted in the observation that second language students are faced with a challenging set of tasks requiring optimum teaching and learning conditions, if students are to gain adequate proficiency in the new language. In other words, all academic programmes in which ESL students participate need to provide optimal conditions for learning English. It needs to provide a language-rich environment with the benefits of intensive, full-time language programmes integrated within mainstream programmes. The aim is to foster the development of listening skills and significant speaking, reading and writing proficiency in the LoLT (Graf, 2011; Farrell, 2007). The participants all contend that this holistic approach is missing in the delivery of the support to ESL students on the Edgewood Campus, UKZN. The lack of cross-disciplinary responses to student linguistic needs call for professional staff development around strategies for LoLT teaching across the curriculum.

Chapter 6

Concluding discussion and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

It emerges from this study that Edgewood Campus, in particular, just like the Whole School of Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in general, is yet to strike a balance between student enrolment and both physical and human resources. At the moment, this lack of balance is a hindrance to any attempt to improve the offerings: the implementation of inclusive education, the development of an effective institutional language support and the fostering of student access to the epistemology they require to achieve academic success and familiarity in the selected institution of higher education. This finding is not new knowledge because prior to this study, researchers such as Mgqwashu (2013), Clarence (2012), Boughey (2005, 2010), Morrow (2007) and Ndimande-Hlongwa, Balfour, Mkhize, and Engelbrecht (2010) had already established that at all 23 South African universities, the lack of balance between the intake of students and the available human and physical resources contribute substantially to hindering the provision of adequate academic support to first year students, at-risk of academic failure and exclusion, because of limited LoLT proficiency. These students are said not to receive the holistic language support required to contribute significantly in academic practices (Boughey, 2010; Rose, 2005). By 'holistic language support', Rose (2005) refers to the provision of effective means for developing listening, speaking, reading and writing proficiency in the LoLT. In relation to first year university students, a holistic language support has to be geared to help students develop Cummin's (1999) Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

As Benson and Kosonen (2013) contend, a holistic approach to the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) should be rooted in the observation that English second (additional) language students within the South African Higher Education landscape are faced with a challenging set of tasks requiring optimum teaching and learning conditions, if students are to gain adequate proficiency in the new language. All academic programmes in which ESL students take part, thus need to provide optimal conditions for learning English. These programmes need to provide a language-rich environment with the benefits of

intensive, full-time language programmes integrated within mainstream programmes (Ashbrook, 2010). The aim is to foster the development of listening skills and significant speaking, reading and writing proficiency in the LoLT (Graf, 2011; Farrell, 2007).

6.2. Promoting the professional development of permanent and both contract and intermittent staff

Besides the phenomenon of an overcrowded learning environment and large class sizes, the participants have constantly referred to the limited awareness lecturers and both intermittent and contract staff display with regard to adequate ESL instructional strategies. Permanent lecturers and both intermittent and contract staff, thus need to be given opportunities to learn about English Second Language instructional strategies for large classes. For the lecturers who took part in this study, it is only when every staff member has developed sensitivity to second language student challenges with the LoLT and learned how to close this linguistic gap, that Edgewood Campus (UKZN) will successfully argue that it has stopped postponing answers to current problems, to the next generation. To prepare students with limited proficiency in the LoLT for epistemological access, an urgent need to adopt a cross-disciplinary response to the development of language proficiency is necessary. This should be done regardless of whether the LoLT is an African language or one inherited from the colonial era (Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014; Mgqwashu, 2013; Ingvarsdóttir & Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010; Gow, Kember & Chow, 1991). The necessity for all staff members to develop adequate ESL instructional strategies calls for series of professional programmes to equip staff with skills for the provision of individual instruction to ESL students. Further skills necessary are: a cross-disciplinary provision of ESL support, that is, cross-curriculum, language teaching or Whole School responses to the academic literacy needs of ESL students (Benson & Kosonen, 2013).

6.3 Toward a paradigm shift

The growth in student enrolments at South African universities is bound to continue (CHE, 2013). The pressure of students trying to get to university will keep growing, because twenty years of democracy have just started to instil in resilient, young, black South African minds

that furthering their education at tertiary level is a human right and that they can choose to exercise this right (UNESCO, 2009, DoE, 2001). More importantly, students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds perceive that in exercising their tertiary education right, they have better chances of embarking on professional careers and of escaping traditional black-jobs, women-jobs and poverty. In response to their decision to exercise their tertiary education right and in an attempt to break the cycle of oppression and poverty, academic staff need to acquire not only ESL instructional strategies but also Inclusive and Reflective Language Instructional Skills (Freire, 1973; Tchatchoueng 2014; Mgqwashu, 2013; Ntombela & Raymond, 2013b; Kamwendo, 2010; Ndimande-Hlongwa, Balfour, Mkhize, & Engelbrecht 2010). This shift from mere ESL instructional strategies to Inclusive and Reflective Language Instructional Strategies is important within the democratic South African educational context. It uses language instruction to promote freedom and self-determination beyond English Second Language instruction, traditionally used to perpetuate colonialism, elitism and the various cycles of oppression (Freire, 1973; DoE, 2001). As Mandela (1973) contends, truly inclusive, instructional strategies have the potential to elevate to the same academic success, both the daughter of the former slave and the daughter of the former master; those with disabilities and those without noticeable disabilities. It could therefore be said that some of the answers to the agenda of redress of past imbalances within the South African Higher Education landscape lie in the professional development of teaching staff toward the acquisition of inclusive and reflective language instruction skills (Rose, 2005; Mgqwashu, 2013; Boughey, 2010 & 2005; Kamwendo, Ndimande-Hlongwa & Mkhize, 2014).

6.4 Special note on the professional development of both contract and intermittent staff

Investing generously in the professional development of intermittent and contract tutoring staff of local universities is one of the major recommendations derived from this study. This recommendation is motivated by the thought that today's intermittent and contract tutoring staff are likely to be tomorrow's permanent lecturing staff either within the School of Education of UKZN, or at any other local university. There is a need to equip this growing generation of academics to do well what they have to do today in tutorial classrooms, so that in currently doing well what they are asked to do, they prepare themselves adequately for what is to come. In view of the mixed-ability student groups assisted in tutorial groups, they

should preferably be exposed to ESL teaching and learning strategies conceived for inclusive education classrooms (Tchatchoueng, 2014; Ntombela & Raymond, 2013a & 2013b).

There are several teaching and learning strategies educators use in inclusive education classrooms and that intermittent and contract staff helping with the delivery of foundational academic literacy courses to ESL students should be made aware of. These various inclusive instructional strategies could help in breaking the boring routine that some of the participants have noticed in ALE and ELC tutorial venues and will refresh the mode of delivery of these courses. Some of these inclusive teaching and learning strategies are: co-operative learning, scaffolding, cubing, problem-solving and collaborative co-teaching (Gultig & Stielau, 2009).

As Prinsloo (2001, p. 344) has it, when selecting teaching and learning strategies, educators of inclusive education classrooms have two main objectives: “meeting the needs of all learners and actualizing the full potential of all learners”. As a result, educators of inclusive education classrooms prefer teaching and learning strategies that are learner-centered, highly participatory and based on the principles of experiential learning. They consider the best of these teaching and learning strategies to be those that give learners a margin of trial and error in the learning process (Harley & Rule, 2013, Jarvis, 1987). Best teaching and learning strategies also allow educators to consider individual prior learning knowledge and to cater for different types of barriers to learning. Some of these barriers are: lack of competence in the language of learning and teaching; under-preparedness in previous grades; and various forms of impairments, including visual and auditory impairments. In the case dealt with in this study, educators can encourage learners to draw from their talents and areas of strength; and to experiment and take risks to further develop their language abilities and skills (Rose, 2005). Reform of the institutional approach/response to ESL students’ LoLT needs on the Edgewood Campus, UKZN is thus essential.

The participants also noted that the language support in place on the selected campus does not allow for one-on-one interactions between the tutor and the students, because of a non-practical student-to-tutor ratio, which is attributed to time, class size and poor staffing factors. There is therefore, a pressing need to increase the number of permanent and/or intermittent and contract staff to offer differentiated language support to students with limited LoLT proficiency. Again, in the absence of enough tutors with adequate training in English Second language instruction to second language students, the professional development of tutors is also needed.

6.5 Conclusion

This study, qualitative and interpretive in nature was guided by two research questions: the first key question this study sought to answer was: How, according to lecturers, do first year students' LoLT abilities impact their learning outcomes? The second research question was: What are lecturers' evaluations of the academic support that is available on the Edgewood Campus to improve students' LoLT abilities? Data were collected from six consenting participants (UKZN permanent lecturers) through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Three concepts comprised the framework informing the analysis of data: inclusive education, epistemological access and the concept of the Whole School approach to the development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). The findings indicate that students with limited proficiency in the LoLT tend to withdraw from participating in class discussions; often refrain from seeking lecturer assistance; are likely to plagiarise during assignments; and tend to perform poorly in examinations. Overall, the six participants found support provided to students with limited English LoLT proficiency on the Edgewood Campus of UKZN to be negatively affected by unplanned mass enrolment. The participants also argue that the designated support is insufficient, because it is not cross-disciplinary; not differentiated (but offered on a one-size-fit-all model), and it is not sustained beyond the first year of study.

In discussing the findings, the researcher has observed that the Edgewood Campus which is home to the School of Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal is yet to strike a balance between student enrolment and both physical and human resources. This observation also applies to UKZN in general. The designated university just like all the other 22 South African higher institutions of learning is responding to a national call to widening participation. This call is to be found in *Education White Paper 3* on transformation in Higher Education. Participants to this study suggest however that, UKZN and all the other local universities can bring about the required transformation at their own pace. In other words, to avoid a revolving door syndrome whereby students are admitted en mass, fail and also leave the system en mass before graduation, UKZN can adopt a renewable five year plan to systematically implement the required transformation. This is akin to the current UKZN Strategic Plan 2007 – 2016, revised by the Council in June 2012 and in implementation at the moment at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Thus, a clear growth strategy is required to ensure that students who are welcomed into the Bachelor of Education programme are adequately accommodated within the physical environment, and sufficiently catered for by

both the lecturing and tutoring staff. It is unfortunate that at the heart of the failure of the LoLT support for students with limited language ability is the noble project of widening participation (massification). To reverse this situation, both the philosophy of inclusion and differentiation in instruction should inform and support a Whole School response to student needs.

Of major interest is the realisation that for the six lecturers who took part in this study, both ‘formative’ and ‘summative’ assessments no longer constitute avenues for addressing student language challenges. They indicated that very few assessed papers still comment on where the students have gone wrong, or give recommendations to improve the assignment; or, inversely, to indicate what students got right and how they could elaborate on different concepts. L6 explains this well when he says:

“The assessment of these students’ papers is now reduced to just a big tick for correct answers in the middle of the page or a cross for answers that are not correct. They get no further explanation as to why they have achieved the mark that they have got”.

For Mqgwashu (2013), the assessor’s feedback should enable students to improve on their manipulation of the language and should predispose them to the acquisition of a constellation of linguistic abilities including: learning from reading, developing critical reading skills and gaining reflective writing abilities. In his article *“On reading for epistemological access”*, he shows amply how, through an inclusive and reflexive delivery of foundational academic literacy courses such as ALE, one could enable students to develop critical reading and informed writing abilities (Mqgwashu, 2013).

Two important recommendations from the study are: first, the provision of adequate professional development for permanent lecturers and both contract and intermittent tutoring staff on inclusive and reflective Second Language instructional strategies to students with limited LoLT proficiency. The second recommendation is that Edgewood Campus in particular and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in general, should strive towards the provision of differentiated support to students with different LoLT proficiency levels. This could be achieved through maintaining an enabling student-to-tutor ratio in the foundational academic literacy tutorial groups, for the provision of a more individualised support to students. Education, as Mandela (1973) stated, is the great engine of personal development. With adequate academic support, through education, the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine; a child of farm workers

can become the president of a great nation. But as the African icon insists: it is what we make of what we have that will determine the quality of South African tertiary education.

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One to one semi-structured interview schedule

- 1. What are lecturers' experiences of how their first year students abilities in English as Language of Learning and Teaching affects these students' learning outcomes?**
 - Who are those among your students who have limited proficiency in the LoLT?
 - To what do you attribute their limited proficiency in the LoLT?
 - From your experience, what impact does the lack of competence in the LoLT have on these students' learning outcomes?

- 2. What are lecturers' evaluations of the academic support that is available to improve students' competence in the LoLT?**
 - What students' supports are in place on the Edgewood Campus to improve students' ability in English as LoLT?

 - Base on your experience in teaching at different undergraduate level (e.g. 1st, 2nd, 3rd and maybe 4th year), what evaluation will you make regarding the effectiveness of the available support in improving students' competency in the use of English as LoLT.

 - To what will you attribute the success (or the failure) of the available support in improving students' use of English as LoLT?

Thank you very much for your time and for your generous contribution to this project

Appendix B

Appendix C

P.O Box: 42 Dale Road Manor Garden
Durban
4001

August 2013

Dear Participant

I am undertaking to research on lecturers' experiences of institutional supports to first year students who have limited proficiency in English as the main language of learning and teaching on the Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The objectives of the study are twofold: (1) To investigate lecturers' experiences of how their first year students' abilities in English as Language of Learning and Teaching affects these students' learning outcomes and (2) to find out lecturers' evaluation of the academic support that is meant to improve students' competence in the LoLT on the Edgewood Campus. South Africa, like any other developing country has to conduct studies of this nature in order to critically evaluate and improve methods of teaching and learning. It will therefore be highly appreciated if you could read this document, and show your willingness to participate in this project by signing the declaration below and summiting it back to me.

Please take note of the following issues:

1. There will be no limit on any benefit that the participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project;
2. Respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your own personal opinion;
3. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance;
4. There are no right or wrong answer;
5. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality;
6. Real names of the participants will not be used, but pseudonyms;
7. The participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to themselves;
8. The participants will not be under any circumstance forced to reveal what they don't want to reveal; and
9. An audio recording will be made solely with your permission.

This research project is supervised by Prof Gregory Kamwendo and by Dr Sithabile Ntombela. The telephone number of Prof Kamwendo is 031-2603459 and his email address is kamwendo@ukzn.ac.za. That of Dr Ntombela is 031- 260 1342 and her email address is ntombelas1@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your support, co-operation and valuable time: Best wishes from

Joseph Tchatchoueng
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Cel.: 0722898339; Email: 211558721@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Consent form

Thank you for agreeing to participate to this research project

Please take note of the following:

1. There will be no limit on any benefit that the participants may receive as part of their participation in this research project;
2. Respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your own personal opinion;
3. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance;
4. There are no right or wrong answer;
5. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality;
6. Real names of the participants will not be used, but pseudonyms;
7. The participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to themselves;
8. The participants will not be under any circumstance forced to reveal what they don't want to reveal; and
9. An audio recording will be made solely with your permission.

Please sign the following declaration and include your full names as indicated:

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 participate in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

Appendix E