STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS OF TUTORIAL SUPPORT SERVICES AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

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Secondly, I would like to give special thank you, to my supervisor Dr Cedric Mpungose, who guided me from proposal stage till I complete this study. I salute you sir. May God shower you with more blessings and energy to groom more young academics. You deserve to be a Professor now.

Thirdly, I would like to thank my family members especially my wife who continuously supported me in hard times, when I wanted to quit.

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Finally, I would also like to thank all six participants who participated in this study. Without you, this research study would have not taken place nor be completed.

DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to my family:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall, I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27 Verse 1

ABSTRACT

Tutorial support services in the curriculum is assisting students to understand and succeed in their academic studies. The main purpose of this study was to explore students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university. The three key research questions that were addressed by this study are: What are students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university? How do students' reflections influence tutorial support services at a South African university? What informs students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university? This study was located within the interpretative paradigm and a qualitative case study was adopted. Data were collected from three main sources for triangulation purposes: one-on-one interviews, reflective activity and focus group interviews. Furthermore, this qualitative case study draws on six (6) undergraduate students at one South African university of technology. The Currere theoretical framework was adopted for this study. The study found that the students are using all three reflections (formal, informal, and personal) in tutorial support services sessions. The findings of this study have showed that while there are three types of rationale – personal, societal, and professional rationale, students have centered both rationales as the most dominant influence in attending tutorial sessions. This study recommends that students should equally integrate these three propositions of rationale for a full, rounded reasons for attending tutorial support services. The university should make it mandatory that they explicitly define the rationale of attending tutorial classes, so that students gain access to the guidelines/rationale of why they are attending tutorials and what benefits are derived from attending them. This will assist the students to implement the tutorial curriculum successfully. Findings generated from this study may be used improve more effective and efficient tutorial support programmes, not only at this institution, but other institutions across the globe. Finally, this study could inform policy formulation for the implementation of effective tutorial services in universities.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Acronym	Description
AD	Academic Development
AaL	Assessment as learning
AfL	Assessment for learning
AoL	Assessment of learning
CAD	Centre for Academic Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FYE	First Year Experience
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
SSS	Student Support Services
VUT	Vaal University of Technology
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW, CONTEXT, AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This research study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' thoughts and reflections on the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of tutorial support services, ultimately aiming to identify areas of improvement and potential solutions to enhance the student experience. By exploring these reflections, I seek to contribute to the ongoing discourse on student support and success in higher education settings, particularly in South Africa, where access to quality education and support systems remains a significant challenge. As a result, this study aims to explore students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university. This chapter aims to present the focus and purpose of the study, rationale, and summary of the reviewed literature, critical research questions and objectives, data generation methods, data analysis, limitations, sampling, and ethical issues addressed.

1.2 TITLE

Students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university.

1.3 FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university.

1.4 LOCATION OF THE STUDY

South Africa has 26 public universities and one of them was chosen to be part of this study. This institution (a university of technology) is in the southern Gauteng province. I work at this institution and therefore I chose it due to proximity and convenience for conducting this important study. This university has two campuses, namely, Vanderbijlpark (main) campus and Sebokeng campus, with four faculties, which are Human Sciences, Management Sciences, Engineering & Technology, and Applied & Computer Sciences. The majority of the students at this institution come from a disadvantaged background. About 99% of the students at this institution are Black and Coloured, with less than 1% being White and Indian students. The study was therefore conducted on the Vanderbijlpark (main) campus. This

study aimed to explore the students' reflections of tutorial support services provided to undergraduates at this institution.

1.5 RATIONALE

As a First-Year Experience (FYE) Coordinator in the Centre for Academic Development (CAD), and part-time lecturer in the Department of Education at one of South Africa's universities of technology, I observed that the university seems reluctant to evaluate the support services that they offer to students, which includes tutorials. The CAD in collaboration with other support service departments on campus, such as student counselling services, student life and governance services, disability services, the writing lab, mathematics centre, and tutor development services, provide a variety of academic and non-academic support services to all students. The support given to students ranges from academic, to emotional, moral, social, physical, financial, cultural, health and wellness support. The aim of these support services is for the student to attain their full potential during their academic life at the institution. However, I have observed that the throughput rate and success rate seem to be low, given the extent of the support programmes on offer at the institution.

Another area of concern, from my personal experience, is that students attending the tutorial classes at this institution have never been given an opportunity to reflect on how effective these tutorials are, or to evaluate the tutors who provide them with tutorial support. The students only get a chance to evaluate the lecturers and their modules. This also motivated me to conduct this important study and to explore students' reflections of support services at a South African university. I believe that feedback from the students' reflections may address any problems and result in improvement in how tutorial support services are provided at this institution.

Furthermore, from my knowledge, students are being driven by different reflections on the use of tutorial services at this institution. Some students are drawing from personal reflection, because they try to explore tutorial services using their own understanding, without asking for or reading related tutorial materials/documents. Other students are drawing from formal reflections, where they can read tutorial materials/documents or any other information, including tutorial policies. The last is informal reflection on their tutorials, since they may decide not to read the tutorial policy but prefer to ask other students or lecturers in order to

get the information they want. This becomes a challenge when students are drawing from these different reflections, because the use of tutorial services becomes inconsistent, in that there is no single model of tutoring which can cater for all the different reflections of the students. This leads to different challenges, including but not limited to a high failure rate, high dropout rates, students not attending tutorials, and students being misled by their own understanding.

Consequently, I am motivated to conduct this study in order to be able to formulate a model of student reflection that may address such challenges, by integrating their perceptions so that there will be effective use of tutorials at this institution. This led me to conduct this research to explore the students' reflections regarding tutorials as one of the support services provided to them. Tutorials were chosen for examination mainly because they have a high impact on student teaching and learning.

According to Koth, Bradshaw and Leaf (2008) reflections are regarded as interpreting an object or structures to obtain the meaning. An interpretive case study conducted by Kadiyala (2021) on students' reflections on their teaching and learning support services highlights the importance of students' reflections in addressing issues related to tutorial support services. The study concluded that most students were not aware of the tutorial support services that were offered on campus. Some students did not attend tutorials at all, some were informed by their peers about the services, and most got to know about the services via campus notice boards and other university communication channels. This suggests that there is no proper model for combining all different reflections of students regarding tutorial support services. This also implies that students' reflections play a vital role. Moreover, studies by Khoza (2018) and Mpungose and Khoza (2022) confirm that most studies on student reflections are carried out within the critical paradigm. Hence a study on students' reflections within the interpretive paradigm is needed, and my study meets this need by exploring students' reflections on tutorial support services at one of South Africa's universities.

Prior research on students' reflections of support services (Peng et al., 2022; Modebelu & Adegun, 2019) concluded that most teaching and learning centres, especially in Africa, do not consider students' reflections when evaluating their services. This is in line with the findings of various other researchers (Machika, 2013; Aluko, 2021) who concur that most academic development practitioners (those who work in student support services) mainly develop, implement and maintain student support programmes while giving little attention to student

reflections which could enhance the effectiveness of their programmes. This study may fill this void by exploring the reflections of students regarding tutorial support services. Further to this, most studies looked at how online learning or tutoring occurs (Hlekwase & Ntuli, 2020; Shikulo & Lekhetho, 2020; Susilana, Hutagalung & Sutisna, 2020; Nyawo, 2020; Pérez-Jorge, Rodríguez-Jiménez & Barragán-Medero, 2020), and how online learning/tutoring impacted on teaching and learning (Subban, Soni & Padayachee, 2022; Ebrahim, Singh & Van Wyk, 2022). However, previously (before the COVID-19 pandemic) online learning was largely ignored by most South African institutions, including the one in this study.

This study may assist academic development practitioners to better understand programmes which are relevant for students both at this institution under study and at other universities. Findings generated from this study may be used to improve and create more effective and efficient tutorial support programmes, not only at this institution, but at other institutions across the globe. This study may also play a role in helping to achieve the mission of CAD and the university at large. This study may offer guidelines for the tutoring model in addressing the needs of students at this institution. It may further contribute to more effective tutorial support services, not only at this institution but at other South African universities or even beyond our borders. This study may also illustrate the benefits of a tutorial programme in an institution of higher learning and how it helps students to stay on at the university to complete and earn their degrees. This study might also highlight the quality, adequacy, and appropriateness of the current tutorial support services that are in place or lead to a repositioning of this institution's tutorial support services.

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations on the improvement of the tutorial services at this institution will be made, which may also assist other universities. Finally, this study could inform policy formulation for the implementation of effective tutorial services in universities. This study might make a significant contribution to the existing knowledge in the field of academic development.

1.6 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

1.6.1 Unpacking the study's phenomenon (reflections)

Studies by Blacer-Bacolod and Bacolod (2021, p. 38) assert that "reflection is a form of

mental processing that we use to fill a purpose of justifying practises or to achieve some anticipated outcome". In support, Carnow, Steenkamp and Ekron (2020) further agree with the fact that students' reflections are constantly contributing to improved ways of supporting students, for example through an improved tutoring system.

Schunk and Meece (1992) divided reflections into two main categories: external reflections and self-reflections. They define external reflections as reflection derived due to the stimulation that comes from outside individual. This means that other people (students/lecturers/tutors) might have influenced the individual to make a decision. This type of reflection is similar to the informal reflection, which is under investigation in this study. The second category of reflection is self-reflection, which is defined by Schunk and Meece (1992) as reflection where the stimulation is derived from within the individual. This suggests that self-reflection is the same as personal reflections, which will be one of the key phenomena of this study. This kind of reflection is usually derived from love, interest, and passion.

1.6.1.1 Personal reflections

Personal reflection is a process that takes place within the individual, that begins with the receipt of excitatory stimulus, until it is realised and understood by the individual, so that the individual can recognise himself or herself and the surroundings (Govender, Soni & David, 2022). In support of this, Dumas (2018) describes student learning opportunities as individual personal perceptions. In a study of assessing perception of the learning environment among nursing students conducted by Shrestha et al. (2019), self-reflection (referred to in this study as personal reflection) was recorded as having the highest score among other dimensions of reflection. This suggest that in personal reflections students are driven by love, passion, self-esteem, and other related personal factors in executing tutorial support services.

1.6.1.2 Formal reflections

This level of reflection places content at the heart of teaching and learning (Le Grange, 2016; Khoza, 2015b). Students using this kind of reflection are strictly connected with content (Pratt, 2002), and are mainly driven by written documents/textbooks or tutorial information (Khoza, 2015a; Mpungose & Khoza, 2022).

Formal reflections are a crucial component of student reflections. In this study, formal

reflections relate to issues regarding the institution's tutorial support services, tutor policies and documents that inform students of the structures available (Johnson & Majewska, 2022; Uzunoglu & Uzunoglu, 2011). This kind of reflection might have a contribution to make to the teaching and learning at this institution. Students having this perception have a responsibility to convey the message to their peers. Therefore, students holding this reflection may exhibit deficits; for an example, students may experience challenges in assisting peers with the tutorial content and in understanding what is expected of tutorial sessions. This may cause a problem or challenge when dealing with other reflections (personal and informal) in evaluating tutorial support services. Scholars like Mpungose and Khoza (2017), Kavaric (2023) and others concur that formal reflections are driven by content, which in turn brings to light other important perceptions, such as personal and informal reflections. This implies that when students are driven by a formal reflection, they are addressing a particular context (in this study, tutorial services) because they know the details of what the services offer.

A study conducted by Jelfs, Richardson and Price (2009), which sought to ascertain tutors' and students' reflections regarding effective tutoring in distance education, used stratified sampling to select 457 students. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, which revealed that although there were some similar reflections, students were more aware in their conceptions of tutoring that were more informed by their formal reasoning. This suggests that students should consider informal reflections so that their personal perceptions assist in reviewing their tutorial services.

1.6.1.3 Informal reflections

Reflections of this nature are central to what students believe in seeking help from others (Kelley-Hall, 2010). Informal reflections enhance skills and ability to have a measure of control over the way in which students perceive tutorial services. Moreover, informal reflections allow students to include opinions and ideas from other people in the surroundings who are involved in the tutoring process (Shrestha et al., 2019). In other words, students socially construct their own ideas, assisted by their peers, tutors, and lecturers. This implies that informal reflections need to be supplemented by formal and personal reflections to make informed decisions on their choices.

1.6.2 Debate on students' reflections

Peng et al.'s (2022) study on students' reflections found that active learning classrooms

normally draw from informal reflections. The challenge with informal reflections is that they are not reliable in determining the experiences of something; however, they do allow students to share ideas, information and knowledge which could have been obtained via formal structures.

Most studies are based on formal reflections of tutorial academic support (Kamau, 2012; Kelley-Hall, 2010b). Some studies focus on all student support services (focusing on a variety of support services, for example, library, student counselling, academic advising, maths centre, and many more) in a single study (Ranasinghe et al., 2009; Modebelu & Adegun, 2019; Kamau, 2012). Some studies also focus on open and distance learning as well as online tutoring (Kavaric, 2023; Lambie & Law, 2018). This study will focus on the single support service of tutorials, covering both online and face-to-face tutoring. Ranasinghe et al. (2009a) conducted a study on the evaluation of learners' perceptions of student support services (SSS), to identify the importance and efficacy of the SSS package currently available at that institution. The study revealed that learners considered regular day schools, audiovisual aids, and timely availability of course materials as the most important components of the SSS. This suggests that students' reflections play a vital role in teaching and learning.

Ozoglu (2009) conducted a PhD study on the perceptions of learner support services in the Turkish Open Education System. The main aim of the study was to examine and identify the support service needs and preferences of distance learners studying at that institution. The study revealed that the affective support needs of students were largely unmet. This suggests that, although the support needs were not met, personal reflections through self-preferences are key to successful implementation of an effective tutorial support system. Over and above this, personal reflections must be substantiated by formal and informal perceptions in order to gain an overall informed perception about tutorials.

Furthermore, in the reviewed literature the majority of studies were conducted in a positivist paradigm, with some in the critical paradigm as case studies. This suggests the need for a study to be conducted using the interpretive paradigm, in order to involve students to reflect on tutorial support services implementation. There is scant literature on the levels of reflections, and this study will fill this void, and is therefore relevant.

1.6.3 Curriculum issues in tutorial services

The word ‘curriculum’ stems from the Latin verb *currere*, meaning to run, with the noun of this word meaning “race or racecourse” (Seitz, 2017). Therefore, curriculum is defined by Van Den Akker (2003) as a plan that dictates the way educational activities should be carried out in an organisation in order to achieve set goals and objectives. In addition to this definition, other scholars (Nieveen & Van Den Akker, 1999; Sivesind et al., 2012) define curriculum as a mix of main ingredients, such as a course of study, individual students’ experiences, content, and a set of subjects/modules or programme of studies. This suggests that a curriculum is a sequence of planned experiences where students practise content taught and apply knowledge and skills learnt to achieve excellence and proficiency. According to Van Den Akker (2003), and Thijs and Akker (2009b) curriculums have different levels, such as international, comparative (supra); system, society, nation, state (macro); school, institution, programme (meso); classroom, group, lesson (micro); and individual, personal (nano). That suggests that the focus of this study is at the nano level where students are involved in implementation of the curriculum to achieve the learning outcomes (Kuiper et al., 2005). Curriculums are also further divided into three main categories: intended (planned/prescribed), implemented (practised/enacted), and attained (assessed/achieved) (Van den Akker & Voogt, 1994). My study focuses on a practised curriculum which is mainly linked to what is happening in the tutorial classroom (Van den Akker, 2010).

1.6.3.1 Intended curriculum

The intended curriculum comes into view in national policies which reflect the national vision, educational plans, and formal and national documents certified for educational goals (Seitz, 2017; Phaeton & Stears, 2017). The Glossary of Curriculum Terminology (UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE), 2013, p. 32) defines an intended curriculum as a:

> “set of formal documents which specifies what the relevant national education authorities and society expect that students may learn at school in terms of knowledge and skills, values and attitudes to be acquired and developed, how the outcomes of teaching and learning process may be assessed. It is usually embodied in curriculum framework(s) and guides, syllabi, textbooks, teacher guides, content of tests and examinations, regulations, policies, and other official documents”.

For example, the tutorial module template is a formal plan of what is expected to be covered thoroughout the semester in the tutorial lecture venue at the institution. This suggests that the intended curriculum may be influenced by the formal perception, since it is guided by the written tutorial documents such as tutorial policies, tutorial workbooks, textbooks and tutorial module templates, in order to address the students’ needs (Seitz, 2017). This further suggests

that for students to perceive the tutorials curriculum, they need to consult those written tutorial documents to adhere to procedures. Other scholars, like Van den Akker (2010), refer to this curriculum as an official or planned curriculum. This suggests that the intended curriculum is official and formal in nature. This further suggests that something is written as part of the formal learning within a university, such as tutorial support documents, tutorial policy and any other curriculum documents to support teaching and learning of tutorials at the institution.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Kabate (2014), which explored the relationship between the lecturer and a tutor, the findings showed a positive relationship. The author asserts that the tutor and lecturer meet up before each tutorial class to discuss what content should be covered. This is a good sign of a well-planned intended curriculum, because of the strong and vibrant relationship between the tutor and the lecturer. This relationship aids the understanding of tutorial module content by students, since the tutor is aware of what needs to be covered in a particular tutorial class.

When students engage in the intended curriculum, it is important that they consider the professional rationale behind their teaching and learning (tutorials), which is driven by formal reflections (Guintu & Fajardo, 2020). A study conducted by Priestley and Nieveen (2020) regarding understanding of curriculum, in which the authors discussed the role of curriculum, claims objectives are what is to be achieved upon completion of the study, programme, or course. This suggests that objectives are crucial in the intended curriculum and tutors should be driven to understand the content of tutorials, because the objectives are based on the tutorial content of the subject matter. Constantine et al. (2015), in their paper on planning to teach where they interrogate the link between curricula, syllabi and lesson plans, claim that resources used in any tutorial class are key for teaching and learning. Thijs and Van den Akker (2009), suggested three main resources here: hardware, software, and ideology. Hardware resources refer to tools or objects used in education, while software resources include any materials or tools which can display teaching and learning information and ideology as activities that one cannot see or touch in education, such as theories (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009). Retna et al. (2009) claim that when students attend tutorial classes, they need to bring their hardware resources for the interface with their tutor, to enable effective teaching and learning.

Furthermore, according to Fix et al. (2019), summative assessment is defined as learner's

achievement at the end of the teaching cycle of a course or programme. Makumane and Ngcobo (2021) claim that the student needs to determine what he/she has achieved and whether the learning outcomes were also achieved. This suggests that summative assessment is mainly used for measuring student performance and to test whether the student has grasped the concepts taught in the tutorial classroom. Moreover, the students are assessed on the tutorial content that they are taught during a particular period of learning. Hence, Hlekwase and Ntuli (2020) define content as topics or concepts that are expected to be learned and that form the basis of teaching and learning. This articulates that students must be driven by formal perceptions in order to understand the tutorial content delivered to them by tutors. In addition, Machika (2013) suggests that face-to-face tutorial sessions are well understood by the majority of students, rather than in online learning. Monyomane and Monyomane (2020) claim that most learners attending tutorials are at-risk students and therefore require face-to-face interaction with their tutors. This suggests that students in large-formal tutorial classes may prefer a formal location during formal times (working hours) so that they may have contact with their tutors while they are on campus. This may also assist students to immediately understand the formal content they may have gone through in the normal class with their lecturer.

Furthermore, Shivananda et al. (2021) state that one of the student roles in tutorial classes with small groups is to act as an instructor. This suggests that students can play active roles for active learning to take place within the tutorial setting. Moreover, during content-centred learning students use textbooks and tutorial workbooks to engage with the tutor and other students for tutorial activities. The implemented curriculum will be discussed next.

1.6.3.2 Implemented curriculum

Thijs and Akker (2009) assert that the implemented curriculum, also known as the perceived curriculum, is the curriculum delivered by the teacher (tutor) and class activities. Further to this, it is also defined as curriculum in action (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009a), because both tutors and students must be in action during the teaching and learning process. This curriculum focuses on implementing the intentions or the goals of teaching and learning as intended by national officials (Phaeton & Stears, 2017). The implemented curriculum refers to "class management with institutional arrangements, educational strategies, source use and teachers' attitude" (Phaeton & Stears, 2017b, p. 13). The Glossary of Curriculum Terminology (UNESCO IBE, 2013, p. 30) defines the implemented curriculum as "the actual

teaching and learning taking place in schools through interaction between learners and teachers (tutors) as well as among learners for example intended curriculum is translated into practice and actually delivered". This suggests that the learning activities are implemented to achieve the intended learning outcomes, which implies that the implemented curriculum involves learning outcomes. In their article titled 'Bridging bridges: how research may improve curriculum policies and classroom practices', Van Den Akker et al.'s (2010) research study explores how research could enhance curriculum reform. The authors define learning outcomes as the totality of information, knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, competencies, or behaviours that a learner has mastered during the completion of a curriculum. This suggests that during curriculum implementation, students must achieve the tutorial learning outcomes.

Moreover, when students engage in the implemented curriculum, it is important that they consider the social rationale behind their tutorials, which is driven by informal reflections. This suggests that informal content may be discussed during informal times (outside normal working hours) with friends and peers. This is in line with Subban et al. (2022), who claim that learning can happen anywhere, anytime, and online learning is key to achieving this. In other words, tutorial learning can be improved by peer learning which involves exchanging information and knowledge among learners, allowing a student-centred approach. Additionally, Monyomane and Monyomane (2020) claim that for a tutorial lesson to be effective, students should use software resources (computers or tablets) rather than only materials received in tutorial class. This suggests that students should also be driven by informal perceptions, because students may need to construct their own ideas through social activities, assisted by their peers, tutors, and lecturers. This further suggests that students may become tutorial facilitators within their small groups and may use this opportunity for peer assessment among themselves. The next section discusses the attained/achieved curriculum.

1.6.3.3 Attained curriculum

Van Den Akker (2003) classified the attained curriculum, which is also referred to as the assessed, achieved or learned curriculum, as occurring at the student level. The author defined it as the result of what has been achieved at the end of the teaching, learning and assessment cycle. This author further asserts that the attained curriculum defines what students' competencies, academic achievements, attitudes, and belief indications are. In other words, it is what the learner or student absorbs during the teaching and learning process, as a

result of interaction with other students, tutors or the institution itself. This includes knowledge, attitudes and skills acquired by the student. The Glossary of Curriculum Terminology (UNESCO IBE, 2013, p. 6) defines the attained curriculum as one which "indicates the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that learners actually acquire as a result of teaching and learning, assessed through different means and/or demonstrated in practice". This suggests that the assessed curriculum reflects how a learner processed and interpreted the knowledge and skills (information) gained during the tutorial lessons.

Furthermore, when students engage in the assessed curriculum, it is important that they consider the personal rationale behind their tutorials, which is driven by personal reflections (Govender et al., 2022). This suggests that the achieved curriculum may be influenced by personal perceptions, because students are driven by love, passion, and self-esteem. For this kind of curriculum to be successful and effective, tutors should be driven by the aims of the tutorial lessons in order for the students to participate successfully and do well in those modules. In other words, tutors need to have their own aims to achieve the goals of the tutorial lesson. This suggests that for any tutorial class, the tutorial subject taught must have its own aims.

Moreover, Khoza, (2013) proclaims that ideological resources play a pivotal role in ensuring success in education. This suggests that students need ideologies (tutoring methods) to reach their aims. The environment where tutorials are taking place is crucial in reaching these aims (Thijs & Akker, 2009b). Shah and Scholar (2016) assert that a conducive environment (where students are free to consult their tutor and/peers) is key to successful teaching and learning. In addition, Nathanson et al. (2013) opine that formative assessment (assessment for learning) in tutorial classes may contribute significantly to high class attendance, and low dropout rates, and may improve the overall throughput rates of at high-risk modules, if the tutorial marks are accounted for at the end of the semester. In addition, Machika (2013) alluded that the dropout rate of about 40% in the first year of study is because there are no support programmes or there is non-attendance of existing support programs. This suggests that a certain percentage (for example 10%) of the tutorial marks should be added to the final marks of the student towards the end of the semester. This will not only allow students to attend in numbers, but will also contribute to the overall success rate. Also, a blended learning approach will be key in resolving some of the challenges that students face, as they may also work on tutorial assignments individually, during their personal time.

1.6.4 Debates on tutorial services

A tutorial is defined as an intensive, small group learning activity that takes place either face to face or online and is led by a tutor, who in most cases is a senior student (Shivananda et al., 2021; Govender, Soni & David, 2022). According to Lambie and Law (2018), there are different forms of tutorials, that include one-on-one consultations, small group consultations, large group consultations, online tutoring, and extra classes (Modebelu & Adegun, 2019). Online tutoring via small groups may be informed by informal perceptions, because students may seek help from other peers and particularly their tutors. Large group consultations may be face to face and informed by formal perceptions, as written documents may be involved in the process of tutoring. One-on-one consultations via a blended learning approach may be informed by personal reflections, because this is driven by love, self-esteem, and passion.

Tutor programmes are an important and established teaching and learning mechanism that can assist in facilitating learners' access to the epistemological discourse of the academy. These programmes have numerous benefits, such as promoting student engagement, relationship building and social integration within a supportive learning environment; promoting multilingualism, and collaborative and cooperative learning; enhancing student learning; encouraging critical and reflexive thinking; and promoting the quality of assessment (Ndlela, 2017). Moreover, Roschelle et al. (2020) add that tutorials can play a major role in increasing student performance and success.

Over and above these benefits, an added benefit of tutor programmes is their dual purpose in relation to tutors. This refers to the notion that tutors not only teach, but also learn while they are teaching others. Essentially, they learn what they are teaching; they also learn *how* to teach (Priestley & Nieveen, 2020). Ultimately, the value of tutor programmes lies in how well they are designed, planned, and delivered at faculty, departmental and programme levels (Lekhetho, 2021). However, other scholars such as Hlekwase and Ntuli (2020) and Monyomane and Monyomane (2020) claim that one of the challenges of tutorials is that one needs to be motivated enough to complete the tutorial tasks assigned by the tutors (personal reflections).

Hlekwase and Ntuli (2020) conducted a study on tutors' views on the integrated e-tutor model in open and distance learning. The findings revealed successes and challenges of the integrated tutoring model that affect the support that is required by deserving students. Further to this, another study was conducted by Chemhuru et al. (2015), on perceptions of

students on the conduct of tutorials in Zimbabwe Open University using a mixed methods approach. The study intended to establish whether the tutorials are conducted in a manner that satisfied the students. The study findings revealed that tutors were not adequately prepared for their tutorials, and recommended that tutors should be inducted on how to conduct tutorials.

This suggests that many of the studies on students' perceptions of tutorial services are focusing on distance learning. This study intends to close this gap by conducting a study on students' perceptions of tutorial support services at a contact university. Also, most previous studies on students' reflections on tutorial support services did not consider the three different levels of reflections (personal, formal, and informal) but rather focus on the tutorial services. This study also closes this research gap by focusing on the three levels of reflections.

1.7 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is:

- To explore students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university;
- To explain how students' reflections influence tutorial support services at a South African university; and
- To understand the reasons which inform students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the three research questions of this study:

- What are students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university?
- How do students' reflections influence tutorial support services at a South African university?
- What informs students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university?

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research approach: Qualitative research

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research mainly focuses on the collection of non-numerical data to understand terms, personal views, or experiences (Rahman, 2016). Furthermore, qualitative research is normally used to gain more in-depth information from participants, which quantitative research cannot provide (Creswell, 2013). This suggests that qualitative research gives the researcher an opportunity to interact and understand by talking with participants (students) and observing students' behaviour in their real-life context. Qualitative research was selected as the best research approach for this study, because the study aims to ascertain students' reflections on tutorial support services, which requires gaining an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of selected participants in the context of tutorials. The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it will allow me to gain a deeper understanding of students' reflections on tutorial support services, and to become aware of the dimensions that influence their reflections on tutorial support services in a particular way. Moreover, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) outlined that qualitative researchers do not assume that there is a single unitary reality that is apart from our perception. As such, I utilised all levels of reflections (personal, formal, and informal), to arrive at a concrete conclusion. One of the shortcomings of qualitative research is that it does not use numerical data; to overcome this challenge I used written and spoken words. The next section discusses the research paradigm related to this study.

1.9.2 Research paradigm: Interpretive paradigm

This study adopted an interpretive paradigm. Research paradigm refers to the all-encompassing system of interrelated practice and thinking that defines the nature of enquiry along the three dimensions of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Ontological and epistemological aspects are mainly concerned with the person's worldview (focusing on aspects of reality). In support of this, Hennink et al. (2020) posit that interpretivist researchers adopt epistemology and the ontological belief that reality is socially constructed. They also believe that there is no single method to attain knowledge (anti-foundationalists). This suggests that interpretivist researchers draw from a variety of methods, tools, and techniques to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Cropley, 2022).

Alexander (2004) added that the interpretive paradigm explores the richness, depth, and complexity of the phenomena. Furthermore, in interpretive research the researchers seek to

understand the world through human experience (Bitzer, 2010). Interpretivist researchers believe that social interaction is key in gaining knowledge from participants (Hennink et al., 2020). The advantages of the interpretative paradigm is that it is good for exploring hidden reasons behind social phenomena, can assist in theory building, is most appropriate for studying context-specific or idiosyncratic events, and is also good in uncovering interesting and relevant research questions (Creswell, 2013). The main limitation of this paradigm is that more time and resources are required in data collection and analysis efforts (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). In utilising this paradigm, I interacted with the participants (students) and let them talk about their reflections on the tutorial support services, without the use of other resources.

1.9.3 Research style: Case study

This study employed a case study research strategy/design. Case studies are defined as in-depth studies which are intended to produce information from participants (one person, group, or events) by using manifold sources of data (Cohen, 2018). Yin (2003) identified different types of case studies, such as explanatory, exploratory, intrinsic, instrumental, collective, and descriptive case studies. This study adopted a descriptive case study, because I wanted to get better insights into the students' perceptions of the tutorial support services. Yin (2003), defines the descriptive case study as providing a narrative account of what happened or is currently happening, to understand a particular case in question. Case studies allow for studying individual persons, a group of people, process or phenomenon or event in a particular institution in detail, and I believe my study can achieve this by using three data generation methods (triangulation) (Cohen, 2007), which are reflective activity, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions.

This study focused on the case of undergraduate students at a South African university. It adopted a descriptive case study of six undergraduate students currently doing tutorials. An interpretive descriptive case study is relevant for this study, because it allows me to obtain richer and open-ended answers from the students in understanding their reflections on tutorial support services at a South African university. Yin (2003) states that the case study research strategy/design aims at gaining deeper insights and understanding of the specific phenomena, in this case, the students' perceptions. One advantage of a case study is that it can serve many stakeholders (Creswell, 2002; Tracy, 2013), which suggests that multiple stakeholders (such as lecturers, tutors, other students, coordinators and so on) may benefit from one case study.

However, case studies also have limitations and one of them is bias. To avoid this limitation, I reviewed the findings with my peers, and I reported every step that I followed in arriving at my conclusions.

1.9.4 Sampling: Purposive and convenience

Sampling refers to the process of selecting sample data from the population of interest (Simmonds & Le Grange, 2019). This study adopted purposive sampling and convenience sampling, which are both non-probability sampling methods. Purposive sampling was adopted because students who attend the tutorial services hold the relevant information pertaining to this study, and hence will be selected for it. Moreover, I selected the students based on them having experience of the use of tutorial support services at the institution.

Another sampling technique I used in this study was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling involves using a sample that is selected based on ease of access and convenience (Creswell, 2013). It was opted for this study because of proximity to the students; it is a rigorous technique, and allows easy access to participants who can provide relevant information for the study (Creswell, 2007). This suggests that this technique offers the advantages of easy access to students who are readily available when needed. In this case study, I selected six students (participants) who are easily and readily available, as students who I teach at the university where I work and that are attending tutorials. Participants in this study were recruited by email communication. Certain factors inhibit conducting research in a larger population, such as expense, time, and accessibility (Cohen, 2018). Using a smaller, manageable group that is representative of the population of interest overcame such limitations. The next section discusses the data generation process.

1.9.5 Data generation methods

Data for this study was generated by using three methods: reflective activity, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). This was to obtain rich, in-depth information on the perceptions of students regarding tutorial support services. These three methods would improve the credibility and trustworthiness of the data through detecting consistencies in the findings across all methods applied.

1.9.5.1 Reflective activity

Reflective activity is defined as the ability to reflect on something, for example, on situations,

problems and/or objects, and act on it (Creswell, 2007). Student reflective activity will require students to answer short questions about the phenomenon of the study (reflections) (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I designed open-ended questions that are guided by the currere method for students to complete. This was the first step, setting the scene for the FGD and one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Reflective activity was used to explore different reflections on the tutorial support services at a South African university. Moreover, students were given time to reflect on their practices, to discover if they have used reflections to explore tutorial support services. A week was given for this process to be completed. The FGD is discussed next.

1.9.5.2 Focus group discussion

Focus group interviews were conducted with students regarding the use of tutorial support services. Creswell (2013) asserts that focus groups can also be referred to as discussion groups or group interviews, where people are asked to come together in a group to discuss certain issues. The focus group sessions allowed students to share their experiences on the use of tutorial support services in my presence. I use an interview schedule to guide the FGD. I conducted one focus group session with student respondents. The maximum number for the focus group was six students. This view is supported by Cropley (2022), who alluded that when there is only a 'one-shot' opportunity for data generation, focus groups may be a reasonable alternative to conducting a number of individual interviews. This allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the different opinions and viewpoints of participants, as the discussion is conducted in a natural and unstructured way which allows participants to be free to express their views and opinions on the topic at hand (Hennink et al., 2020). Maree (2007) argues that focus group interviews produce rich data that may be difficult to analyse, but I overcame this shortcoming by using thematic analysis for all the data that was generated.

1.9.5.3 One-on-one semi-structured interviews

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students on their reflections on tutorial support services. Cropley (2022) is of the view that semi-structured is the most common type of interview. This is an in-depth interview often used by qualitative researchers. The questions for the individual semi-structured interviews were derived from the currere theoretical framework. Data were generated through face-to-face interviews with the selected students.

Rahman (2016) points out that the advantage of one-on-one semi-structured interviews is that the participants are free to talk about what they deem important, with little influence from the researcher. The author further suggests that it is important for researchers to establish a rapport with the participants, so that they feel comfortable to reveal important or sensitive information. This was another way to overcome the problem of students who do not want to talk freely about events or situations. The next section describes how data that was collected was analysed.

1.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis refers to the process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modelling data to extract meaningful insights and draw conclusions (Chan & Zhang, 2019). It involves various techniques for examining patterns, trends, and relationships within a dataset to uncover underlying information. This process allows researchers to understand the data more comprehensively and make informed decisions based on the generated findings. Thematic analysis is a specific approach to data analysis that focuses on identifying and analysing patterns, themes, and meanings within qualitative data (Gilbert & Stoneman, 2016). It involves systematically categorising and interpreting textual or visual data to extract significant themes or patterns, which are then used to generate a deeper understanding of the material being analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was used as the method to analyse the data in this study. How trustworthiness was ensured in this study is described in the next section.

1.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in qualitative research entails establishing credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability (Cropley, 2022).

1.11.1 Credibility

Credibility refers “to the qualitative researcher's belief in the accuracy of the study's findings” (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 23). To ensure the credibility of the study, I used my supervisor to cross-check this study and provide input where necessary to improve it. Credibility was also noted in the reflective activity, where students demonstrated their true reflections of their experiences with the tutorial support services. Finally, I used recording devices such as my cell phone, field notes, quotes from interviews and concepts from the literature review to

increase the credibility of this study.

1.11.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to how the researcher shows that the findings of a study may be applied to similar contexts, demographics, or phenomena (Creswell, 2013). The findings of this study apply to similar situations, populations, and phenomena, thus establishing transferability.

1.11.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to providing correct and direct information in a study (Creswell, 2012). In this study, dependability was ensured by using direct quotations and references from reputable scholarly work.

1.11.4 Confirmability

Conformability refers "to the degree of neutrality in the findings of a research study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 56). In this study I ensured confirmability by taking the data that was generated and my interpretations of it back to the participants so that they could confirm that it reflected their input correctly, thus ensuring confirmability.

1.12 ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethics involves a critical reflection on morality with its intent to safeguard the world, including the environment, animals, and humans, to protect dignity and promote justice, equality, fairness, truth, and trust (Creswell, 2013). This implies that ethics is a systematic approach to morality and how we ought to act in a given situation, providing strong reasons for doing so.

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was sought from and granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), with reference number HSSREC/00006262/2023. In addition, a gatekeeper's letter was obtained from Vaal University of Technology Research Ethics Committee, with reference number CREC 25-05-2023-5.2. Permission was requested from all participants who took part in this study.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality in this study, the interview guide carries no personal details of the participants and used pseudonyms. An informed consent form was given to each participant to consent to the interview before data collection could take place and their

understanding of the research project was confirmed. The consent form included a clause stating that the study would not harm them in any way.

1.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to one university and only students who had used the tutorial services; thus, these results cannot be reliably generalised to all South African universities. However, it is anticipated that the study will raise questions and concerns that might lead to further research on a larger scale.

University-level learning takes on various forms, and therefore the way in which students experience the tutorial services may be different from one another, for various reasons such as students' personality, motivation, ability, learning preferences and styles, and disposition. Their personal perceptions might influence the findings of this study.

Another limitation was the exclusion of the views of tutors, tutors' coordinators, and lecturers on the tutorial services. These are curriculum specialists or practitioners, and their contribution could enrich the findings of the study. Moreover, I may be biased to a limited extent, as I am an educator at this institution, and interviewed my students and hence may have personal enthusiasm for this research. I remained as unbiased as possible, given the circumstances. I allowed students to provide their own information without persuasion during my interaction with them.

1.14 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This first chapter presents an overview of the study. It highlights the focus and purpose of the study, rationale, critical research questions and objectives, data generation methods, data analysis, sampling, and trustworthiness of the study, It also indicates how ethical issues were addressed, and presents the limitations encountered.

Chapter Two presents the literature review, focusing on reflections on tutorial support services. I reviewed and analysed literature related to the research questions. The theoretical framework of Tyler's currere method is discussed in detail, applying the levels of reflections in each of the four stages. I also defined the theoretical framework and justified why it was suitable for this study.

In Chapter Three, I explain the research methods and design used to answer the research questions. I also discuss the research approach (qualitative), research paradigm, research

style, data collection techniques (interviews, reflective activity, and focus group discussion), and sample selection process. The chapter also outlines the ethical considerations, trustworthiness measures and limitations of the study.

Chapter Four focuses on the findings of the study based on the data collected. This chapter analyses and interprets the results, addressing the research questions and objectives. The chapter includes tables and figures to support the findings. The chapter also discusses the implications of the results and compares them to those of previous research.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, provides a summary of the key findings and implications of the study. The chapter restates the research questions and objectives, highlighting how they were addressed. It also provides the conclusions and recommendations linked to the research questions: What are students' reflections on tutorial support services at a South African university? How do students' reflections influence tutorial support services at a South African university? What informs students' reflections on tutorial support services at a South African university? This chapter also links with findings in the literature, and the objectives of the study, which were to explore students' reflections on tutorial support services at a South African university, to explain how students' reflections influence the tutorial support services, and to understand reasons which inform students' reflections on tutorial support services at a South African university.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One I provided an introductory overview of the research topic and its background. I provided an introduction to the study, the problem statement, research questions, research objectives, and the significance of and rationale for the research, including a brief overview of the research methodology and literature review. Building upon this foundation, Chapter Two focuses on a comprehensive literature review to identify existing knowledge and research gaps related to the chosen field of inquiry. A literature review is an essential component of any academic research study, as it involves a systematic examination and synthesis of published works, such as books, scholarly articles, and conference proceedings, pertaining to a specific research area. By analysing and summarising the existing body of literature on the subject, researchers can gain insight into current knowledge, identify areas for further inquiry, and validate the importance and relevance of their research. While Chapter One provided a brief review of existing literature, Chapter Two delves deeper into the review to ensure a rigorous and well-informed investigation.

By reviewing and critically evaluating prior studies, I build upon the work of others, contribute new perspectives, and avoid duplicating previous research efforts. Furthermore, the literature review serves to establish the theoretical framework (currere) for my study, providing a solid foundation for the research methodology and analysis that follow. Through this systematic exploration and analysis of the literature, I contributed to the existing knowledge, and propose novel insights that can advance the field of study.

This chapter provides a comprehensive literature review on various aspects related to reflections (the phenomena of the study), curriculum concepts, approaches to curriculum, the role of tutorials in curriculum, and the currere conceptual framework. The chapter begins with an exploration of different types of reflections, including formal, informal, and personal reflections, highlighting their significance in educational settings. Subsequently, it delves into an examination of curriculum concepts and explores various approaches to curriculum development. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the role of tutorials in curriculum design and delivery, and the current practices and challenges associated with this instructional method. Finally, the chapter concludes with an exploration of the currere conceptual framework, highlighting its value in curriculum development and implementation. The

chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of reflections, curriculum concepts, approaches to curriculum, the role of tutorials, and the currere conceptual framework, thereby contributing to the existing literature in the field of education.

Figure 2.1 presents a flow chart of the literature review with the top half representing reflections as the study phenomenon, followed by the debate on students' reflections and tutorial support services.

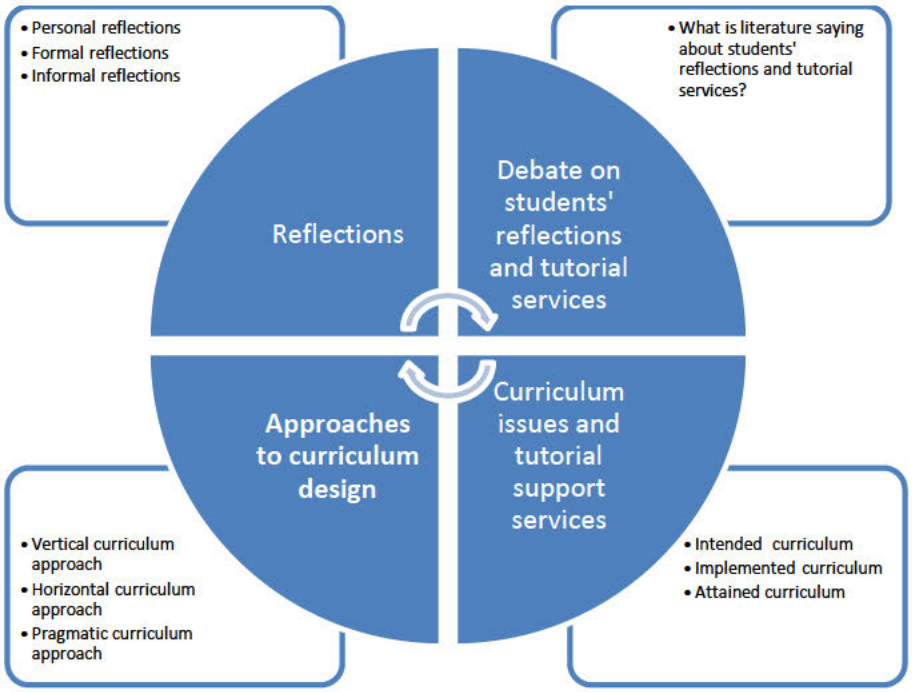

Figure 2.1: Chapter 2 flow model

2.2 UNPACKING THE PHENOMENON OF THE STUDY (REFLECTIONS)

Reflections play a critical and crucial role in the teaching and learning of a curriculum. There is no consensus on the definition of reflections. Different scholars have defined reflections to their own understanding (Van Manen, 1977; Boyd & Fales, 1983; Rodgers, 2002; Dewey, 1938; Liston & Zeichner, 1987; Bould & Walker, 1998; Schon, 1983). For instance, Rodgers (2002) defined students' reflections as the process of students thinking deeply and critically about their own learning experiences and outcomes. Other scholars, like Boyd and Fales

(1983), look at reflections as involving students looking back on their school work or their performance in a particular task or project, and analysing what they did well, what they struggled with, and how they can improve in future. Pedro (2005) acknowledges that reflection is an essential aspect of metacognition and self-regulated learning, as it helps students develop a better understanding of their own learning processes and take ownership of their own learning.

According to Dewey (1933, p. 9) reflections are "active, persistent and careful considerations of any belief or supposed from of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to which it leads". In other words, Dewey (1933) sees reflections as a deliberate and active process that enables development of practices. His study alluded to the fact that reflection should include recalling an event and posing questions to explore why things are in that format or shape and what could be done better to improve the practice, and this is in line with my theoretical framework for this study. Carnow, Steenkamp and Ekron (2020) are in accordance that students' reflections are constantly contributing to improved ways of supporting students themselves, for example, through an improved tutoring system. This suggests that reflections represent the process of gaining students' perspectives by learning from their experience to improve their teaching and learning practices. Reflections assist learners to understand and have control of their teaching and learning (Hatton & Smith, 2005).

The origin of reflections in education can be traced back to the work of influential educational theorists and philosophers such as John Dewey and Jean Piaget (Pedro, 2005). Dewey (1933) is regarded as the godfather of reflections and emphasised the importance of reflective thinking in a democratic society, where individuals should actively engage in critical reflection to improve their actions and decisions. Piaget's theory of cognitive development also highlighted the significance of reflection in the learning process, as children continually construct their understanding of the world through active reflection on their experiences (Bould & Walker, 1998).

In recent years, educational research has further highlighted the benefits of students' reflections. It has been found that engaging in reflection allows students to connect new information to prior knowledge, identify gaps in their understanding, recognise misconceptions, and develop strategies for future improvement (Kelly, 2016). Moreover,

Mezirow (1990) added that reflective practices also promote higher-order thinking skills, as students critically examine their own thoughts and actions. This suggests that, by reflecting on their learning, students gain a better sense of their strengths and weaknesses, leading to increased motivation and self-efficacy and as well as becoming active participants in their learning journey and developing lifelong skills for continuous growth and improvement.

Another important element which is often overlooked when defining reflection is emotions (Bould, Keogh & Walker, 1985). Bould et al. (1985) assert that for reflection to be a key ingredient of teaching and learning, the emotions of learners – such as fear, calm and elation – must be considered. They further highlighted that emotions could influence the way in which students may recall past events. Thus, through emotions, students' reflections may lead to an exploration of various students' rationales behind the usage of tutorial support services at this institution. This is supported by Khoza (2013b), who states that rationale is key to the implementation of any curriculum. This suggests that situations or emotions that students face when doing tutorials or in tutorial sessions allow them to reflect their practices. Further to this, Kelly (2016) asserts that reflections allow students to correct their misconceptions and beliefs about situations and/or emotions they face.

Schon (1983) claimed that by using reflection in teaching and learning, practitioners can make explicit and tacit knowledge to improve their practice. Schon (1983) identified two types of reflection: reflection on action and reflection in action. Reflection on action is defined as tasks taking place after action, while reflection in action refers to tasks in the midst of action. This suggests that students' reflections on their knowledge and utilisation of tutorial support services could provide clarity, understanding and answers to the problems they face, because they are able to reflect about past, current and future events.

Schunk and Meece (1992) further place reflections into two main categories: external reflections and self-reflections. They define external reflections as reflection derived due to the stimulation that comes from outside the individual. This means that other people (students/lecturers/tutors) might have an influence on the individual as they make a decision. This type of reflection is similar to informal reflection, which is under investigation in this study. The second category of reflection is self-reflection, which is defined by Schunk and Meece (1992) as reflection where the stimulation is derived from within the individual. This suggests that self-reflection is the same as personal reflection, which is one of the key phenomena of this study. This kind of reflection is usually derived from love, interest, and

passion. Khoza (2015) conducted a study to understand student educators' reflections on their practices of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), and key findings suggest that people should reflect (when given the opportunity) at all three levels, namely personal (self-reflection); informal (verbal reflection), and formal (written reflection). This also concurs with what Schon (1983) and Petro (2005) believe, that people should engage all three levels of reflection – formal, informal, and personal – to inform practices.

2.2.1 Personal reflections

Personal reflections regarding tutorial support services refer to the individual's thoughts, feelings, and experiences on the tutorial support they have received (Ellis et al., 2014). Thus, it is a self-assessment and evaluation of their own learning and progress that has occurred with the help of tutorial support staff. In other words, personal reflection is a process "that takes place within the individual that begins with the receipt of excitatory until it is realised and understood by the individual, so that the individual can recognise himself or herself and the surroundings" (Govender, Soni & David, 2022, p. 32). In support of this, Dumas (2018) describes student learning opportunities as individual personal perceptions. A study assessing reflection on the learning environment among nursing students conducted by Shrestha et al. (2019) found that self-reflection (referred to in this study as personal reflection), had the highest score among other dimensions of reflection. This suggests that in personal reflection students are driven by love, passion, self-esteem, and other related personal factors in realising the effect of tutorial support services. This further suggests that personal reflection is the individual's own thoughts of action and feeling that might emerge as a result of social interaction with family and friends. In other words, personal reflection is the self-introspection of an individual, meaning that students receiving tutorial support services at this institution may be driven by personal beliefs, emotions or feelings in their teaching and learning, in order to do justice in their practices to improve in the subject of their tutorials.

These personal reflections can include a range of aspects, such as: learning progress: reflecting on how tutorial support has facilitated their understanding of concepts and improved their academic performance; problem-solving skills: assessing how tutorial support has enhanced their ability to solve problems, both in the subject matter and in their overall approach to learning; confidence and motivation: reflecting on how tutorial support has boosted their confidence and motivation to continue learning and achieving their goals; personal growth: evaluating how tutorial support has contributed to their personal growth,

such as developing critical thinking skills, time management, and effective study habits; communication and collaboration: reflecting on how tutorial support has improved their communication skills and ability to work with others in a collaborative and supportive manner; and feedback and support: assessing the effectiveness of the feedback and support provided by tutorial staff in addressing their individual learning needs and challenges (Dewey, 2013; Zeichner & Keneth, 1987; Ellis et al., 2014).

Over and above this, personal reflections in tutorial support services allow individuals to critically analyse their own progress, identify areas for improvement, and recognise the value of the support they have received. In other words, the self-reflection process can help students to become more self-directed learners and take ownership of their educational journey. However, personal reflections alone are not enough, and must be supplemented by formal reflections.

2.2.2 Formal reflections

Formal reflections are a crucial component of student reflections. In this study, formal reflections simply refer to use of items such as tutor policies and documents that inform students of the structures available in the institution's tutorial support services (Johnson & Majewska, 2022; Uzunoglu & Uzunoglu, 2011). Formal reflections on tutorial support services refer to a structured and intentional process of reviewing and analysing the effectiveness and impact of the tutorial support provided to students (Kavaric, 2023). Ellis et al. (2014) defined formal reflections as involving a systematic evaluation of the goals, strategies, and outcomes of the support services to improve future delivery and enhance student learning experiences. This kind of reflection might make a contribution to the teaching and learning at this institution. Students having this perception have a responsibility to convey the message to their peers. However, students holding this reflection may exhibit deficits; for example, students may experience challenges in assisting peers with the tutorial content and to understand what is expected of tutorial sessions. This may then cause a problem or challenge when dealing with other reflections (personal and informal) in evaluating tutorial support services. Scholars like Mpungose and Khoza (2017), Kavaric (2023) and others) concur that the formal reflections are driven by content, which in turn brings to light other important perceptions such as the personal and informal.

By engaging in formal reflections, tutorial support services aim to enhance the quality and

effectiveness of their services, to have a positive impact on student learning outcomes. Thus, this level of reflection places content at the heart of teaching and learning (Le Grange, 2016; Khoza, 2015b). Students with this kind of reflection are strictly connected with content (Pratt, 2002) and mainly driven by written documents/textbooks or tutorial information (Khoza, 2015a; Mpungose & Khoza, 2022). A study conducted by Jelfs, Richardson and Price (2009), which sought to find out tutors' and students' reflections regarding effective tutoring in distance education, used stratified sampling to select 457 students. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, and findings revealed that although students were more commensurable in their conceptions of tutoring that were more informed by their formal reasoning (formal reflections). This suggests that students should consider informal reflections, so that personal reflections could assist in reviewing their tutorial services.

2.2.3 Informal reflections

Reflections of this nature are central to what students believe in seeking help from others (Kelley-Hall, 2010). Sahu et al. (2018) state that informal reflection requires students to share ideas about their teaching and learning aspects (tutorials), and this can be achieved in various ways, such as group discussions, networking and collaboration with peers. Various studies clarify that informal reflection is pivotal to students regarding school matters. As this study is based on students' reflections of tutorial support services at a university, informal reflection is paramount. Informal reflections enhance skills and ability to have a measure of control over how students perceive tutorial support services. Moreover, informal reflections allow students to gain opinions and ideas from other people in the surroundings who are involved in the tutoring process (Shrestha et al., 2019). In other words, students socially construct their own ideas, assisted by their peers, tutors, and lecturers. This implies that informal reflections alone need to be supplemented by formal and personal reflections (discussed above) in order to make informed decisions on their choices.

Informal reflections in tutorial support services refer to the process of students expressing their thoughts, feelings, and impressions about their tutorial experiences in a casual and unstructured manner (Uzunoglu & Uzunoglu, 2011). This can be done through personal conversations with tutors or peers, or online platforms, or informal discussions in small groups. Informal reflections allow students to critically evaluate their learning progress via peer assessment (that is, students may mark each other's assessment during the tutorial session in the presence of a tutor), identify challenges, clarify concepts, and express any

concerns or questions they may have. It offers a space for students to share their experiences, interact with others, and receive support and guidance from tutors or peers (Johnson & Majewska, 2022). Thus, informal reflection creates social spaces where students can interact and address issues of teaching and learning that affect them (Uzunoglu & Uzunoglu, 2011). This further suggests that through this interaction, students may discuss what they are doing in the tutorial classes, their issues and ways of resolving them and, most importantly, comfort each other. These informal reflections may also help tutors and support services gain insights into students' learning needs, strengths, and areas of improvement. Additionally, informal reflections can foster a sense of community and collaboration among students, as they share their knowledge, learn from each other, and provide mutual encouragement and support (Ozoglu, 2009). Overall, informal reflections in tutorial support services serve as a valuable tool for both students and tutors, enabling a more holistic and dynamic learning experience. In the context of informal reflection, all tutorial learning activities are societally centred. Tutorial activities (tutorial modules) are done online, where students and tutors socially interact through a digital blackboard (known as VUTela), where weekly scheduled meetings are held to share the ideas of the tutorial module. This requires tutors to act as facilitators in order to meet students' needs (Piaget, 1976). This suggests that informal reflection drives the societal teaching and learning process by addressing the societal needs of students, lecturers, tutors, and so on (Ramrathan, 2017).

2.3 DEBATE ON STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS

Authors, such as Shivananda et al. (2021) and Ozoglu (2009) tend to agree that students' reflections on tutorial support services vary widely. These authors concur that some students find the tutorial support services helpful and appreciate the additional guidance and assistance they provide. Moreover, they feel that these services help them better understand and grasp complex concepts, improve their study skills, and perform better academically (Kamau, 2012; Kelley-Hall, 2010c). These students also believe that the tutorial support services offer personalised attention and a more individualised approach to learning, which suits their learning style (Sahu et al., 2018). The latter study find that tutors are knowledgeable and supportive, helping the students build confidence in their abilities. Additionally, students appreciate the opportunity to ask questions and receive immediate feedback during tutorial sessions (Jelfs et al., 2009). They find these interactions valuable in clarifying doubts and deepening their understanding of the subject matter (Shivananda et al., 2021). This suggests

that informal reflection plays an important role in providing additional support and guidance for students.

However, some students have mixed feelings about the tutorial support services. They recognise the benefits of having additional support, but feel that the effectiveness of these services depends on the quality of the tutor (Johnson & Majewska, 2022). Some students have had positive experiences with highly knowledgeable and attentive tutors, while others have encountered tutors who were unprepared or lacked effective teaching strategies (Govender, Soni & David, 2022). Furthermore, some students believe that tutorial support services may only benefit students who are already performing well academically (Lambie & Law, 2018). They feel that these services do not address the root causes of academic struggles, and may not be effective in helping students who have significant learning gaps or challenges (Kamau, 2012).

Peng et al. (2022) conducted a study on students' reflections and it was found that active learning classrooms normally draw from an informal reflection. Based on the informal reflections, this study found out that most students were satisfied with the informal learning experience because they were able to share ideas among themselves. The challenges with informal reflections are that it is not a reliable perception in determining the experiences of something. However, informal reflections allow students to share ideas, information and knowledge.

Furthermore, most studies are based on formal reflections of tutorial academic support (Kamau, 2012; Kelley-Hall, 2010b). Some studies focus on all student support services, covering a variety of services, for example, library, student counselling, academic advice, and maths centre, in a single study (Ranasinghe et al., 2009; Modebelu & Adegun, 2019; Kamau, 2012). Some studies also focus on open and distance learning and online tutoring (Kavaric, 2023; Lambie & Law, 2018). This study focuses on one single support service and both online and face-to-face tutoring. Ranasinghe et al. (2009a) conducted a qualitative study on the evaluation of learners' perceptions of student support services (SSS) at the Open University in Sri Lanka. That study was conducted to identify the importance and efficacy of the SSS package currently available for students at that institution. The study revealed that learners considered regular day schools, audiovisual aids, and timely availability of course materials as the most important components of SSS. This suggests that students' reflections play a vital role in teaching and learning.

Ozoglu (2009) conducted a PhD study on the learner support services perceptions in the Turkish Open Education System. The main aim of the study was to examine and identify support service needs and preferences of distance learners studying at that institution. The conclusion of the study revealed that the affective support needs of students are largely unmet. This suggests that although the support needs are not met, personal reflections through self-preferences are key to successful implementation of effective tutorial support systems. However, personal reflections must be substantiated by formal and informal perceptions to gain an overall informed perception about tutorials.

Furthermore, most of the reviewed studies are conducted in the positivist paradigm, and some in the critical paradigm as case studies. This suggests a need for a study to be conducted using the interpretive paradigm, so as to involve students in order for them to reflect on implementation of tutorial support services at this institution. There is scant literature on the levels of reflection, and this study will fill this void and is therefore relevant.

In fully understanding the debates around students' reflections on tutorial support services, it is also of the utmost important to discuss curriculum issues.

2.4 TUTORIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

A tutorial is defined as an intensive small group learning activity in either face-to-face or online mode led by a tutor, who in most cases is a senior student (Shivananda et al., 2021; Govender et al., 2022). The aim of tutorials is to "promote an enabling learning environment which facilitates the development of discipline-specific skills and enhances the academic success of students" (Sahu et al., 2018, p. 112). According to Lambie and Law (2018), there are different forms of tutorials that include one-on-one consultations, small group consultations, large group consultations, online tutoring, and extra classes tutorials (Modebelu & Adegun, 2019). Online tutoring via small groups may be informed by informal perceptions, because students may seek help from peers and particularly from their tutors. Large group consultations may be face-to-face and informed by formal perceptions, as written documents may be involved in the process of tutoring. One-on-one tutoring is informed by personal perceptions, because of the love and passion that students have for tutoring. A study conducted by Kavaric (2023), classifying the effectiveness of different types of tutorial interventions on student success rates, concluded that online tutoring can be informed by informal perceptions, since tutees can get assistance from family members or

members of society. This might lead to different outcomes of the tutorial programmes, since family members or the community might provide false information, and the tutees may fail the subject as a result.

Tutor programmes are an important and established teaching and learning mechanism that can assist with facilitating learners' access to the epistemological discourse of the academy. These programmes have numerous benefits, such as promoting student engagement, relationship building and social integration within a supportive learning environment; promoting multilingualism, and collaborative and cooperative learning; enhancing student learning; encouraging critical and reflexive thinking; and promoting the quality of assessment (Ndlela, 2017; Priestley & Nieveen, 2020). Moreover, Roschelle et al. (2020), add that tutorials can play a major role in increasing student performance and success. Another benefit over and above this is the dual purpose tutor programmes in relation to tutors. This refers to the notion that tutors not only 'teach', they also learn while they are 'teaching' others. Essentially, they learn what they are teaching; they also learn *how* to teach (Priestley & Nieveen, 2020). Ultimately, the value of tutor programmes lies in how well they are designed, planned, and delivered at faculty, departmental and programme levels (Lekhetho, 2021). However, other scholars such as Hlekwase and Ntuli (2020) and Monyomane and Monyomane (2020) claim that one of the challenges of tutorials is that one needs to be motivated enough to complete tutorial tasks assigned by tutors (personal reflections).

Hlekwase and Ntuli (2020) conducted a study on tutors' views on the integrated e-tutor model in open and distance learning, and the findings revealed successes and challenges of the integrated tutoring model that affect the support that is due to deserving students. Further to this, another study was conducted by Chemhuru et al. (2015), on perceptions of students of the conduct of tutorials in Zimbabwe Open University using a mixed methods approach. The study intended to establish whether the tutorials are conducted in a manner that satisfied the students. The study findings revealed that tutors were not adequately prepared for their tutorials and recommended that tutors should be inducted in how to conduct tutorials. This suggests that many of the studies on students' perceptions of tutorials services focus on distance learning. This study intends to close the gap by conducting a study on students' perceptions of tutorial support services at a contact university. Finally, most studies on students' reflections on tutorial support services did not consider the three different levels of reflections (personal, formal, and informal reflections) but rather focused on tutorial services.

This study closes the research gap by focusing on the three levels of reflections.

There are numerous studies and literature sources available that examine the impact and effectiveness of tutorial support services for students. Below are some key findings and reflections.

Improved academic performance: Many studies have found that students who utilise tutorial support services tend to have higher academic achievement compared to their peers who do not access these services. For example, a study conducted by Kenny et al. (2019) found that students who received tutorial support had significantly higher exam scores and overall course grades.

Increased self-confidence and motivation: Tutorial support services have been found to boost students' self-confidence and motivation. Bhattacharyya et al. (2018) found that receiving tutoring led to increased self-efficacy beliefs and higher motivation levels in students, making them more likely to persevere and succeed academically.

Enhanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills: Tutorial support services often provide students with personalised guidance and feedback, fostering the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This suggests that informal perceptions through the guidance of the tutor are contributing to these skills. Sheikhi et al. (2017) found that students who received tutorial support demonstrated improved critical thinking abilities, leading to better analysis and interpretation of course content.

Increased retention and graduation rates: Tutorial support services have been found to positively impact student retention and graduation rates. A study conducted by Rutschow, Mayer and Douglas (2016) revealed that students who accessed tutoring were more likely to persist in their studies and graduate within a reasonable time frame.

Overall, the literature suggests that tutorial support services provide valuable assistance to students, helping them improve their academic performance, self-confidence, and critical thinking skills, and ultimately increasing their chances of retention and graduation. These findings highlight the importance of implementing and expanding tutorial support programmes at higher education institutions. The next section discusses the theoretical framework which was adopted by this study.

2.5 CURRICULUM ISSUES IN TUTORIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

The word curriculum stemmed from the Latin verb *currere*, meaning to run the course, with the noun of this word meaning "race or racecourse" (Seitz, 2017; Pinar 1974, 1976, 1978). Therefore, a curriculum is defined by Van Den Akker (2003) as a plan that dictates the way educational activities should be carried out in an organisation to achieve set goals and objectives. Other scholars (Nieveen & Van Den Akker, 1999; Sivesind et al., 2012) define the curriculum as a mix of main ingredients such as a course of study, individual students' experiences, content, and a set of subjects/modules or programne of studies. Taba (1967) viewed the curriculum as a planned learning experiences for students, meaning it resonates well with formal reflections since planned learning in terms of content is involved. In addition, Dewey (1938) avers that the curriculum should be based on the principle of experimental learning, where students learn by doing (doing practical tutorial quizzes) and reflecting on their experiences (whether formal, informal or personal). Further to this, Pinar et al. (1995) sees curriculum as something we do, and regards it as an action verb. If curriculum is viewed as an action verb, this implies that students reflect on their tutorial practice based on past actions (formal reflection), present actions (informal reflection), and future actions (personal reflection) in order to address all their needs.

Van den Akker (2009) and Thijs and Van den Akker (2009) further defined curriculum as an educational plan for teaching and learning, which is conducted via a series of lessons. Berkvens et al. (2014) defined curriculum as lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or programme during a particular time. Similarly, Tyler (1959) and Pinar (2012) defined curriculum as consisting of all experiences gained by the learner and teacher (tutor) and planned by the school to attain educational goals. This suggests that curriculum is a sequence of planned experiences where students practice content taught and apply knowledge and skills learnt to achieve excellence and proficiency. This further suggests that curriculum is an action-based activity which students must carry out, so that they will be able reflect (personal, formal, and informal) in order to understand correctly. In other words, these curriculum definitions seek students to be driven by all levels of reflections. This will help students to meet content standards and excel in a particular course/module or programme.

According to Van den Akker (2003) and Thijs and Van den Akker (2009b), curriculum has different levels: international, comparative (supra); system, society, nation, state (macro);

school, institution, programme (meso); classroom, group, lesson (micro); and individual, personal (nano). At macro level, the formal tutor policy document is from the Department of Higher Education and Training, the university has its own curriculum (meso), followed by the curriculum implemented by the tutor (MICRO) and finally the students' curriculum (nano). The focus of this study is at the nano level where students are involved in the implementation of the curriculum to achieve the learning outcomes thereof (Kuiper et al., 2005). Curriculum is also further divided into three main categories: intended (planned/prescribed); implemented (practised/enacted); and attained (assessed/achieved) (Van den Akker & Voogt, 1994). This study focused on the practised curriculum, which is mainly linked to what is happening in the tutorial classroom (Van den Akker, 2010). Mpungose (2016), Govender, Soni and David (2022) and Khoza (2016) also classified the three levels of curriculum as intended, implemented and attained.

2.5.1 Intended curriculum

The intended curriculum comes into view in national policies which reflect the national vision, educational plans, and formal and national documents certified for educational goals (Govender et al., 2022; Phaeton & Stears, 2017). Modebelu and Adegun (2019, p. 67) define the intended curriculum as a

> "set of formal documents which specifies what the relevant national education authorities and society expect that students may learn at school in terms of knowledge and skills, values and attitudes to be acquired and developed, how the outcomes of teaching and learning process may be assessed. It is usually embodied in curriculum framework(s) and guides, syllabi, textbooks, teacher guides, content of tests and examinations, regulations, policies, and other official documents".

For example, the tutorial module template is a formal plan of what is expected to be covered thorough the semester in the tutorial lecture venue at the institution. This suggests that the intended curriculum may be influenced by formal reflection, since it is guided by written documents such as tutorial policies, tutorial workbooks, textbooks, and tutorial module templates in order to address the student needs (Seitz, 2017). This further suggests that for students to reflect on the tutorials curriculum, they need to consult those written tutorial documents to adhere to the procedures. Other scholars, like Van den Akker (2010), refer to this curriculum as the official or planned curriculum. This suggests that the intended curriculum is official and formal in nature. This further suggests that something is written as part of the formal learning within a university, such as tutorial support documents, tutorial policy and other curriculum documents to support teaching and learning via tutorials at the

institution. Furthermore, a study conducted by Kabate (2014) showed that there was a positive relationship between the lecturer and tutor. The author asserts that the tutor and lecturer meet up before each tutorial class, to discuss what content should be covered in it. This is a good sign of a well-planned intended curriculum, because of the strong, vibrant relationship between the tutor and the lecturer. This relationship aids the understanding of tutorial module content by students, since the tutor is aware of what needs to be covered in a particular tutorial class. This suggests that formal reflections are at play since tutorial content is used to meet students' needs.

A study conducted by Priestley and Nieveen (2020) in which the authors discussed the role of the curriculum claims that objectives are what is to be achieved upon completion of the study, programme, or course. This suggests that objectives are crucial in the intended curriculum and tutors should be driven by objectives to understand the content of tutorials, because they are based on the tutorial content of the subject matter. Constantine et al. (2015), interrogate the link between curricula, syllabi and lesson plans, and claim that resources used in any tutorial class are key for teaching and learning. Thijs and Van den Akker (2009) suggested three main resources: hardware, software, and ideology. Hardware resources are tools or objects used in education, while software resources include any materials or tools which can display teaching and learning information, and ideology takes the form of activities that one cannot see or touch in education, such as theories (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009). Retna et al. (2009) claim that when students attend tutorial classes, they need to bring their hardware resources for the interface with their tutor. This suggests that students may use hardware resources to enable effective teaching and learning with the tutors, and they need to be driven by formal reflection.

Furthermore, according to Fix et al. (2019), summative assessment is defined as the learner's achievement at the end of the teaching cycle of a course or programme. For example, in the university tutor policy all students attending tutorials write a tutorial test which constitutes 10% in their final assessment for that particular subject or module. Makumane and Ngcobo (2021) claim that the student needs to determine what he/she has achieved and whether the learning outcomes were also achieved. This suggests that summative assessment is mainly used for measuring student performance and to test whether the student has grasped the concepts taught in the tutorial classroom. Moreover, the students are assessed on the tutorial content that they are taught during a particular period of learning. Hence, Hlekwase and Ntuli

(2020) define content as topics or concepts that are expected to be learned and form the basis of teaching and learning. The prescribed content differs according to the module. This articulates that students must be driven by formal perceptions in order to understand the tutorial content delivered to them by tutors.

Monyomane and Monyomane (2020) claim that the majority of learners attending tutorials are at-risk students and therefore require face-to-face interaction with their tutors. This suggests that students in large formal tutorial classes may prefer a formal location during formal times (working hours) in order to have contact with their tutors while they are on campus. This may also assist students to immediately understand the formal content they may have covered in the normal class with their lecturer. Furthermore, Shivananda et al. (2021) state that one of the student roles in the tutorial classes with small groups is to act as an instructor. Moreover, during content-centred learning, students use textbooks and tutorial workbooks to engage with the tutor and other students for tutorial activities. Without the actual implementation of any curricula, intended curricula will be useless (Hoadley & Jansen, 2013).

2.5.2 Implemented curriculum

Thijs & Van den Akker (2009) assert that the implemented curriculum, also known as the perceived curriculum, is the curriculum delivered by the teacher (tutor) and class activities. Further to this, it is also defined as curriculum in action, because both tutors and students must be in action during the teaching and learning process (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009a). This curriculum focuses on implementing the intentions or the goals of teaching and learning as intended by national officials (Phaeton & Stears, 2017). The implemented curriculum refers to "class management with institutional arrangements, educational strategies, source use and teachers' attitude" (Phaeton & Stears, 2017b, p. 13). The Glossary of Curriculum Terminology (UNESCO IBE, 2013, p. 30) defines the implemented curriculum as "the actual teaching and learning taking place in schools through interaction between learners and teachers (tutors) as well as among learners for example intended curriculum is translated into practice and actually delivered". This suggests that the learning activities are implemented to achieve the intended learning outcomes, which implies that the implemented curriculum involves learning outcomes. Van den Akker et al. (2010) explored how research could enhance curriculum reform, and defined learning outcomes as the totality of information, knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, competencies, or behaviours that a learner has mastered

during the completion of a curriculum. This suggests that during curriculum implementation, students must achieve the tutorial learning outcomes.

Moreover, when students engage in the implemented curriculum, it is important that they consider the social rationale behind their tutorials, which is driven by informal reflections. This suggests that informal content may be discussed with friends and peers during informal times (outside normal working hours). This is in line with Subban et al.'s (2022) belief that learning can happen anywhere, anytime, and that online learning is key to achieve this. In other words, tutorial learning can be improved by peer learning which involves exchanging information and knowledge among learners, allowing for a student-centred approach. Additionally, Monyomane and Monyomane (2020) claim that for a tutorial lesson to be effective, students should use software resources (WhatsApp, Facebook and VUTela) rather than only the materials received in the tutorial class. This suggests that students should also be driven by informal perceptions, because students may need to construct their own ideas through social activities assisted by their peers, tutors, and lecturers. This also further suggests that students may become tutorial facilitators within their small groups, and students may use this opportunity for peer assessment among themselves. Without an achieved curriculum, progress or failure may not be identified (Hoadley & Jansen, 2013).

2.5.3 Attained curriculum

Van den Akker (2003) classified the attained curriculum, which is also referred to as the assessed or achieved or learned curriculum, as at the student level. The author defined it as being the result of what has been achieved at the end of the teaching, learning and assessment cycle. The author further assert that the attained curriculum defines what students' competencies, academic achievements, attitudes, and belief indications are. In other words, it is what the learner or student absorbs during the teaching and learning process as a result of interaction with other students, tutors or the institution itself. This includes knowledge, attitudes and skills acquired by the student. The Glossary of Curriculum Terminology (UNESCO IBE, 2013, p. 6) defines the attained curriculum as one which "indicates the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that learners actually acquire as a result of teaching and learning, assessed through different means and/or demonstrated in practice". This suggests that the assessed curriculum reflects how a learner processed and interpreted the knowledge and skills (information) gained during the tutorial lessons.

Moreover, when students engage in the assessed curriculum, it is important that they consider the personal rationale behind their tutorials, which is driven by personal reflections (Govender et al., 2022). For this kind of curriculum to be successful and effective, when supporting students, tutors should be driven by the aims of the tutorial lessons in order to participate successfully and do well in those modules. In other words, tutors need to have their own aims to achieve the goals of the tutorial lesson. This suggests that for any tutorial class, the tutorial subject taught must have its own aims. Moreover, Khoza (2020) proclaims that ideological resources play a pivotal role in ensuring success in education. This suggests that students need ideologies (tutoring methods) in order to reach their aims. Moreover, in reaching their aims, the environment where the tutorials take place is crucial (Thijs & Akker, 2009b).

Machika (2013) posits that the dropout rate of about 40% in the first year of study is because there are no support programmes in place, or there is non-attendance of existing support programmes. This suggests that a certain percentage (for example 10%) of the tutorial marks should be added to the final marks of the student towards the end of the semester. This will not only allow students to attend in numbers, but also contribute to the overall success rates. In addition, a blended learning approach will be key in resolving some of the challenges students face, as they may work individually as researchers on tutorial assignments during their personal time. There are several approaches to curriculum design that educational practitioners may adopt when developing a new curriculum (Berkvens et al., 2014).

2.6 APPROACHES TO CURRICULUM DESIGN

Approaches to curriculum design can be broadly classified into three main types: vertical curriculum, horizontal curriculum, and pragmatic curriculum (Beane, 1997; Van Brummelen, 2002; Berkvens et al., 2014). Each approach focuses on different aspects of curriculum development and seeks to meet the specific needs of students in a tutorial class setting.

2.6.1. Vertical curriculum

A vertical curriculum refers to a sequential approach to curriculum development, where subject matter is organised into hierarchical levels of complexity (Van Brummelen, 2002). This approach aims to build upon previously learned knowledge and skills, ensuring a solid foundation before progressing to more advanced concepts (Marsh, 2014). This suggests that the curriculum is designed to progress vertically, ensuring a logical and coherent sequence of

learning experiences. For example, in a tutorial class for mathematics, a vertical curriculum would start with basic numeracy skills such as addition and subtraction, gradually progressing to more complex operations like multiplication and division, and eventually incorporating concepts like algebra and calculus. This approach recognises that learning is cumulative, and students need a strong foundation so that they may grasp more advanced concepts. This suggests that this approach is influenced by formal reflections since content is involved.

2.6.2. Horizontal curriculum

The horizontal curriculum focuses on the integration of different subject areas and the interrelationships between them (Beane, 1997). This approach is intended to create a holistic and interconnected learning experience for students (Jacobs, 1989). Therefore, it encourages interdisciplinary learning and helps students to understand how knowledge from various subjects can be applied in real-world contexts. For instance, in a tutorial class for environmental science, a horizontal curriculum would include elements of biology, chemistry, geography, and social studies. This would enable students to explore the interconnectedness of various environmental issues and understand the implications of their actions on ecosystems, human societies, and sustainability.

2.6.3. Pragmatic curriculum

The pragmatic approach to curriculum is focused on meeting practical needs and preparing students for the demands of the real world (Schiro, 2012). This approach emphasises the application of knowledge and skills, allowing students to develop problem-solving abilities and critical thinking (Miller & Seller, 2018). Furthermore, it integrates real-life experiences and contexts into the curriculum, making learning relevant and meaningful. For example, in a tutorial class for entrepreneurship, a pragmatic curriculum would include a mix of theoretical knowledge and practical experiences. Students would learn about business concepts such as marketing, finance, and operations, but they would also engage in activities such as creating business plans, conducting market research, and participating in simulations or real-world projects.

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is defined as “a figure, typically represented as a concept map that

summarises all key information presented in the literature review of the study" (Antonenko, 2015, p. 3). In clarifying this definition, Antonenko (2015, p. 6) further defines it as "a theory-based and driven argument that is developed to justify the significance of the problem, define relevant concepts, establish theoretical and empirical rationale, guide selection of appropriate of the methods and scaffold data analysis and interpretation". This suggests that a theoretical framework describes the theory or model of the phenomena under investigation in a study. The theoretical framework also serves as an organising instrument (Simmonds & Le Grange, 2019).

The theoretical framework used for this study was based on William Pinar's (1975) currere approach that encourages teachers and students to engage in a reflective process of curriculum inquiry (see Figure 2.2).

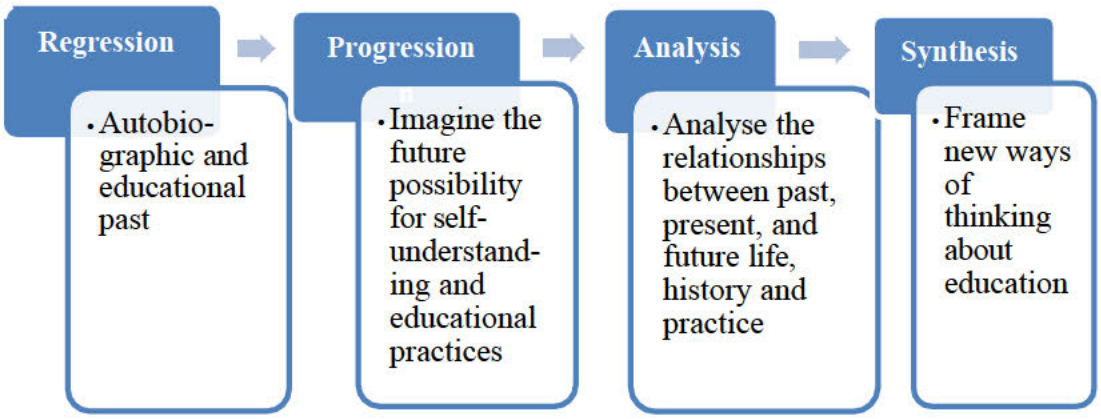

Figure 2.2: Four stages of the currere method (Source: Pinar, 1975)

The currere method consists of four stages, as depicted in Figure 2.2. This is often viewed as a cyclical process that can be revisited and revised as needed. The currere method is an educational approach that focuses on self-reflection and self-understanding as a means of curriculum development and teaching (Pinar, 2012). It involves four stages, namely the regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetic stages.

In the regressive stage of currere, students reflect on their personal experiences and memories to identify patterns and themes that have shaped their educational journey (Lambie & Law, 2018). The regressive stage involves looking back on past experiences, memories, and traditions to understand how they have shaped our identities and understandings of the world (Lekhetho, 2021). It encourages individuals to critically examine their own beliefs, values,

and assumptions, as well as the historical and cultural context in which they exist. Schwab (1971) emphasises the importance of personal reflection in curriculum development, arguing that it allows individuals to connect with the content and make it meaningful to their lives. One relevant reference that discusses the regressive stage in currere is Pinar's (2012) book *What is curriculum theory?* The author explores the role of personal experience in understanding curriculum and advocates for the significance of self-reflection. This stage is often characterised by asking questions such as 'Who am I?', 'How did I become this way?', 'What experiences have shaped me?', and 'What are the stories and traditions that have influenced me?' (Pinar, 2012). This suggest that students doing tutorials at this institution can look back at the past and see where they made mistakes and correct them.

The progressive stage involves envisioning alternative futures and possibilities for educational practices based on personal values and aspirations (Kenny et al., 2019). This stage encourages individuals to critically analyse the current educational system and imagine new ways of teaching and learning. A study by Miller and Bartlett (2001) explored the progressive stage of currere by examining teachers' visions for inclusive education. They found that teachers' personal values and beliefs played a significant role in shaping their visions for inclusive practices. This suggests that that personal reflections are at play, because students need to progress and envision alternative futures on their own. This stage is characterised by asking questions such as 'What is possible?', 'What do I want to become?', 'What are my hopes and dreams?' and 'What are the possibilities for change and transformation?' (Pinar, 2012).

In the analytical stage, individuals critically examine the existing curriculum and educational theories (Pinar, 1975). They analyse the cultural, historical, and social factors that have influenced the current curriculum and educational practices. This stage encourages individuals to question the underlying assumptions and power structures within the curriculum (Govender et al., 2022). A relevant reference for the analytical stage is Apple's (1993) book *Official Knowledge,* which analyses the hidden social and political agendas in educational policies and practices, providing a critical perspective to challenge the existing curriculum. This stage is characterised by asking questions such as 'What are the problems and challenges we face?',' 'What are the underlying causes and root issues?', 'What are the dominant narratives and discourses that shape our understandings?' and 'What are the power dynamics and who benefits from them?' (Pinar, 2012).

The synoptic stage involves synthesising and reconstituting new knowledge and understandings based on the previous stages (Pinar, 2012). This stage involves synthesising the insights gained from the previous stages to develop a new curriculum or educational approach that aligns with personal beliefs and aspirations. This stage emphasises the need for creativity and innovation in curriculum development. One reference that discusses the synthetic stage is Eisner's (1997) book *The Kind of Schools We Need*. Eisner proposes a reconceptualised curriculum that focuses on multiple intelligences and arts-based education, arguing for a more holistic and experiential approach to learning. This stage is characterised by asking questions such as 'What have I learned from the previous stages?', 'How can I challenge and change existing narratives, structures, and practices?' and 'How can I bring about meaningful and sustainable change in my educational context?' (Pinar, 2012).

Overall, the currere method aims to empower students to become active participants in their own learning and to engage in a critical and transformative approach to curriculum and education. It encourages students to reflect on their own experiences, values, and beliefs, and to critically analyse and challenge existing structures and systems in order to work towards more equitable and inclusive educational experiences (Govender et al., 2022). Below are the critical stages of currere and how they relate tutorials.

Stage 1: Recalling the past. In this stage, the goal of the tutorial is to help students reflect on their previous knowledge and experiences related to the curriculum content. Interpretation of this stage would involve creating an environment that encourages students to share their previous knowledge and experiences through discussions and interactive activities. The activities could include group discussions, individual reflections, or experiential exercises that help students recall and articulate their prior knowledge. The assessment could involve reflecting on their past experiences and connecting them to the curriculum content. For example, in a science tutorial, students could be asked to share their previous experiences with conducting experiments or making observations. They may discuss what they already know about the scientific method or identify any misconceptions they may have. The resources needed for this stage could include learning materials such as textbooks or online resources that provide students with prompts or questions to trigger their memory and reflection on past experiences.

Stage 2: Attending to the present. In this stage, the tutorial focuses on the current content and presents it in a way that is accessible and engaging to students. Interpretation of this stage

would involve creating an environment that accommodates different learning styles and abilities. The tutorial could incorporate various resources, such as visual aids, audio recordings, or hands-on activities to present the content in different formats. The assessment could involve checking for understanding and ensuring that all students have grasped the current content. For example, a history tutorial could include a mix of visual materials, such as maps or timelines, audio recordings of historical speeches or songs, and interactive activities that allow students to engage with primary sources. The environment could be set up with different stations or materials that students can explore at their own pace, accommodating different learning styles. The resources needed for this stage could include multimedia tools, such as projectors or virtual reality headsets, that enhance the presentation of the current content.

Stage 3: Anticipating the future. In this stage the tutorial focuses on helping students to make connections between the current content and their future goals and aspirations. Interpretation of this stage would involve creating an environment that encourages students to think critically and envision applications of the curriculum content in their future. Activities could include discussions, case studies, or project-based learning that require students to apply the current content to real-world scenarios. The assessment could involve evaluating students' ability to apply the current content to future situations. For example, in a mathematics tutorial student could be asked to solve real-world problems that require them to use the current content, such as calculating distances or solving for unknown variables in a practical scenario. The activities could also involve group discussions where students debate the relevance and potential applications of the current content in different professional fields. The resources needed for this stage could include real-world examples or case studies that illustrate the practical applications of the curriculum content.

In the context of students' reflections on tutorials, the currere framework emphasises the importance of allowing students to reflect on their own experiences during these sessions and to integrate these reflections into their learning process. By encouraging students to critically analyse their experiences, currere seeks to empower students and foster a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. One of the key aspects of currere is the notion of autobiography, where students are encouraged to examine their own life experiences and how they relate to the subject matter. This can be particularly valuable in tutorial settings, where students can draw on their own experiences (personal reflections) to deepen their

understanding of the topic and engage in meaningful discussions with their peers (informal reflections). Furthermore, the currere framework acknowledges the importance of subjectivity and recognises that each student's perspective is unique. In this regard, it encourages educators to provide a supportive and inclusive environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions.

While there may not be specific research studies examining students' reflections of tutorials using the currere framework, several recent studies have explored the broader applications of currere in various educational contexts. For example, a study by Steeves and Daley (2017) explored the use of the currere framework in a teacher education programme. The researchers found that integrating currere into the curriculum allowed students to reflect on their personal experiences as learners and to connect these experiences to their future roles as teachers. Another study by Akpinar and Sesen (2019) applied the currere framework in a university course to promote reflective thinking and enhance self-awareness among students. The researchers reported that students showed increased engagement and a deeper understanding of the course material when using the currere approach. Overall, these studies demonstrate the potential of the currere framework to foster meaningful reflections and promote student agency in various educational contexts, including tutorials (Wang & Morris, 2010). By encouraging students to critically examine their experiences and integrate them into the learning process, the currere framework can enhance students' engagement and understanding of the subject matter.

William Pinar's 1975 currere method is a valuable approach to understanding and analyzing the experiences and reflections of students in a university setting, particularly in discussing the topic of tutorial support services. This method allows for a critical and reflexive examination of the students' experiences, and it resonates with the poststructuralist and postmodernist educational theories that emphasize the importance of individual experiences and perspectives in the educational process (Pinar, 2012). One of the key principles of the currere method is the focus on personal experiences and reflections, rather than on predefined structures or theories (Wang & Morris, 2010). This aligns with the idea that students' perspectives and experiences should be at the center of educational research, particularly in the context of tutorial support services. By using this approach, it allows for a deeper understanding of the diverse and complex ways in which students engage with and experience tutorial support services. Furthermore, the currere method also emphasizes the

importance of context and cultural influences on personal experiences, which is particularly relevant in the South African university setting. By adopting this method, it allows for a more nuanced understanding of how tutorial support services are perceived and utilized by students from different socio-cultural backgrounds. In addition, Pinar's currere method allows for the integration of multiple forms of data, including narratives, interviews, and visual representations. This multi-modal approach enables a more comprehensive and rich understanding of the students' reflections on tutorial support services, which may not be fully captured through traditional research methods. Moreover, Pinar's currere method opens up the space for critical reflection and dialogue, allowing for a more democratic and inclusive approach to educational research (Brookfield, 2017). This is particularly important when examining tutorial support services, as it allows for the amplification of student voices and experiences, which are often marginalized in traditional educational research. One literature source that supports the adoption of Pinar's currere method in the study of students' reflections on tutorial support services is "Curriculum Studies Handbook: The Next Moment" by Erik Malewski (Gough, 2013). In this book, Malewski discusses the significance of Pinar's approach in highlighting the personal and contextual dimensions of educational experiences, which is essential in understanding students' perspectives on support services.

In conclusion, adoption of the currere method in this study on students' reflections of tutorials is driven by the desire to promote critical thinking, foster personalisation and student voice, connect academic learning to real-life experiences, encourage self-awareness and self-reflection, and empower students in their learning journey.

2.7.1 Rationale for attending tutorials

It is crucial to understand the reasons (rationale) behind students' decisions to attend tutorial classes. This literature review aims to explore and analyse the various personal, professional, and social reasons that drive students to attend tutorial classes. By examining previous studies, I can gain an in-depth understanding of students' motivations and highlight the significance of tutorial classes in their overall academic journey.

One of the primary personal reasons for attending tutorial classes is the desire for individual attention and personalised instruction. Research by Smith and McIntyre (2018) found that students often seek tutorial classes to clarify complex topics, address specific areas of difficulty, and receive more in-depth explanations directly from qualified tutors. Personalised

instruction helps students to develop a stronger conceptual understanding and enhances their overall learning experience. Another personal rationale for attending tutorial classes is the need for academic support. Students may struggle with specific subjects, assignments, or exam preparation and feel the need for additional explanations, practice, and feedback. A study conducted by Johnson et al. (2017) showed that tutorial classes provide a supportive environment where students can ask questions, receive immediate feedback, and engage in collaborative learning with peers facing similar challenges. This support may alleviate academic anxieties and enhance their self-confidence, leading to improved academic performance. This suggests that personal reasons for attending tutorial sessions may be influenced by personal reflections.

Students also attend tutorial classes due to professional reasons. One prominent rationale is the aspiration for academic excellence and competitive advantage. Wu et al. (2019) discovered that students recognised the tutorial classes as opportunities to supplement their regular coursework, expand their knowledge base, and outperform their peers. Additionally, the tutorial environment offers exposure to broader perspectives, cutting-edge research, and advanced learning techniques that can contribute to their professional development and future career prospects. Furthermore, tutorial classes can assist students in meeting high academic expectations or overcoming educational gaps. Several studies, such as that conducted by Chen and Chen (2016), have found that students from disadvantaged academic backgrounds may seek tutorial classes to bridge the learning gap and narrow the educational disadvantage. These classes allow for targeted remedial work and tailored guidance, enabling students to catch up with their peers and increase their chances of success. This suggests that professional reasons for attending tutorial sessions may be influenced by formal reflections.

Apart from personal and professional rationales, social reasons also play a significant role in students' decision to attend tutorial classes. Studies have noted that students often view tutorial classes as a platform to build social networks and form study groups with like-minded individuals. This social interaction provides a supportive and collaborative learning environment, as discussed by Zhou et al. (2018). Students can engage in peer discussions, share study resources, and exchange ideas, fostering friendships and a sense of belonging within the academic community. Moreover, tutorial classes offer opportunities for cultural and social integration. Research conducted by Liu et al. (2017) revealed that international students attending tutorial classes reported better adjustment and integration into the host

culture, facilitating the development of interpersonal skills and cross-cultural understanding. These classes also offer a chance to explore diverse perspectives and gain exposure to a wider range of experiences. This suggests that social reasons for attending tutorial sessions may be influenced by informal reflections as they are mostly influenced by peers and family.

2.7.2 Goals of attending tutorials

Understanding the goals, aims, objectives, or learning outcomes of attending tutorials is vital for tutors to design effective tutorial sessions. This literature review aims to explore previous research studies to identify the various goals that students may have when attending tutorials. Alawadhi and Morris (2008) explored the reasons why students attend tutorials and highlighted several objectives that students have, including seeking clarification on complex concepts, improving problem-solving skills, and preparing for exams. The findings emphasise the importance of providing clear guidelines and objectives for tutorial sessions. This suggests objectives are driven by formal reflections. Cottrell (2013) investigated the primary aims of attending tutorials, which included consolidating knowledge gained from lectures, practising skills through active engagement, receiving feedback on assignments, and enhancing critical thinking abilities. This suggests that the aims are driven by personal reflections.

2.7.3 Resources

In the digital age, students attending tutorials have access to a broad range of resources, including software resources, hardware resources, and ideology resources. Software resources play a vital role in the tutorial landscape, providing students with tools to enhance their learning experience. Online learning platforms such as Moodle, Blackboard or Canvas enable students to access course materials, submit assignments, interact with peers and instructors, and engage in discussions. These platforms often incorporate multimedia elements, enabling students to watch video tutorials or participate in virtual simulations, thereby catering to diverse learning styles (Jin, Bridges & Nendaz, 2013). Additionally, the availability of productivity software, such as the Microsoft Office suite and Google Docs, allows students to create, edit, and collaborate on documents, presentations, and spreadsheets. These valuable resources not only enable students to complete assignments effectively, but also promote collaborative learning (Gold & Jacobs, 2013). This suggests that software resources are influenced by informal reflections.

Hardware resources utilised by students in tutorials have also evolved significantly. The proliferation of personal laptops, tablets, and smartphones has ensured that students have constant access to instructional materials and resources. For instance, students can easily access e-books, online articles, and educational videos on their devices, enabling them to review relevant content anytime and from anywhere (Duncan et al., 2018). Furthermore, the integration of technologies like smart boards, videoconferencing systems, and classroom response systems allows for interactive and engaging tutorial sessions (Moss, 2017). This suggests that hardware resources are influenced by formal reflections.

Apart from software and hardware resources, ideology resources play an essential role in shaping the learning experience of students attending tutorials. Ideology resources encompass various factors such as pedagogical approaches, educational theories, and teaching strategies. For instance, a student-centred approach, like the flipped classroom, empowers students to take ownership of their learning by accessing pre-recorded lectures or materials before attending face-to-face tutorial sessions (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). This method allows students to interact with the instructor and peers, clarifying doubts and deepening their understanding of the subject matter during the tutorial. Moreover, the adoption of constructivist theories of learning promotes active engagement and critical thinking among students attending tutorials. By creating a collaborative learning environment that encourages students to construct their knowledge through interaction and reflection, tutorials become more learner-oriented (Jonassen, 2012). This suggests that ideology resources are influenced by personal reflections.

2.7.4 Accessibility

A considerable body of research has been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of tutorial classes, with distinct approaches that include individual tutoring, small group tutoring, and whole class tutoring. Individual tutoring involves a one-on-one interaction between a student and a tutor. This approach allows for personalised instruction tailored to the specific needs of the student. According to a study conducted by Bloom (1984), individual tutoring resulted in significant academic gains. It was found that individualised instruction allowed students to progress at their own pace, receiving immediate feedback and instruction geared towards their learning style. Similarly, Vygotsky's 1978 socio-cultural theory emphasises the zone of proximal development, suggesting that one-on-one interaction with a tutor can provide essential scaffolding for cognitive development. This suggests that personal tutoring is

influenced by personal reflections.

Small group tutoring involves a tutor working with a small cohort of students, typically 2–6 individuals. This form of tutoring promotes collaborative learning and peer interaction. Previous research has revealed positive outcomes associated with small group tutoring. For example, Gersten, Williams and Baker's study (2001) highlighted how small group tutoring enhanced students' metacognitive skills, as students could engage in discussing and reflecting on their thought processes. Additionally, small group settings can foster a supportive and interactive learning environment. Hattie, Biggs and Purdie's (1996) research indicated that peer interaction in small groups facilitated deeper understanding of concepts and greater confidence in academic performance. This suggests that small group tutoring is influenced by informal reflections.

Whole class tutoring involves delivering tutoring to the entire class as a collective unit rather than individual or small group settings. While whole class tutoring has had less emphasis in the literature, previous studies have identified some potential benefits. For instance, Slavin (1996) conducted a large-scale study that examined the impact of whole class tutoring, and the findings indicated that whole class instruction improved overall student achievement and engagement. This suggested that whole class tutoring may be effective when implementing instructional strategies that promote active learning and participation, such as cooperative learning structures or technology-based resources. This suggests that large group tutoring is influenced by formal reflections.

2.7.5 Content

This literature review aims to examine the content taught in tutorial classes and determine whether it leans towards personal, formal, or informal content. Previous studies suggest that tutorial classes often involve personal content tailored to students' individual needs. Cheng (2004) found that tutorial classes primarily focus on addressing students' specific weaknesses and difficulties in particular subjects. Tutors commonly assess students' proficiency levels and customise teaching plans to accommodate each student's unique learning style, aiming to foster a personalised educational experience. Moreover, research conducted by Wan et al. (2014) highlights the significance of personal mentoring and guidance in tutorial classes. Tutors often go beyond subject matter to offer support and guidance on personal matters, such as stress management, study skills, and goal setting. This personalised approach

facilitates a nurturing academic environment, aiding students in overcoming barriers to success. This suggests that personal content is influenced by formal reflections.

Although tutorial classes emphasise personalisation, formal content remains a key component of instruction. Scholars like Harris (2004) have shown that tutorial classes seek to strengthen students' understanding of specific topics that are covered in their regular classes. Tutors often work collaboratively with students to cover challenging content, reinforce key concepts, and provide additional practice materials. In a study conducted by Fenwi and Asongu (2015) it was observed that tutorial classes follow a structured curriculum, adhering closely to the official academic syllabus. Tutors employ standardised teaching methods and materials to ensure consistency and alignment with the formal education system. This formal content delivery enables students to gain a solid foundation in the subject matter while complementing their regular coursework. This suggests that formal content is influenced by formal reflections as content is involved.

While tutorial classes primarily focus on personal and formal content, there is also a place for informal content. Research by Cherian (2015) reveals that tutors often incorporate interactive and engaging activities such as group discussions, role-playing, and multimedia presentations into the tutorial class environment. These informal strategies foster active participation, enhance students' critical thinking skills, and create a relaxed learning atmosphere. Moreover, Ezeani (2011) found that tutorial classes may include informal discussions about real-life applications of academic concepts, case studies, and practical examples. This approach helps students relate theoretical knowledge to practical situations, enabling a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This suggests that informal content is influenced by informal reflections.

2.7.6 Activities

Tutorial activities play a crucial role in enhancing student learning experiences, helping them gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter through interactive discussions and active participation. The effectiveness of tutorial activities depends on the approach adopted by tutors, whether tutor-centred, person-centred, or learner-centred. This literature review aims to analyse previous studies and shed light on how students are performing in tutorials with different activity orientations.

Tutor-centred activities refer to the scenario where instructors take the main role in delivering

information and directing discussions. In a review of the literature on tutor-centred activities, Smith (2016) found that students perceive this approach as informative but that it often lacks engagement. They tend to be passive recipients of knowledge, leading to lower levels of critical thinking and knowledge retention. Additionally, research by Johnson (2018) suggests that tutor-centred activities can hinder students' creativity and autonomous learning, weakening their problem-solving skills. This suggests that tutor-centred activities are influenced by formal reflections as content is involved.

Person-centred activities aim to develop an environment where students actively engage in the learning process by sharing personal experiences and perspectives. According to a study by Brown (2017), students who participated in person-centred activities reported higher motivation, improved critical thinking skills, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. The findings from a study conducted by Taylor (2019) also demonstrate that person-centred activities fostered a supportive and inclusive classroom environment, resulting in increased cooperation and collaboration among students. This suggests that tutor-centred activities are influenced by personal reflections.

Learner-centred activities emphasise self-directed learning, allowing students to take control of their learning experiences. A meta-analysis conducted by Anderson (2018) revealed that students who engaged in learner-centred activities exhibited higher levels of motivation, intrinsic learning, and self-regulation. They were more likely to be active in class discussions, ask questions, and actively seek feedback from their instructors. Furthermore, Johnson (2017) found that students involved in learner-centred activities demonstrated improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This suggests that learner-centred activities are influenced by informal reflections.

2.7.7 Students' role

Traditionally, the role of students in tutorial classes has been perceived as passive receivers of knowledge from instructors. However, recent studies have emphasised the significance of students' active participation in the learning process. This literature review aims to explore the roles that students assume during tutorial classes, analysing their engagement as researchers, instructors, or facilitators. Several studies have highlighted students' ability to adopt a researcher role during tutorial classes. They engage in information-seeking behaviours, employ critical thinking skills, and carry out independent investigations to

acquire a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Kardash, 2000). These students demonstrate a self-directed approach to learning and actively seek out resources beyond what is provided by the instructor (Harris & Henry, 2003). By assuming the role of a researcher, students develop skills such as problem-solving, information evaluation, and evidence-based reasoning, enhancing their overall learning experience. This suggests that students are driven by personal reflections to act as researchers in the tutorial setting.

In certain instances, students may adopt the role of an instructor during tutorial classes. This role involves guiding and supporting their peers in understanding concepts, sharing insights, and facilitating discussions (Dolmans et al., 2006). Students who take on this role benefit from enhanced subject knowledge, critical thinking, and communication skills (Malik et al., 2020). It also allows them to consolidate their own understanding of the subject matter by articulating and explaining it to others (Chong & Chew, 2013). The instructor role empowers students to become active contributors to a collaborative learning community. This suggests that students are driven by formal reflections to act as instructors in the tutorial setting.

However, students in tutorial classes also play a crucial role as facilitators, promoting effective group dynamics, and fostering peer-to-peer learning experiences. They create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages active participation, dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving (Topping, 2017). By taking ownership of their learning and promoting shared responsibility, students facilitate knowledge construction (Brown & Palincsar, 1989). This fosters a sense of mutual respect and engagement, helping students to uncover diverse perspectives and alternative solutions (Sato, 2019). This suggests that students are driven by informal reflections to act as facilitators in the tutorial setting.

2.7.8 Environment/location

This literature review aims to explore the location and environment preferences of students attending tutorial classes, particularly focusing on three forms: online, face-to-face (in lecture halls), and blended learning. Online tutorial classes have gained popularity due to their convenience and flexibility. Studies have shown that students increasingly opt for online tutorials due to factors such as accessibility, time flexibility, and personalised learning options. For instance, Bernardo, Liu and Lou (2014) found that students appreciated the ability to access online tutorials from anywhere, eliminating the need for a physically fixed location. Similarly, Zawacki-Richter et al. (2020) observed that online tutorials allow

students to freely manage their time, conveniently fitting tutorials into their schedules. This suggests that personal reflections drive online learning.

Face-to-face tutorial classes held in lecture halls have long been the traditional educational setting. While this format offers direct interaction between students and instructors, it presents limitations in terms of spatial constraints and fixed schedules. Previous research by Anderson and McCroskey (2016) highlighted that some students prefer face-to-face tutorials for dynamic discussions, immediate feedback, and the social aspect of learning. Additionally, Vovides et al. (2009) noted that face-to-face tutorials fostered a sense of community among students, resulting in increased engagement and motivation. This implies that face to face tutorials may be influenced by formal reflections as they require a formal setting.

Blended learning combines both online and face-to-face components, seeking to leverage the benefits of both. Several studies have identified the advantages of blended learning tutorial classes. For example, Bogdanovic and Lillydahl (2016) found that blended learning provided students with flexibility without sacrificing the benefits of personal interaction. Similarly, Smedley, Higgins, and Xiao (2012) discovered that blended learning tutorials promoted active engagement and critical thinking through the integration of online activities and face-to-face discussions. This suggests that blended learning may be influenced by informal reflections.

2.7.9 Time

Determining the most effective time slot for attending tutorial classes is crucial to optimise students' learning outcomes. This literature review aims to explore previous studies investigating the timing choices for attending tutorial classes, specifically whether students attend during personal time, school hours, or exclusively on weekends. Several studies have examined the impact of attending tutorial classes during students' personal time, such as evenings or weekends. For instance, Cheng et al. (2014) found that students who attended tutorial classes during their personal time achieved significantly better grades compared to those who did not. Moreover, Daskolia and Hatzinikita (2018) reported that students who engaged in tutorial classes during personal time demonstrated improved self-regulation skills and a greater sense of autonomy, positively contributing to their overall academic performance. This implies that personal times are influenced by personal reflections.

There is limited research exploring the potential benefits and limitations of scheduling

tutorial classes during regular school hours. However, a study by Nelleke et al. (2016) found that organising tutorial classes during school hours provided students with an opportunity to receive immediate assistance and clarify any doubts related to class material. This synchronous learning environment facilitated active engagement, enhanced interaction between students and educators, and potentially improved learning outcomes. This timing is influenced by formal reflections. Another common timing choice for tutorial classes is exclusively on weekends, which allows students to focus solely on their academic endeavours during this specific time frame. A study conducted by Jansen et al. (2019) found that tutorial classes held on weekends positively contributed to students' motivation and perseverance, as they could dedicate uninterrupted time to their studies. Furthermore, a systematic review by Goldberg et al. (2017) highlighted that weekend tutorial classes were associated with increased exam scores and improved exam preparation. This suggests that informal reflections are at play.

2.7.10 Assessment

The effectiveness of tutorials relies not only on the content and teaching strategies but also on the assessment methods employed. This literature review aims to explore how tutorials are assessed, examining the three main approaches: assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning. By assessing tutorials effectively, tutors can gain valuable insights into students' understanding, provide personalised feedback, and facilitate continuous improvement in their teaching strategies. This review synthesises and discusses previous studies, offering useful insights for practitioners and researchers in the realm of tutorial-based assessments.

Assessment for learning (also known as formative assessment) involves gathering information about students' abilities and using it to provide feedback and support their learning. Several studies have demonstrated that in the context of tutorials, formative assessment enhances student engagement, motivation, and deep learning. For instance, Black and Wiliam (1998) found that when tutors incorporated formative assessments such as tutorial quizzes, peer feedback, and self-reflection exercises, students showed significant improvement in their tutorial performance. Similarly, Taras (2005) identified the importance of adopting real-time formative assessment methods in tutorials, such as think-aloud protocols, concept maps, and peer assessment, which effectively guided students' learning progression. This suggests that this form of assessment is influenced by personal reflections.

Assessment as learning focuses on empowering students to take an active role in monitoring their own learning progress. Research has shown that engaging students in self-assessment and reflection activities during tutorials promotes metacognitive skills, self-regulation, and deeper understanding. Hounsell (2007) illustrated the benefits of incorporating structured reflection in tutorials to encourage students' ownership of their learning journey. Moreover, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) emphasised the importance of dialogic feedback, whereby tutors engage in meaningful discussions with students regarding their learning strategies, goals, and progress, fostering a sense of autonomy and self-directedness. This suggests that assessment as learning is influenced by informal reflections.

Assessment of learning, also known as summative assessment, aims to evaluate students' achievement of learning outcomes at the end of a tutorial or course. Although often used for grading purposes, the assessment should also provide valuable feedback to inform future instruction. Studies have explored various summative assessment methods, such as written assignments, presentations, and examinations, to determine their effectiveness in assessing tutorial-based learning. For example, Tsui (2002) investigated the use of portfolio assessment in tutorials, highlighting its ability to assess both process and product, fostering critical thinking skills and providing formative feedback. Additionally, Moon et al. (2012) applied rubrics to evaluate students' tutorials, ensuring a comprehensive and fair assessment process. This suggests that summative assessment is influenced by formal reflections as it involves formal written documentation.

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined how informal reflection, formal reflection, and personal reflection emerge from the literature. The chapter stipulated that all curriculum levels are influenced by informal, formal, and personal reflections, including curriculum development beliefs and approaches (instrumental/vertical approach, horizontal approach, pragmatic approach). Pinar’s four phases model (regressive phase, progressive phase, analytical phase, and synthetic phase) was discussed as the theoretical framework of this study. The next chapter will unpack and put more emphasis on the research design and methodology utilised to generate the data.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two discussed students' reflections of tutorial support services in the South African higher education context and around the world. Chapter Two included matters related to reflections (personal, formal and informal) as the study phenomenon, the debate on students' reflections around the world, discussion on curriculum issues (intended, implemented, and attained) and approaches (vertical, horizontal, and pragmatic) to curriculum design in higher education institutions. Chapter Two also described the four phases of Pinar's currere as the conceptual framework. The literature also showed that tutorials are effective support interventions at universities, although students' reflections tend to differ.

The main purpose of this study was to explore students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university. To achieve this goal, the following objectives were designed to guide the study:

- To explore students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university.
- To explain how students' reflections influence tutorial support services at a South African university.
- To understand the reasons which inform students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university.

Moreover, the following critical research questions were formulated:

- What are students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university?
- How do students' reflections influence tutorial support services at a South African university?
- What informs students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university?

This chapter presents the methodology and design employed in conducting the research. It

provides a comprehensive overview of the research design, approach, paradigm, research style, sampling techniques, population and sample size, data collection and analysis methods, as well as the limitations of the study, ethical considerations, and measures to ensure trustworthiness. This chapter explains the overall research design that was selected for the study. It discusses the rationale behind the chosen design and justifies its appropriateness for answering the research questions and meeting the objectives. The research approach (qualitative) used in the study is described, and the reasons for adopting this specific approach are clarified. The benefits and limitations of this chosen approach are also discussed. This chapter delves into the philosophical paradigm guiding this research study, that is, the interpretivist paradigm. The different sampling techniques applied in the research are outlined and justified. This chapter also describes the population from which the sample was drawn, and the sample size is also determined and justified.

This chapter further explains the methods employed to collect and analyse data, which includes a description of the tools, such as interviews and reflective activity, used to gather data. Additionally, the data analysis techniques, such as thematic analysis, adopted for this study are detailed. The limitations inherent in the research design and methodology are discussed. The ethical considerations considered during the research study are outlined. This chapter also details the measures implemented to ensure the trustworthiness or rigour of the research. Techniques such as triangulation, member checking, peer review, and prolonged engagement are explained, highlighting how they enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, or confirmability of the study's findings.

By providing a comprehensive overview of the research methodology and design, this chapter establishes a strong foundation for the subsequent chapters, enabling readers to understand how the research was conducted and interpreted. A research design refers to the overall plan or strategy used to conduct scientific research and answer research questions. It outlines the methods and procedures that will be employed to collect and analyse data in order to reach valid and reliable conclusions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

This chapter therefore aims to provide more details about the research strategies adopted to address the research objectives and questions indicated above. Figure 3.1 is a flow model that gives a step-by-step outline of the research design and methodology that was adopted in this study.

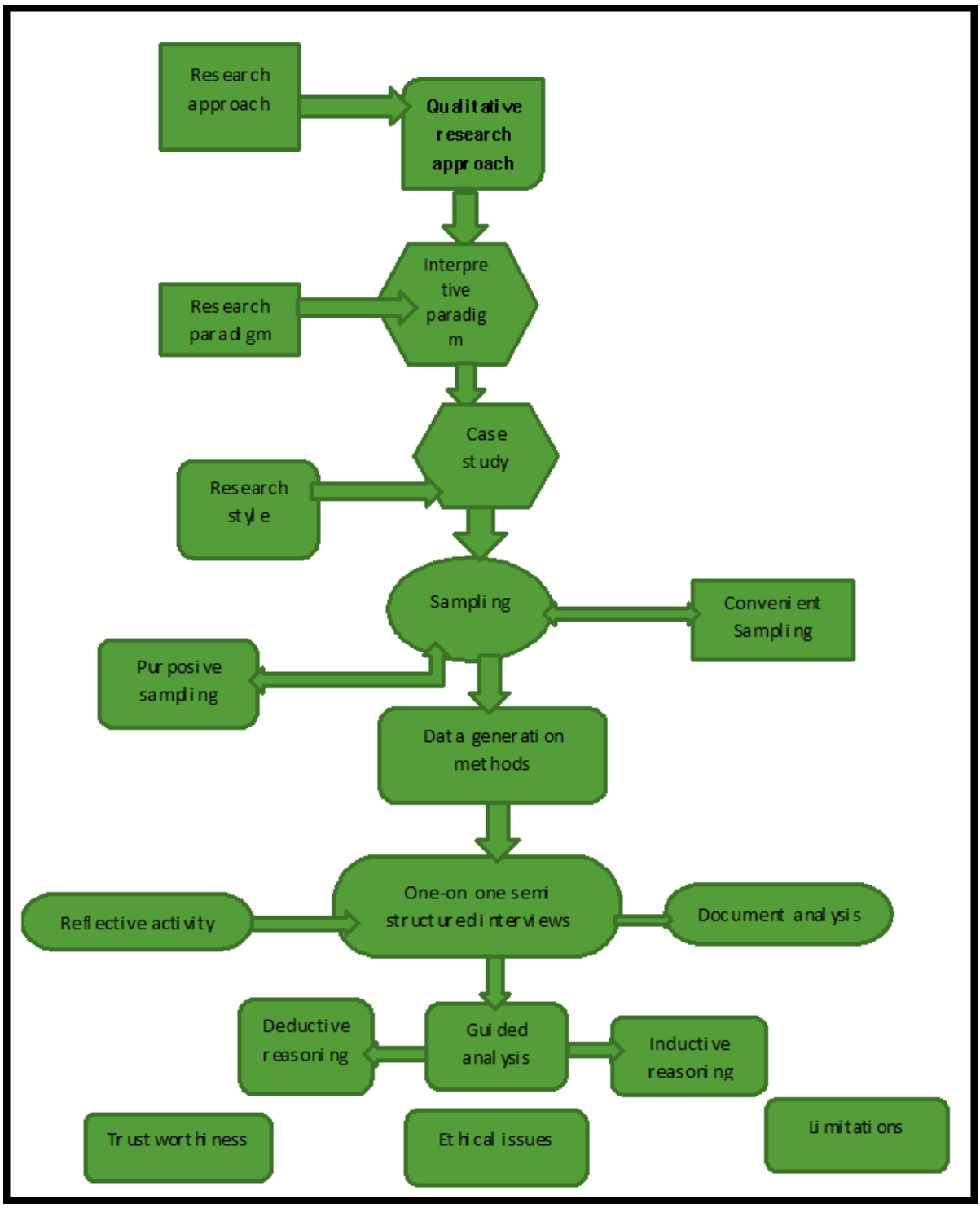

Figure 3.1: Chapter 3 flow model

3.2 LOCATION OF THE STUDY

South Africa has 26 public universities and this study chose one of them to be part of this study. This institution (a university of technology) is in the southern part of Gauteng

province. I am working at this institution and I therefore chose this place due to proximity and convenience to conduct this important study. This university has two campuses, namely, the Vanderbijlpark (main) campus and Sebokeng campus. Furthermore, the university has four faculties, which are Human Sciences, Management Sciences, Engineering and Technology, and Applied Sciences and Information Technology. Most students at this institution come from a disadvantaged background, and about 99% of them are Black and Coloured, while less than 1% comprise White and Indian students. This study explores the students' reflections on tutorial support services provided to undergraduates at this institution.

The next section discusses the research approach that was used in this study.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

There are three primary research approaches: the qualitative approach, quantitative approach, and mixed methods or pragmatic approach (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Ramrathan, 2017; Bryman, 2015; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). This study adopted a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach focuses mainly on the collection of non-numerical data to understand terms, personal views, or experiences (Rahman, 2016). Furthermore, qualitative research is normally used to gain more in-depth information from participants than a quantitative approach can provide (Creswell, 2013; Kozleski, 2017). This suggests that qualitative research gives the researcher an opportunity to interact and gain understanding by talking with participants (students) and observing students' behaviour in their real-life context. Additionally, qualitative research is typically "used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations", while quantitative research focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). This implies that this approach allows researchers to delve deeply into the topic and gain insights that might not be captured through quantitative methods alone. Furthermore, qualitative research is concerned with exploring and understanding the subjective experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of individuals or groups (Tracy, 2013; Rahman, 2020). This method often utilises techniques such as interviews, reflective activity, observations, and analysis of textual materials to gather rich, descriptive data (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). Many research scholars (for example, Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018; Rahman, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Creswell, 2013) argue that when studying human learning, a qualitative approach is the one best suited

to it.

Several reasons led me to choose a qualitative research approach for this study. First, qualitative research is particularly suitable when studying complex phenomena or exploring new areas where little prior knowledge exists (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2007). Its open-ended approach enables the discovery of new concepts, relationships, or patterns that would be missed by relying only on numerical data (Stewart & Hitchcock, 2020). Second, qualitative research allows for flexibility and adaptability during data collection (Creswell, 2002; Creswell, 2013). As a researcher, I can adjust my methods, probe more deeply into relevant areas, and modify the approach as to gain more understanding of the research topic. This flexibility is especially advantageous when the research question is exploratory and requires the researcher to be open to unexpected findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Third, qualitative research is valuable for generating rich, detailed data that captures the context and nuances of participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013). It provides a depth of understanding that numbers alone cannot convey. This is particularly relevant when studying social and behavioural phenomena, where capturing the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals is crucial. Lastly, qualitative research is often used in situations where ethical considerations play a central role, such as researching vulnerable populations or studying sensitive topics. It allows for a more personalised, empathetic approach that considers the unique circumstances and viewpoints of participants (Merriam, 2009; Rahman, 2020).

Furthermore, qualitative research was selected as the best research approach for this study, because the study aims to garner students' reflections on tutorial support services, which requires accessing experiences and reflections in the context of tutorials from selected participants. This suggests that the qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of students' reflections on tutorial support services and make them aware of the dimensions that influence their reflections on tutorial support services in a particular way. Moreover, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017, p. 23) outlined that "qualitative researchers do not assume that there is a single unitary reality that is apart from our reflection". As such, I utilised all levels of reflections (personal, formal, and informal) to arrive at the concrete conclusion using a descriptive research style.

One of the shortcomings of qualitative research is that it does not use numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017); to overcome this challenge I used written and spoken words.

Another limitation of qualitative research faced in this study was limited generalisability (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2016). To overcome this limitation, I employed qualitative meta-synthesis or comparative analysis, which involves combining findings from multiple qualitative studies to draw broader conclusions. Another challenge of this method is subjectivity and researcher bias (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The researcher can interpret data in his own way or understanding, introducing the possibility of subjectivity and researcher bias. To overcome this, I employed techniques such as member checking, peer debriefing, and independent coding by multiple researchers to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. Another limitation is that qualitative research is time-consuming and resource-intensive (Morse, 2015). It often requires substantial time and resources, as it involves in-depth interviews, observations, or focus groups. I mitigate this limitation by carefully designing my study, optimising sample size (six participants), and utilising innovative data collection methods such as virtual interviews. The next section discusses the research paradigm adopted for this study.

3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Research paradigms refer to the broad philosophical perspectives and approaches that guide how research is conducted and interpreted (Creswell, 2013). Two of the main research paradigms are positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is a quantitative-based paradigm that aims to discover universal laws and generalisations through empirical observations and testing (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In contrast, interpretivism is a qualitative-based paradigm that emphasises the subjective interpretation and understanding of social phenomena through the perspectives and experiences of individuals or groups (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The interpretivism paradigm is often considered the best choice in social sciences and humanities research due to its alignment with the nature of human experiences and social contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Interpretivism recognises that individuals have distinct interpretations of reality based on their unique beliefs, values, and social interactions. This paradigm focuses on the understanding of these subjective meanings and seeks to uncover the complexity and intricacies of human behaviour and social phenomena (Charmaz, 2006; Peterson & Lorimer, 2012).

This study adopted an interpretive paradigm. The research paradigm encompasses three dimensions, which are “ontology, epistemology, and methodology” (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 112). Ontological and epistemological aspects are mainly concerned with the

person's worldview (focusing on the aspects of reality). In support of this, Hennink et al. (2020, p. 26) posit that interpretivist researchers "adopt epistemology and the ontological belief that reality is socially constructed". They also believe that there is no single path to knowledge (anti-foundationalists). This suggests that interpretivist researchers draw from a variety of methods, tools, and techniques to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Cropley, 2022). Alexander (2004) further added that the interpretive paradigm explores the richness, depth, and complexity of the phenomena. Furthermore, in interpretive research, researchers seek to understand the world through human experience (Bitzer, 2010). Moreover, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017, p. 34) posit that when using this paradigm, "data is gathered and analysed in a manner consistent with the grounded theory". Interpretivist researchers believe that social interaction is key in gaining knowledge from participants (Hennink et al., 2020).

One of the key strengths of the interpretivism paradigm is its ability to capture rich and detailed data (Creswell, 2013). This paradigm relies on qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, which allow researchers to explore the depth and context of social phenomena. The use of open-ended questions in interviews, for example, enables participants to express their perspectives and experiences in their own words. This leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic (students' reflections of tutorial support services) than could be gained through the closed-ended survey questions used in positivist research.

Additionally, interpretivism acknowledges the role of the researcher in the research process. Researchers are viewed as active participants who engage in the interpretation and construction of knowledge. They recognise that their own biases and assumptions can influence the research findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). This reflexivity allows the researcher to critically reflect on their own positionality and its potential impact on the research process and outcomes. Moreover, interpretivism provides a valuable framework for studying complex social phenomena that cannot be easily quantified or generalised (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). For instance, in studying social interactions and cultural practices, interpretivism allows researchers to explore the nuances and meanings behind certain behaviours or rituals. This deeper understanding can contribute to the development of meaningful interventions and policies that are sensitive to the social and cultural context (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Other advantages of the interpretative paradigm are that it is good

for exploring hidden reasons behind the social phenomena, can assist in theory building, is most appropriate for studying context-specific or idiosyncratic events, and is also good in uncovering interesting and relevant research questions (Creswell, 2013).

While interpretivism has its strengths, such as providing rich and deep insights into human behaviour and social interactions, it also has some limitations. I discuss three main limitations of interpretivism and suggest ways to overcome them. One of the main criticisms of interpretivism is its potential for subjectivity and researcher bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Since interpretivism involves the interpretation of social phenomena through the lens of individual experiences and perspectives, it is susceptible to the researcher's own biases and preconceptions. To overcome this limitation, I adopted a reflexive approach. This means being aware of my own biases and preconceptions, acknowledging them and actively reflecting on how these might influence the interpretation of the data. I also used multiple researchers and conducted peer debriefing to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Silverman, 2017). By transparently documenting the research process and decision-making, I also allowed for scrutiny and achieve a sense of transparency and objectivity (Maxwell, 2012).

Another limitation of interpretivism is its limited ability to generalise findings to broader populations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Since interpretivism focuses on understanding the unique experiences of individuals, it is challenging to generalise these findings to larger populations or draw universal conclusions about social phenomena. To address this limitation, I embraced the notion of theoretical generalisation. This involves identifying common patterns or concepts that emerge from the analysis of qualitative data and connecting them to existing theories or frameworks (Maxwell, 2012), such as the one I adopted for this study. By establishing theoretical connections, I contributed to the development of broader theoretical understandings that might have wider applicability beyond this specific study context. Furthermore, I also increased the transferability of the findings by providing rich contextual details about the participants and setting, which allows readers to determine if the findings can be applied to their own contexts (Maxwell, 2012).

Another challenge of interpretivism involves the fact that it is resource and time intensive (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Interpretivism often requires a significant investment of resources and time. The data collection methods, such as interviews or observations, tend to be time-consuming and labour intensive (Charmaz, 2006). Additionally, the qualitative analysis

process can be iterative and time-consuming, as it involves in-depth coding, categorisation, and interpretation of data. To mitigate these challenges, I adopted purposive sampling and convenience sampling strategies. These involve identifying and selecting participants who possess the most relevant and diverse perspectives regarding the research question or existing knowledge (Silverman, 2017). For instance, in this study participants were selected based on their knowledge on the use of tutorial services and their ease of availability. I also utilised technology to facilitate the organisation and analysis of qualitative data, which helped me to streamline the analysis process and save time (Silverman, 2017). Lastly, in believing in this paradigm, I interacted with the participants (students) and I let them talk about their reflections on the tutorial support services without using more resources. The next section discusses the research style adopted for this study.

3.5 RESEARCH STYLE

This study employs a case study research strategy/design. Case studies are defined as in-depth studies which are intended to produce information from participants (one person, group, or events) by using manifold sources of data (Cohen, 2018). Yin (2003), Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) and Kozleski (2017) identify different types of case studies, such as explanatory, exploratory, intrinsic, instrumental, collective, and descriptive case studies. This study adopts a descriptive case study because I want to get better insights into the students' reflections on the tutorial support services. Yin (2003) defines the descriptive case study as one that provides a narrative account of what happened or is currently happening, to understand a particular case in question. A descriptive case study is also defined as a method of research that involves a detailed analysis of a specific case or phenomenon (Yin, 2018). It aims to provide an in-depth understanding and thorough description of the subject matter under investigation. This type of case study typically involves collecting qualitative data through various methods, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. Case studies allow studying of individual persons, a group of people, process, phenomenon or event in a particular institution in detail, which I believe my study can achieve by using three data generation methods (triangulation) (Cohen, 2007).

Case studies are often used by researchers in the interpretivist paradigm (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). This study looked at the case of undergraduate students at a South African university and used a descriptive case study of six undergraduate students currently doing tutorials. An interpretive descriptive case study is relevant for this study, because it allows me

to get richer information and to use open-ended questions with the students in understanding their perceptions of tutorial support services at a South African university. In addition, Yin (2003) reveals that the case study research strategy/design aims at gaining deeper insight and understanding of specific phenomena, in this case, reflections.

One of the advantages of a case study is that it can serve many stakeholders (Creswell, 2002; Tracy, 2013). This suggests that multiple stakeholders (such as lecturers, tutors, other students, coordinators, and so on) may benefit from one case study. Another strength of descriptive case study is that it provides researchers with extensive and in-depth data about a specific case. This level of detail allows for a comprehensive understanding of the subject and enables researchers to explore various aspects and perspectives (Creswell, 2014). This suggests that rich and detailed data can be obtained from such a case study. This method also allows researchers to study a phenomenon within its natural environment. By collecting data in real-life situations, the findings are more likely to reflect the complexity and richness of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2018). This further suggests that a naturalistic setting is beneficial to the study.

However, case studies also have their limitations, and one of them is bias (Stake, 1995). To avoid this limitation, I reviewed the findings with my peers, and I reported every step I followed to reach my conclusions. Secondly, due to their focus on a specific case or phenomenon, descriptive case studies typically have limited generalisability. The findings cannot be directly applied to other contexts or populations, as the uniqueness of the case may limit the applicability of the results (Yin, 2018). In overcoming this limitation, I employed appropriate sampling techniques, such as purposive sampling and convenience sampling, to help enhance the generalisability of the findings. I was also careful in selecting a case that represents a diverse range of contexts or populations to ensure broader applicability. The next section discusses the context and sampling techniques opted for in this study and the reasons for doing so.

3.6 CONTEXT AND SAMPLING

Sampling refers to the process of selecting sample data from the population of interest (Simmonds & Le Grange, 2019). This study adopts purposive sampling and convenience sampling, which are both non-probability sampling methods. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on the purpose of a particular study. The participants are not

randomly selected (Bryman, 2015). This sampling method is often used in qualitative research where the researcher aims to gain in-depth insights from a particular group or population (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Purposive sampling was adopted because students who attended the tutorial services are the holders of relevant information pertaining to this study, and hence were selected for this study. Moreover, I selected the students based on their experience of the use of tutorial support services at the institution. One of the major advantages of using this method is specificity: by targeting students who possess specific knowledge about tutorials, I addressed the research questions more effectively. Another strength is that purposive sampling allows researchers to access individuals with specialised knowledge or experiences, making the study more credible (Bryman, 2015).

However, there are certain limitations with this type of sampling. Purposive sampling may result in findings that represent only the selected participants, limiting the generalisability to wider populations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). To overcome this limitation, I clearly justify why a purposive sampling method was chosen, including the specific characteristics or expertise that participants possess and their relevance to the research question (thus providing a detailed sampling rationale for this study). As researchers intentionally select specific individuals, there is a risk of bias in the sampling process, potentially influencing the findings (Bryman, 2015; Creswell, 2013). To overcome this limitation, I provided rich and detailed descriptions of the selected participants, their characteristics, and the sampling procedure to enhance transparency and generalisability. In addition, I combined purposive sampling with convenience sampling to diversify the sample and increase the range of perspectives.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method that involves choosing participants based on their accessibility and availability, making it a practical choice for studies with limited resources and time constraints (Bryman, 2015). Additionally, in the context of this study, the researcher was specifically interested in gathering the reflections of students who have utilised tutorial support services. Convenience sampling provided a straightforward way to access this population and gather their perspectives on the topic at hand. It also allowed for the recruitment of participants from various backgrounds and experiences, potentially providing a diverse range of insights into the effectiveness of tutorial support services for different student populations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Overall, convenience sampling was a suitable choice for this study as it enabled the researchers to efficiently gather relevant data from the target population within the given constraints of the

research project. The convenience sampling technique involves a sample that is selected based on ease of access and convenience (Creswell, 2013). The convenience sampling technique was also opted for in this study because of proximity; it is a rigorous technique that allows easy access to participants and can provide relevant information for the study (Creswell, 2007). Convenience sampling allows me to collect data quickly and cost-effectively as participants were easily accessible. This suggests that this technique offers advantages of easy access to students who are readily available when needed. In this case, I selected six students (participants) who were easily and readily available; they were students who were attending tutorials. Participants in this study were recruited by email communication. I used convenience sampling because participants were my students at the university where I am currently working. I easily approached individuals who were conveniently located and known to me, saving me time and effort.

There are certain factors which might inhibit conducting research in a larger population, such as expense, time, and accessibility (Cohen, 2018). To overcome this, I tried to use a smaller, manageable group that was most representative of the population of interest. Creswell and Creswell (2017) state that convenience sampling tends to be biased toward individuals who are more accessible, who may not accurately represent the population of interest. This can lead to generalisability issues through lack of representativity. To overcome this limitation, I acknowledge and clearly state the limitation of convenience sampling in this research study, to ensure transparency and proper interpretation of the results. Another limitation of this method, as acknowledged by Creswell and Creswell (2017), is selection bias. As participants are selected based on convenience, there is a risk of selecting individuals with similar characteristics or opinions, compromising the diversity of the sample (Cohen, 2018). To overcome this limitation, I collected data from various convenient sources to increase the diversity and breadth of the sample.

Table 3.1 shows the demographic data for the participants in this study.

Table 3.1: Study participants' profiles

Participant	Level (year of course)	Modules	Qualification	Gender	Race

Participant 1, P1	1st	Marketing 1	BTech	Male	African
Participant 2, P2	1st	Logistics 1	BTech	Female	Indian
Participant 3, P3	2nd	Sociology of Education 2	BEd	Female	White
Participant 4, P4	3rd	Contemporary Issues	BEd	Male	African
Participant 5, P5	1st	Business Management 1	BTech	Female	African
Participant 6, P6	2nd	History of Education	BEd	Female	African

The next section discusses the data generation process.

3.7 METHODS OF DATA GENERATION

This study adopted three data generation techniques, namely reflective activity, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and a focus group discussion (FGD) to obtain rich, in-depth information on the reflections of students regarding tutorial support services. These three methods were used to improve the credibility and trustworthiness of data as well as creating consistencies in the findings across all methods applied.

3.7.1 Reflective activity

Reflective activity is defined as the ability to reflect on something, for example, on situations, problems and/or objects and act on it (Creswell, 2007). Reflective activity involves asking participants to reflect on their experiences and provide insights based on their own personal perspectives (Waldman, 2017). This suggests that this method allows for in-depth exploration of individual experiences and subjective meanings attributed to specific phenomena. Student reflective activity require students to answer short questions about the phenomenon of the study (reflections) (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I designed open-ended questions that are guided by the currere method for students to complete. This was the first step, setting the stage for the FGD and one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The reflective activity was used to explore different reflections on the tutorial support services at a South African university. Students were given time to reflect on their practices to discover if they had/used reflections to explore tutorial support services. A week was allowed for completion of this process.

The strengths of reflective activity are that it provides rich and detailed data on individual experiences and perspectives (McAllister & McCaughtry, 2009). This data generation method also allows participants to express personal thoughts, emotions, and opinions (O'Dea & Murphy, 2013). In addition, this method encourages participants to think critically and deeply about their experiences (Waldman, 2017). While there are many advantages of this method, limitations also exist. Participants may not have the necessary skills or awareness to articulate their experiences effectively (Kapoulas, 2018). Further, this method relies heavily on participants' ability and willingness to reflect accurately (Creutzfeldt & Czarniawska, 2010). Finally, findings may be influenced by social desirability bias or participants' reluctance to express negative experiences (Sitzia & Wood, 1998). Some methods I used to overcome these limitations included using prompts or guiding questions to help participants reflect more effectively (O'Regan, 2016), providing training or support to participants to enhance their reflective skills (Olofsson & Lindberg, 2018), and using multiple sources of data (for example, one-on-one interviews and an FGD) to triangulate and validate the findings (Bunniss & Kelly, 2010).

Table 3.2 shows the curriculum concepts and questions students were supposed to respond to, together with the propositions (levels), and levels of the phenomenon of interest (reflections).

Table 3.2: Curriculum concepts, questions, propositions and phenomenon levels

Concepts	**Questions**	**Propositions (levels)**	**Phenomenon levels**
Rationale (reflections - phenomenon)	Why are you attending tutorials? • What personal rationale/reason made you attend the tutorials? • What professional rationale/reason made you attend the tutorials? • What social rationale/reason made you attend the tutorials?	1. Personal rationale 2. Professional perception 3. Social perception	1. Personal reflection 2. Formal reflection 3. Informal reflection
Goals	Towards which goals are you attending tutorial classes? 1. What are your aims of attending the tutorials?	1. Aims 2. Objectives 3. Outcomes	1. Personal reflection 2. Formal reflection 3. Informal

	2. What are the objectives of attending the tutorials? 3. Indicate learning outcomes of attending the tutorials.		reflection
Resources	• What hardware resources do you use when attending the tutorials? • What software resources do you use when attending the tutorials? • What ideology resources do you use when attending the tutorials?	1. Hardware resources 2. Software resources 3. Ideological-ware resources/ ideology	1. Formal reflection 2. Informal reflection 3. Personal reflection
Assessment	How are tutorials assessed? 1. What activities do you use during formative assessment? 2. What activities do you use during summative assessment? 3. What activities do you use during peer assessment?	1. Formative assessment 2. Summative assessment 3. Peer assessment	1. Personal reflection 2. Formal reflection 3. Informal reflection
Content	• Is it personal content, formal content, or informal content? Please elaborate.	1. Personal content 2. Formal content 3. Informal content	1. Personal reflection 2. Formal reflection 3. Informal reflection
Accessibility/ grouping	How are tutorial classes done? • One-on-one tutoring • Small group tutoring • Whole class tutoring	1. Individual 2. Small group 3. Large group	1. Personal reflection 2. Informal reflection 3. Formal reflection
Student role	How do you facilitate your own learning during tutorial classes? • Is your role seen as the researcher, instructor or facilitator when attending the tutorials?	1. Researcher 2. Instructor 3. Facilitator	1. Personal reflection 2. Formal reflection 3. Informal reflection
Environment/	Where are you attending your	1. Online	1. Personal

location	tutorials? • Online platform; substantiate which platform • In the lecture halls, (face-to-face interaction) • Blended learning	2. Face to face 3. Blended	reflection 2. Formal reflection 3. Informal reflection
Activities	1. Tutor-centred activities 2. Person-centred activities 3. Learner-centred activities	1. Tutor-centred 2. Person-centred 3. Learner-centred	1. Formal reflection 2. Personal reflection 3. Informal reflection
Time	When are you attending your tutorial classes? • During my personal times • During school hours • On weekends only	1. Personal times 2. Formal times 3. Informal times	1. Personal reflection 2. Formal reflection 3. Informal reflection

Table 3.2 provides guidance to the teaching and learning of tutorials by providing the key components that work for successful teaching and learning. These components stem from the rationale (which is the mission of the plan).

Based on Table 3.2, students were expected reflect based on the propositions identified for each concept from the literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two.

Question 1 aimed to explore the students' rationale for attending the tutorials. Students were expected to respond with their personal reasons for attending tutorial sessions, societal reasons for attending tutorial sessions, according to the needs of the community or society or family members, as well as professional reasons for attending tutorial classes. Khoza (2016b) revealed that the success of any teaching lies in the rationale of each learner. This suggests that rationale at any level prepares students to effectively reflect on the tutorial curriculum. I expected to get responses on reflections based on a personal, professional, or societal rationale.

Question 2 required students to outline their goals for attending tutorial classes. They were expected to explain the goals according to their aims and objectives of attending the tutorials, and learning outcomes from attending the tutorials (Kennedy et al., 2009). This question also

aimed to find out if students have reflections based on these propositions, in order to reflect the tutorial curriculum. I expected to get responses on reflections created in terms of aims (personal), objectives (professional), and outcomes (societal visions).

Question 3 aimed to understand what resources students are attending tutorial classes with. This required students to indicate the kind of resources they use to attend tutorial classes according to three propositions: hardware, software, and ideological-ware resources (Khoza, 2015b). I expected responses to reflect on using theories (ideological-ware – personal reflection) of the module, strategies created using societal views (software – informal reflection) and hardware resources (formal reflection).

Question 4 intended to discover which assessment types were mostly used in tutorial sessions. The assessment types that students were expected to respond with were formative assessment, summative assessment, and peer assessment (Kisaka, 2017). This suggests that this question intended to find out if students are given all forms (assessment for, as, and of learning) of assessment during tutorial sessions for evaluating students' knowledge. I expected to get responses on reflections created by individual participants (formative assessment), reflections created for social purposes (peer assessment), and those created professionally (summative assessment).

Question 5 was expected to stipulate the content that students are taught in tutorial classes. This requested students to indicate the content they are taught in tutorial sessions, whether it is personal content, formal content, or informal content.

Question 6 aimed to find out how students are attending their tutorials. Students were expected to answer based on three concept propositions: individual, small groups, and large group (Sosibo & Katiya, 2015). In this question I expected to understand, for instance, how individual accessibility can influence examples which the student provides as a reflection of tutorial curriculum.

Question 7 expected to explore students' role in the tutorial classes. Here the student had to indicate which role he/she plays in the tutorial classroom. Moreover, students were expected to respond on the following three propositions: instructor, facilitator, or researcher (Bridgstock, 2016; Maharajh et al., 2013). This suggests that students were expected to indicate if they are tutor-centred, student-centred or person-centred in their tutorial classes. Moreover, I wished to know how they reflect based on the different roles they play in their tutorial classes.

Question 8 was based on where students are attending the tutorial classes (environment/location). The three propositions used under this question were face-to-face interaction, online learning, and blended learning (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009a; Yuen, 2010). This question aimed at finding out if students are still using/enjoying traditional ways of teaching and learning (face-to-face interaction), online learning, or blended learning.

Question 9 expected to explore tutorial activities/tasks students receive during tutorial curriculum implementation, and questions to be answered were based on three propositions: tutor-centred, personal centred and learner-centred activities. This question aimed at understanding whether students are implementing constructivist learning approaches (learning activities) in tutorial classes.

Question 10 intended to find out when students are attending their tutorial classes and their preference regarding time. Time attendance was looked at through three propositions: personal time, during school time, and during weekends (Cunningham & Yamasaki, 2018).

3.7.2 One-on-one semi-structured interviews

One-on-one semi-structured interviews involve having a face-to-face conversation with a participant, where the interview follows a flexible structure but allows for probing and clarification when necessary (Pluskota et al., 2019). This method enables deeper understanding of individual perspectives and experiences (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Cropley (2022) is of the view that the semi-structured interview is the most common type of interview and is often used by qualitative researchers. The questions for the individual semi-structured interviews were derived from the currere theoretical framework, and data were generated through face-to-face interviews with the selected students.

This method allows for in-depth exploration of individual thoughts, emotions, and experiences (Marshall et al., 2013). This method also allows the flexibility to adapt the interview process based on participants' responses (Sabri et al., 2014). Lastly, this method builds rapport between the interviewer and participant, facilitating open and honest discussions (Barbour, 2007). In support, Rahman (2016) points out that the advantage of one-on-one semi structured interviews is that the participants are free to talk about what they deem important, with little influence from the researcher. The author further suggests that it is important for researchers to be able to establish rapport with the participant so that they can be trusted if they are to reveal important information. This could be another way of

overcoming the problem of students who do not want to talk freely about events or situations as they unfold.

Despite the advantages of this method, there are some limitations. This method of data collection may be influenced by the power dynamics between the interviewer and participant, potentially leading to social desirability bias (Chapple et al., 2017). This method also relies on participants' recall abilities, which may be affected by memory biases (Hasson et al., 2000). In addition, this method requires skilled interviewers to effectively probe and follow up on interesting points (Fassinger, 2005). To overcome these limitations, I established a supportive and non-judgemental environment to minimise power dynamics (Pluskota et al., 2019). I also conducted member checks to verify the accuracy of the collected data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The FGD is discussed next.

3.7.3 Focus group discussion

Focus groups involve bringing together a small group of individuals to discuss a specific topic or experience (Rahman, 2016). This method allows for interaction and group dynamics, enabling participants to build on each other's ideas and insights (Hennink et al., 2020). A focus group interview was conducted with students regarding the use of tutorial support services. Creswell (2013) asserts that focus groups can also be referred to as discussion groups or group interviews, where a small group of people come together to discuss the research issue at hand. The focus group sessions allowed students to share their experiences on the use of tutorial support services in my presence. I used an interview schedule to guide the focus group sessions. I conducted one focus group session with the six students who participated in this study. Cropley (2022, p. 56) asserts that when “there is only one-shot opportunity for data generation, focus groups maybe a reasonable alternative to conducting a number of individual interviews”. This allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the different opinions and viewpoints of participants, as the discussion is conducted in a natural and unstructured way which allows participants to be free to express themselves on the topic at hand (Hennink et al., 2020).

Another strength of this method is that it facilitates the exploration of shared experiences and social dynamics (Kitzinger, 1995), enables participants to gain new perspectives and insights through group interactions (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006), and provides a more efficient way to gather data from multiple participants simultaneously (Kreuger, 1998; Patel & Patel, 2017).

Despite the strengths of this method, there are some limitations, which include the possibility of dominant individuals within the group overshadowing others and limiting their input (Stewart et al., 2007), participants not feeling comfortable expressing their true opinions due to social pressure (Liamputtong, 2011), difficulties in coordinating schedules, and logistical challenges to assembling groups (Kitzinger, 1995). In overcoming these limitations, I established clear ground rules for participation and encouraged equitable participation (Hennink et al., 2019). I also employed a skilled moderator to ensure that all participants had an opportunity to contribute (Bloor et al., 2001). Finally, I provided participants with opportunities for individual feedback and follow-up interviews to capture their independent perspectives (Wilkinson, 2004). Moreover, Maree (2007) argued that focus group interviews produce rich data that may be difficult to analyse; I overcome this shortcoming by using thematic analysis to analyse all of the data that was generated.

The next section describes how the data that was collected was analysed.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in qualitative research is defined as the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, observation notes, or other non-textual materials that the researcher accumulates to increase the understanding of the phenomenon (Phaeton & Stears, 2017). The process of analysing qualitative data involves coding or dividing the data into categories. It entails making sense of massive volumes of data by reducing the volume of raw data, recognising relevant patterns, pulling meaning from data, and then constructing a logical chain of evidence Thematic analysis was used as the method to analyse the data in this study. Thematic analysis is a method for studying and analysing qualitative data that comprises examining a dataset for repeating patterns, understanding the data, and reporting the data. It is a tool for understanding data, but it also incorporates interpretation in the selection of codes and the creation of themes, or recognition of relevant or intriguing patterns in data, and then using these themes to address the research issue being studied.

Data analysis in qualitative research involves the systematic examination and interpretation of qualitative data collected from interviews, observations, focus groups, or other sources (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It aims to uncover meaningful patterns, concepts, and themes from the data to understand the participants' experiences, perspectives, and contextual factors (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This study adopted thematic analysis to identify, analyse, and report themes within the dataset. It involves the identification of patterns of meaning or themes in

the data, coding relevant segments of data to these themes, and organising them into a coherent and meaningful narrative (Phaeton & Stears, 2017). Thematic analysis was chosen for this study because it helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, contexts, and the wider factors impacting their tutorial experiences. Another reason for using thematic analysis is that the transparent and systematic process of it enhances the robustness and credibility of findings (Creswell, 2007). Thematic analysis offers an opportunity to explore rich descriptive narratives, reflecting the complexity and nuances of the data (Hennink et al., 2020).

The data in this study were analysed using an inductive and deductive approach to allow organisation of the data into categories to maintain alignment with the research questions and maintain focus on the purpose of the study. The data was organised using the keywords or themes highlighted mostly by the participants regarding the research questions, and the keywords were organised to analyse the data. The data was further coded into descriptive codes, with open coding used to identify the themes that were found to be of value.

One of the limitations of thematic analysis is interpretation bias (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a subjective process that relies heavily on the researcher's interpretation. Different researchers may identify different themes from the same dataset, leading to potential bias and variations in the results (Patton, 2015). Another limitation is possibly overlooking important themes (Nowell et al., 2017). Depending on the researcher’s background, values, and interests, they may unconsciously overlook or downplay certain themes, missing relevant insights that are present in the data. One final limitation is lack of transparency (Braun & Clarke, 2006) if the decision-making process used in identifying and defining themes is not adequately explained or made explicit. This can lead to difficulties in replicating the analysis or assessing its validity (Nowell et al., 2017). In overcoming these limitations, I used an iterative process where initial interpretations and themes were continuously refined and reviewed. This helped in addressing potential biases and ensured that important themes were not overlooked. Reflexivity was another way of overcoming the limitations of this method. I regularly reflected upon and documented my own biases, values, and assumptions. This self-awareness helped increase transparency and reduce the impact of subjective interpretations in the analysis.

The ethical considerations for this study are discussed next.

3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical considerations are of the utmost importance in any research project, and qualitative studies are no exception. In qualitative research ethical considerations concern aspects such as the treatment of human participants, confidentiality and informed consent, the researcher-participant relationship, and potential harm to participants (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Ethics involves a critical reflection of morality with its intent to safeguard the world, including the environment, animals, and humans, to protect dignity and promote justice, equality, fairness, truth and trust (Creswell, 2013). This implies that ethics is a systematic approach of morality and how we ought to act in a given situation, providing strong reasons for doing so.

3.9.1 Permission to conduct this study

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was sought and granted by the University of KwaZulu- Natal, reference number: HSSREC/00006262/2023, and a gatekeeper's letter was obtained from Vaal University of Technology (VUT) Research Ethics Committee, reference number CREC 25-05-2023-5.2.

3.9.2 Informed consent

Participants were informed that they are under no obligation to take part in or complete the survey questions. Each participant was informed that should they feel uncomfortable during the study they have the right to withdraw at any time, with no penalties for doing so. An informed consent form was given to each participant to consent to the interview before data collection could take place and their understanding of the research project was communicated. The consent form had a clause which confirmed that the study will not harm them in any way. In qualitative research obtaining informed consent is essential to ensure that participants understand the purpose, potential risks, and benefits of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It was explained that no harm would be caused to the participants as the study did not involve animals or dangerous items. I outlined the scope of the study and its goals to them and assured the participants that their comments would be kept private and anonymous.

3.9.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Preserving the confidentiality and anonymity of participants is crucial in qualitative research (Morse et al., 2002; Berkvens, Van den Akker, & Brugman, 2014). The anonymity, confidentiality, identity, and privacy of the participants was considered and clarified to the institution and the participants, to protect their rights and views. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the interview guide bears no personal details of the participants, and

pseudonyms were used instead.

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in qualitative research entails establishing credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Cropley, 2022; Stewart & Hitchcock, 2020). This study's findings were accurate because the research questions align with the research objectives, and participants were selected based on their attendance of tutorials.

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the qualitative researcher's belief in the accuracy and truth of the study's findings (Hennink et al., 2020), and encompasses the researcher's ability to establish authenticity, credibility, and resonance with the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To ensure credibility I asked my supervisor to cross-check this study and make input, where necessary, to improve it. Credibility was also noted in the reflective activity where students gave their true reflections of their experiences with the tutorial support services. In ensuring credibility in this study I also used various techniques, such as prolonged engagement, member checking, peer debriefing, and thick description. Prolonged engagement involved spending a substantial amount of time in the field, which helped build trust and rapport with participants. This also allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the research context. Member checking was used to verifying the interpretations I made by consulting the participants to ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented. I also used peer debriefing, which involved sharing and discussing the research process and findings with my peers, gaining valuable insights and perspective. Thick description was also applied in this study and mainly refers to providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, methods, and findings. Finally, I used recording devices, which include my cellphone, field notes, quotes from interviews and concepts from the literature review, to increase the credibility of this study.

3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to how the researcher shows that the findings of a study may be applied to similar contexts, demographics, or phenomena (Creswell, 2013). Transferability is concerned with the applicability of the findings in different contexts or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure transferability in this study, I provided thorough and detailed descriptions of the study context, participants, methods, and data analysis procedures. This

allows my readers to determine the similarities and differences between their context and the research study and make judgements about the transferability of the findings. Using purposive sampling techniques and providing rich descriptions of the participants' characteristics can also enhance transferability. Finally, the study's findings apply to similar situations, populations, and phenomena, thus establishing its transferability.

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to providing correct and direct information in a study (Creswell, 2012), and the stability and consistency of the research findings over time and across different researchers (Tracy, 2010). To ensure dependability in this study, I provided clear and transparent documentation of the research process and steps taken, allowing for replication of the study. Also, using multiple researchers and an audit trail can help establish dependability by providing different perspectives on the data, increasing the rigour and credibility of the findings. Finally, in this study dependability was also ensured by using direct quotations from participants and references from reputable scholarly work.

3.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree of neutrality and objectivity in the findings of a research study (Creswell, 2007; Tracy, 2010). It also refers to the degree to which the findings are shaped by the participants' perspectives rather than the researcher's biases or preconceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To ensure confirmability in this study, I adopted a reflexive stance, acknowledging my own biases and values and how these might have influenced the research process and findings. Using triangulation techniques by collecting data from multiple sources such as one-on-one interviews, reflective activity, and an FGD, also enhanced confirmability by providing different perspectives and minimising researcher bias. I also ensured confirmability by taking the data generated and my interpretations of it back to the participants for them to confirm that it accurately reflected what they had shared.

3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to one university and only students who had used the tutorial services, hence these results cannot be reliably generalised to all South African universities. However, the study has raised questions and concerns that might lead to further research on a larger scale.

University-level tutorial learning takes various forms, and the way students experienced the tutorial services were also different from one another for various reasons, such as the student's personality, motivation, ability, learning preferences and styles, and disposition. Their personal perceptions might also have influenced the findings of this study.

Another limitation was exclusion of the views of tutors, tutors' coordinators, and lecturers on the tutorial services. These are curriculum specialists or practitioners and their contribution could enrich the findings of the study. Moreover, I may be biased to a limited extent, as I am an educator at this institution, and I was interviewing my students and may have personal enthusiasm for this research. I was as unbiased as possible, given the circumstances. I allowed students to provide their own information without persuasion during my interaction with them.

3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the research design and methodology of this study and defined the research approach, research paradigm, research style, sampling, data generation methods, data analysis, ethical issues, and trustworthiness as well as the limitations of this research study. Weaknesses were also mentioned, and ways to overcome them. All the above-mentioned methods provide an outline of the research procedure and gave direction as to how it should be conducted to achieve its intended objectives. The students' reflections of tutorial support services were explored using the methods indicated above.

The following chapter provides an analysis of the data generated through the earlier defined research methods, with a focus on outlining the research findings with a discussion thereof.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter on research methodology provided a detailed account of the research design, data collection methods, and procedures employed in this study. It served to provide a foundation to understand the context and the systematic approach used to investigate the research questions. This chapter presents the findings and discussions derived from the qualitative data analysis, providing a deeper insight into the nuances and intricacies of the research topic. By delving into the qualitative data, the aim of this chapter is to present an in-depth exploration and interpretation of the data collected from six participants via reflective activity, one-on-one structured interviews, and an FGD. Through analysis of participants' experiences, perspectives, and narratives, Chapter Four provides a comprehensive overview of the major themes that emerged from the qualitative data. Additionally, this chapter offers critical reflections and discussions on the implications and significance of these findings, shedding light on their relevance and contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the field. Lastly, the currere theoretical framework is discussed and why it was specifically chosen for this study.

4.2 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The three types of reflections ascertained in the literature review, namely personal, formal, and informal reflections, are used to reflect on the tutorial support services at this institution. Each reflection level is related to a theme. The findings are presented with excerpts from the participants' reflective activities and interview responses, and discussion of these findings will be related to the literature discussed in Chapter Two. Below are the ten themes that emerged in this study.

Table 4.1: The ten themes which emerged from the study, questions and data generation method applied.

Theme number	**Theme**	**Research question**	**Data generation method**
Theme 1	Rationale for attending tutorials	Why are you attending tutorials?	Interviews Focus group Reflective activity
Theme 2	Goals of attending tutorials	Towards which goals are you attending tutorial classes?	Interviews Focus group Reflective activity
Theme 3	Content	What is taught in tutorial classes?	Interviews Focus group Reflective activity
Theme 4	Resources	With what resources are you attending tutorial classes?	Interviews Focus group
Theme 5	Student role	How do you facilitate your own learning during tutorial classes?	Interviews Focus group Reflective activity
Theme 6	Assessment	How are tutorials assessed?	Interviews Focus group
Theme 7	Teaching environment	Where are you attending your tutorials?	Interviews Focus group
Theme 8	Tutorial activities	How are you doing your tutorial activities?	Interviews Focus

			group Reflective activity
Theme 9	Accessibility	How are tutorial classes conducted?	Interviews Focus group
Theme 10	Time	When are you attending your tutorial classes?	Interviews Focus group

4.2.1 Theme 1: Rationale for attending tutorials

Question: Why are you attending tutorials?

Participants gave different reasons as to why they attend tutorials. The participants' responses cut across all rationale levels (professional, personal, and societal), as seen in the excerpts below.

P3, and P6 outlined that they attend tutorials to be supportive of other students who need help:

> **P3:** *I attend tutorials because it allows me to be a part of a supportive community of students who are all working towards the same goal. We can share our knowledge, experiences, and study strategies, which helps us grow academically and socially as a group.* (Social rationale)

> **P6:** *Socially, attending tutorials allows me to meet new people and make friends who share similar academic interests. It creates a positive and inclusive environment where we can exchange ideas and support each other throughout our educational journey.* (Social rationale)

P5 and P4 both had a professional rationale for attending:

> **P5:** *I attend tutorials because I know that I learn better in a smaller group setting. Tutorials allow me to have more one-on-one interactions with the tutor, which helps me understand the material more thoroughly.* (Professional rationale)

> **P4:** *I attend tutorials because I believe it enhances my professional development. It gives me the opportunity to clarify any doubts or concepts related to my field of study, ensuring that I have a strong foundation in the subject matter.* (Professional rationale)

P1 and P2 indicated their interest in and love for attending tutorials:

> **P1:** *I attend tutorials because I value the personalized feedback and guidance from the tutor. The constructive criticism and suggestions help me improve my understanding and performance in the subject.* (Personal rationale)

> **P2:** *Personally, I attend tutorials because it helps me stay motivated and accountable. Knowing that I have a tutorial session every week pushes me to stay on top of my assignments and actively engage with the course material.* (Personal rationale)

The university policy documents especially the tutor policy is silent on this matter, because they do not consider that the rationale for students attending tutorials can inform best practices.

Previous studies have identified several reasons why students choose to attend tutorial classes, including personal, professional, and societal rationales (Khoza, 2015; Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009).

Many students attend tutorial classes to improve their academic performance in certain subjects. They may feel that their regular school classes are not sufficient to meet their learning needs. Some students attend tutorial classes to gain confidence in their abilities and reduce anxiety about exams or assignments. The additional support and guidance from tutors can boost their self-esteem (Bernstein, 2006). Tutorial classes offer personalised attention and individualised instruction to students. This can be attractive to those who feel lost or overlooked in large classroom settings. These all imply a personal rationale which is influenced mostly by personal reflection.

In some countries attending tutorial classes is common among students preparing for competitive exams, such as university entrance exams or standardised tests (Kennedy, 2016). They believe that these classes provide them with a competitive edge in achieving higher scores. Students may attend tutorial classes to gain extra knowledge and skills that can enhance their future career prospects. Certain subjects or skills may not be covered comprehensively in regular schools, prompting students to seek additional instruction. These are mostly a professional rationale, influenced by formal reflections.

Cultural and societal factors can play a role in students attending tutorial classes. In some societies, there is a social expectation that students must excel academically. This can create parental pressure, leading students to attend tutorial classes for fear of disappointing their families (Makumane & Khoza, 2020). If a significant number of students in a particular school or community attend tutorial classes, it can create a peer-driven trend. Students may feel compelled to join these classes to avoid feeling left behind or to conform with their peers' actions. This suggests that a social rationale is influenced by informal reflections.

It is important to note that these rationales may vary, depending on the educational system, cultural context, and individual circumstances (Makumane & Khoza, 2020). Additionally, while some studies suggest potential benefits of attending tutorial classes, others raise concerns about over-dependence on such classes or the widening of educational inequalities. The findings indicated that students were driven by personal, professional, and societal rationales when attending tutorial sessions.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Goals of attending tutorials

Question: Towards which goals are you attending tutorial classes?

The findings below show that students had different goals (objectives, aims and outcomes) related to attending tutorial support services, as can be seen below.

In terms of goals, P6 stated a clear aim. When students are attending tutorials towards aims, they are drawing from personal reflections.

> **P6:** *My aim of attending tutorials is to improve my understanding of difficult concepts and strengthen my skills in certain subjects.* (Aim)

Participants also indicated their objectives, as seen in the statements of P4; P2 and P5. These students are drawing from formal reflections. This level of reflection forces students to attend tutorials in line with the goals of the tutorial programme at the institution:

> **P4:** *The objectives of attending tutorials for me are to increase my subject score and achieve better grades overall.* (Objectives)

> **P5:** *Attending tutorials helps me to clarify any doubts or misconceptions I have and allows me to grasp a deeper understanding of the subject matter.* (Objectives)

> **P2:** *The tutorials also provide an opportunity for me to engage in discussions with*

peers and learn from their perspectives, which broadens my knowledge and critical thinking skills. (Objectives)

Moreover, learning outcomes from attending the tutorials were shared by some students:

P3: *One of the learning outcomes I expect from attending tutorials is to become more confident in my abilities and feel prepared for exams or assignments.* (Learning outcomes)

P1: *The learning outcomes of attending tutorials for me include being able to apply the concepts learned in class to real-life situations and develop problem-solving skills.* (Learning outcomes)

This suggests that students were driven by informal reflections. The university policy documents, especially the tutor policy, is not silent about the goal of tutorials at the institution. The goal is to drive all underprepared students to reach their maximum potential through various support programs such as tutorials.

There is limited specific information available regarding the goals of attending tutorials at a university in terms of aims, objectives, and learning outcomes. However, previous research on the broader topic of tutorials and their role in education provided some insights. One study by Wisker (2003) focused on the aims and objectives of tutorials in higher education and suggests that tutorials are designed to promote active student engagement, facilitate interactive learning, and encourage critical thinking skills. Tutorials aim to create a supportive learning environment that allows for more individualised attention, encourages student participation, and facilitates deeper understanding of the course material.

Sweeney and Brown (2016) investigated the effectiveness of tutorials in achieving specific learning objectives and identified various learning objectives commonly associated with tutorials, such as enhancing problem-solving skills, critical analysis, and understanding complex concepts. The study found that effective tutorials helped students to develop these skills through active engagement and discussion.

Overall, the existing research emphasises that tutorials play a vital role in supporting students' learning outcomes. They aim to enhance student engagement, foster critical thinking skills, promote interactive learning, and achieve specific learning objectives. In light

of the above findings, this study suggests that participants are drawing mostly from formal reflections when foreseeing goals to be achieved in attending tutorials.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Content

Question: What is taught in tutorial classes?

Most participants (three) stated that personal content is delivered in all their tutorial classes:

> **P1:** *In tutorial classes, we mostly focus on the content that is taught in our regular classes, but in a more personalised and interactive way.* (Personal content)

> **P4:** *We receive additional guidance on the content taught in our regular classes during the tutorial sessions, helping us deepen our understanding and overcome any difficulties we might have.* (Personal content)

> **P6:** *Tutorial classes not only reinforce what we learn in class but also provide opportunities for personal growth and development through mentoring and self-reflection exercises.* (Personal content)

P1's sentiments imply that tutorial classes revolve around the academic subjects covered in regular classes, but with a personalised approach tailored to each student's needs. P4 indicates that tutorial classes help students with personal content related to their regular classes – offering additional guidance, clearing up doubts, and helping them to grasp the subject matter better. P6 highlights that in addition to reinforcing academic content, tutorial classes also focus on personal growth and development by incorporating mentoring and self-reflection exercises tailored to each student's individual needs. Overall, the excerpts from the three participants show that personal content is influenced by personal reflections. The tutor policy or other tutorial documents do not stipulate what needs to be covered in the tutorial sessions, but they do emphasise that new work cannot be covered by tutors in the tutorial sessions.

Some of the participants revealed that they do formal activities in the tutorial classes:

> **P3:** *I find tutorial classes quite helpful for formal content. We cover specific topics in depth and our tutors provide us with detailed explanations and examples.* (Formal content)

> **P5:** *Tutorial classes focus on formal content, but they often include real-life examples and scenarios to help us better understand the concepts.* (Formal content)

This suggests that tutorial classes primarily concentrate on formal content but aim to provide practical applications through real-life examples, making the learning experience more comprehensive. This further suggests that students are driven by formal reflections.

Some students revealed that the content covered in tutorial classes is both formal and informal:

> **P2:** *It's a mix of both personal and formal content in tutorial classes. We not only learn academic concepts but also develop skills like critical thinking and problem-solving, which are essential for personal growth.* (Informal and formal content)

This implies that none of the participants claim that they only do informal content which is driven by informal reflections.

Previous studies have indicated that tutorial classes often include personal content, such as individual experiences, case studies, or anecdotal examples. These elements aim to enhance students' engagement and understanding by connecting the subject matter to real-life contexts (Dansen & Crisovan, 2014). Incorporating personal content can help foster a deeper connection between the students and the material being taught.

Tutorial classes typically focus on delivering formal content related to the subject matter being taught. These classes may cover specific theoretical concepts, fundamental principles, problem-solving techniques, or academic theories (Hawthorne, 2012). The purpose of emphasising formal content is to ensure that students grasp the core concepts and can apply them appropriately in different contexts. Apart from the formal aspects, tutorial classes often incorporate informal content to facilitate a more relaxed and interactive learning experience. Informal content can include discussions, group activities, multimedia presentations, and open-ended questions (Walker, 2018). It allows students to actively participate in the learning process, express their thoughts, raise questions, and engage in collaborative problem-solving.

The findings of this study regarding this theme is that the majority of participants draw from personal reflections, because they shared that personal content is mostly covered in the tutorial classes.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Resources

Question: With what resources are you attending tutorial classes?

The findings from this study regarding resources shows that different students are using different resources: hardware, ideological-ware, and software, when attending tutorial classes.

The three participants below outlined the software resources that they use:

> **P1:** *I mainly use online collaborative platforms like Google Docs and Zoom for attending tutorials. It helps me stay connected with my peers and interact with my tutors effectively.* (Software resources)

> **P4:** *When attending tutorials, I heavily rely on software resources like virtual whiteboards and online learning platforms. These tools enable me to interact my peers and tutors.* (Software resources)

> **P5:** *For software resources, I regularly use educational applications and websites recommended by my instructors. They provide additional practice exercises and interactive content to enhance my learning experience.* (Software resources)

One mentioned ideological-ware resources:

> **P3:** *In terms of ideology resources, I make use of online forums and educational websites to broaden my understanding of the subject. Sometimes I also consult with my classmates to get different perspectives.* (Ideological-ware resources)

Hardware resources were also mentioned:

> **P6:** *During tutorials, I utilise hardware resources like my tablet and stylus to annotate lecture slides and participate in group activities. These tools help me stay engaged and contribute actively to the sessions.*

> **P2:** *For hardware resources, I rely on my laptop and a stable internet connection. These are essential for accessing the tutorial materials and participating in online discussions.*

The university tutorial documents do not mention which resources students should use during tutorial sessions, mainly because tutorials are offered via a blended approach, and therefore students have a choice.

Software resources in tutorial classes typically refer to the various applications, programs, or digital tools that students can use to support their learning. Previous research has emphasised the importance of providing students with access to appropriate software resources that align with the learning outcomes and objectives of the tutorial class. For example, educational software programs, online platforms, or interactive course materials can enhance student engagement and facilitate a more interactive learning experience (Harrell, 2017).

Hardware resources pertain to the physical devices or technologies that students use during tutorial classes. This may include computers, laptops, tablets, interactive whiteboards, or any other electronic devices that support the learning process. Previous research has highlighted the significance of having sufficient and reliable hardware resources to ensure that students can fully participate in tutorial activities. Also, offering a variety of devices can cater to different learning preferences and needs of students (Greenfield, 2016).

Ideological-ware resources encompass the beliefs, attitudes, values, and mindset that students bring to their learning experiences. Previous research has indicated that these resources can significantly impact students' academic performance and engagement in tutorial classes. For example, a growth mindset, where students believe that intelligence and abilities can be developed through effort and practice, has been associated with increased motivation and academic achievement (Dweck, 2008).

Encouraging a positive learning mindset and providing resources to develop metacognitive skills, such as reflective thinking and self-regulation, can support students' overall success in tutorial classes (Schraw & Moshman, 1995).

4.2.5 Theme 5: Student role

Question: How do you facilitate your own learning during tutorial classes?

Students revealed how they facilitate their own learning during tutorial classes, either as a researcher, instructor, or facilitator:

P1: *During tutorial classes, I take charge of my own learning by actively participating in discussions and asking questions to clarify any doubts I may have.* (Researcher role)

P2: *I consider myself to be a researcher during tutorials, as I often conduct additional research on the topics being covered to deepen my understanding*. (Researcher role)

P6: *I actively engage in group activities and discussions during tutorials, as it helps me to absorb the information better and learn from my peers.* (Researcher role)

P3: *As a student, I see my role as both an instructor and a facilitator. I share my knowledge and help my peers by explaining concepts to them, and at the same time, I depend on others to share their insights with me.* (Instructor and facilitator role)

P4: *As a student, I see myself as my own learning facilitator during tutorials. I set goals, manage my time effectively, and prioritize the areas where I need further understanding.* (Facilitator role)

P5: *I facilitate my own learning in tutorial classes by taking thorough notes and reviewing them afterward to reinforce what I've learned.* (Facilitator role)

Several authors have emphasised the importance of students adopting the role of researchers during tutorial classes. These studies argue that taking an active approach in acquiring knowledge and seeking answers to questions can enhance learning outcomes. By engaging in independent research, students can expand their understanding of the subject matter beyond what is explicitly covered in the class. This role as a researcher encourages students to be self-directed learners, fostering curiosity and a deeper understanding of the material.

Additionally, previous research suggests that students can serve as facilitators in tutorial classes. This role involves organising and leading discussions, facilitating group activities, and encouraging peer-to-peer learning. By assuming the responsibility of a facilitator, students can enhance their comprehension through explaining and teaching concepts to their peers. Not only does this role promote a more active learning environment, it also fosters collaboration and communication skills that are essential for future professional endeavours.

Furthermore, the role of students as instructors has been discussed in the literature. Some authors argue that teaching concepts to others is an effective way to consolidate knowledge and reinforce understanding. By becoming an instructor, students are able to take abstract concepts and translate them into more tangible explanations. In assuming this role, students develop a deeper understanding of the material and the ability to effectively communicate complex ideas.

It is worth noting that while previous authors and studies recognise the potential benefits of these roles, they also acknowledge the challenges that students may encounter in facilitating their own learning during tutorial classes. Factors such as time management, confidence levels, and prior knowledge can influence the effectiveness of assuming these roles.

Additionally, proper support and guidance from the instructor or tutor are crucial in enabling students to fulfill these roles effectively. The tutor guides are silent on the issue of the student's role during tutorials, mainly because it is not compulsory to attend tutorials.

4.2.6 Theme 6: Assessment

Question: How are tutorials assessed?

The students' responses regarding how tutorials are assessed are presented:

> **P1:** *Tutorials are usually assessed through a combination of participation, assignments, and tests. Our tutors evaluate our understanding of the material by engaging in class discussions and actively participating in group activities.*
>
> **P2:** *At our university, tutorials are assessed through regular quizzes and presentations. We are expected to prepare beforehand and demonstrate our understanding of the topic by presenting our findings to the class. Our tutors then provide feedback and assign grades accordingly.*
>
> **P3:** *The main focus of tutorial assessment at our university is on class participation. Tutors encourage us to actively contribute to discussions and share our thoughts on the topic. They assess our understanding and ability to critically analyse the material based on our input.*

P4: *Assessment in tutorials can be quite diverse. Sometimes we have written exams, other times we have to submit essays or reports. It varies depending on the subject and the tutor's preferences.*

P5: *To assess tutorials, our university uses a combination of in-class quizzes, group projects, and individual assignments. Tutors evaluate our understanding of the subject matter, communication skills, and ability to work collaboratively.*

P6: *We are assessed in tutorials through a range of techniques, including written tests, presentations, and peer evaluations. Our tutors aim to create a supportive and interactive learning environment, where we can demonstrate our knowledge and skills.*

This suggests that more of the participants are assessed in tutorials through a range of assessments. The university documents are silent regarding assessment during tutorial sessions, because attending tutorials is not compulsory at the institution. It is therefore left to the tutor to decide what form of assessment they can use with the students, depending on the subject offered.

Assessment plays a crucial role in evaluating the effectiveness of tutorials and ensuring that learners attain their desired goals. In this section, i discuss the assessment of tutorials in terms of assessment of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning, taking into consideration the viewpoints of previous authors.

Assessment of learning refers to the evaluation of learners' achievements and outcomes after completing a tutorial. Several authors suggest that assessing learning outcomes is essential to determine the effectiveness of tutorials in terms of knowledge acquisition, skill development, and comprehension (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Svinicki, 2011; Balbay, Pamuk, Temir, & Dogan, 2018). This assessment approach typically involves traditional methods, such as quizzes, exams, and projects, to measure learners' level of understanding and content mastery. These assessments of learning provide quantitative data that can help tutors and educators identify areas that require further instruction or improvement.

Assessment for learning focuses on formative assessment practices aimed at enhancing the learning process during tutorials. It involves actively engaging learners in reflection, self-assessment, and feedback, which in turn facilitates their understanding of the subject matter (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1989; Kisaka, 2017). According to the previous

authors, assessment for learning enables learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses, set learning goals, and make improvements based on feedback received. This approach emphasises the importance of ongoing assessment throughout the tutorial, rather than relying solely on summative assessments.

Assessment as learning is another approach that views assessment as a learning activity itself. Authors such as Price et al. (2012) argue that assessment should be designed in a way that promotes deep learning, critical thinking, and metacognitive skills. Assessment tasks should offer opportunities for learners to engage in higher-order thinking, apply their knowledge in real-life scenarios, and develop a deep understanding of the tutorial material. This approach encourages learners to take an active role in the assessment process, promoting a sense of ownership and self-regulation in their learning.

While there is a consensus on the importance of assessing tutorials, the most effective assessment methods may vary, depending on the specific context and learning objectives. It is crucial for tutors and educators to consider all three assessment approaches (assessment of learning, assessment for learning, assessment as learning) to ensure comprehensive evaluation and promote effective learning experiences.

4.2.7 Theme 7: Teaching environment

Question: Where are you attending your tutorials?

The responses revealed that tutorials at this institution are carried out using a blended approach, with both face-to-face learning and online learning used separately or together:

> **P1:** *I enjoy attending my tutorials in lecture halls because the face-to-face interaction with my peers and instructors really helps me to grasp the concepts better.* (Face-to-face learning)
>
> **P6:** *The lecture halls provide a vibrant learning environment for tutorials. The physical presence of fellow students and the instructor creates an atmosphere of engagement and active learning.* (Face-to-face learning)
>
> **P3:** *I attend my tutorials on an online platform called Microsoft Teams. It offers various features like screen sharing and breakout rooms that facilitate easy collaboration and discussion among classmates.* (Online learning)
>
> **P5:** *I prefer attending my tutorials on an online platform called Google Meet. It*

integrates well with other Google tools and enables easy communication and group work with my classmates. (Online learning)

P4: *Blended learning for tutorials works well for me as it allows me to have both the convenience of accessing resources online and the opportunity to have face-to-face discussions and clarifications in a physical classroom setting.* (Blended learning)

P2: *I find the blended learning approach for tutorials to be quite effective. It gives me the flexibility to attend some sessions online and others in person, depending on my schedule and preferences.* (Blended learning)

The tutor documents are not silent when it comes to teaching environment, students have a choice to attend either face to face or via online depending on their accessibility to the resources. The analysis of previous literature reveals varying trends in the modality of tutorial classes attended by students, encompassing online, face-to-face, and blended learning formats. A diverse range of studies provide insights into the prevalence and effectiveness of each modality.

A study conducted by Smith et al. (2018) examined the participation of students in online tutorial classes and found that it has become increasingly popular due to its flexibility and accessibility. The authors argued that online tutorials allow students to engage in learning activities remotely, accommodating their individual schedules and preferences. In contrast, Johnson et al. (2017) emphasised the significance of face-to-face tutorial classes. The authors highlighted the benefits of direct interaction between students and tutors, which facilitates active learning, immediate feedback, and the development of interpersonal skills.

The concept of blended learning, combining both online and face-to-face elements, has gained attention in recent years. A study by Brown et al. (2019) discussed the advantages of blended learning tutorial classes, stating that this modality offers a balance between convenience and personal interaction. The authors argued that blending online and face-to-face components allows for flexibility while maintaining the benefits of direct engagement.

A meta-analysis conducted by Johnson and Smith (2016) compared the effectiveness of different tutorial class modalities. The authors found that blended learning tutorial classes

outperformed both fully online and purely face-to-face formats in terms of student achievement and satisfaction. They suggest that the combination of online resources with face-to-face sessions provides a more comprehensive educational experience.

These previous studies provide valuable insights into the preferences and effectiveness of different tutorial class modalities. However, it is important to acknowledge that the choice of modality may depend on individual student characteristics, subject matter, and institutional context. Further research might focus on specific disciplines or explore the impact of tutorial class modality on student outcomes.

4.2.8 Theme 8: Tutorial activities

Question: How are you doing your tutorial activities?

Participants' responses indicate how tutorial activities are conducted at this institution.
The tutorials included learner-centred activities:

> **P3:** *Our tutor encourages active participation and group discussions during tutorial activities. It's very learner-centred as we get to share our opinions and learn from each other.* (Learner-centred activities)

> **P4:** *In our tutorials, the tutor assigns individual research projects and presentations. It's quite learner-centred as we take ownership of our learning and explore topics of interest*. (Learner-centred activities)

> **P6:** *Our tutor often organises group activities and discussions, giving us the freedom to voice our thoughts and opinions. It's definitely learner-centred, as we actively contribute to the learning process.* (Learner-centred activities)

P1 was the only participant to mention tutor-centred activities:

> **P1:** *Our tutor always leads the discussions and provides examples during tutorial activities. It feels very tutor-centred and structured.* (Tutor-centred activities)

Two participants mentioned that the activities in their tutorials were content-centred:

> **P2:** *Most of our tutorial activities involve reading and summarising the content. It's definitely content-centred as we focus on understanding and analysing the material.* (Content-centred activities)

P5: *Our tutorial activities involve problem-solving exercises and case studies. It feels more content-centred as we apply the concepts learned in class to real-life scenarios.* (Content-centred activities)

Sanna and Adeel (2019) observed that tutor-centred activities are commonly used in tutorial sessions. These activities involve the tutor taking the lead in delivering lectures, explaining complex concepts, and providing guidance to the students. According to Biggs and Tang (2011), tutor-centred activities may include presentation of new information, provision of examples, and clarification of doubts or misconceptions. These activities ensure that the tutor guides the students' learning process.

Ma and Xu (2018) argue that content-centred activities in tutorial sessions revolve around the subject matter being taught. These activities include discussions on key concepts, analysis of case studies, and solving subject-specific problems. Cottrell (2013) suggests that content-centred activities can also involve small group discussions, group projects, or debates focused on the subject material. Such activities encourage students to actively engage with the content and deepen their understanding.

A study by Wills and Prescott (2016) highlights the importance of learner-centred activities in tutorial sessions. These activities aim to involve students in their own learning process and promote critical thinking and independent inquiry. Gillespie and Galloway (2017) emphasise the use of learner-centred activities such as group work, problem-based learning, and peer teaching. These activities encourage active participation, collaboration, and knowledge sharing among students.

Overall, previous authors and studies indicate that tutorial sessions at universities generally involve a combination of tutor-centred, content-centred, and learner-centred activities. The tutor plays a crucial role in delivering lectures and guiding the learning process, while content-centred activities focus on exploring and understanding subject matter. Learner-centred activities foster active student participation, critical thinking, and collaboration.

These activities collectively enhance the effectiveness of tutorial sessions and promote student learning and engagement. The tutor policy is not silent on this matter and really encourages a student-centred approach where student engagement, critical skills and problem-solving techniques are highly encouraged in tutorial sessions.

4.2.6. Theme 9: Accessibility

Question: How are tutorial classes conducted?

Students' responses regarding how tutorial classes are conducted are indicated below.

One-on-one tutorials were mentioned by three of the participants:

> **P1:** *Tutorial sessions are usually conducted on a one-on-one basis, where it's just the student and the tutor working together to address specific topics.* (One-on-one tutorials)

> **P4:** *I prefer one-on-one tutoring because it allows me to ask questions without feeling self-conscious in front of a large group.* (One-on-one tutorials)

> **P6:** *I find one-on-one tutoring more accessible as it gives me the opportunity to focus solely on my individual needs and concerns.* (One-on-one tutorials)

Only one of the participants (P3) mentioned whole class tutoring:

> **P3:** *In our department tutorial sessions are done through whole class tutoring, where the tutor guides the entire class through a specific topic or concept.* (Whole class tutoring)

The remaining two participants referred to small group tutoring:

> **P5:** *Small group tutoring can be more accessible for some students who thrive in collaborative learning environments and enjoy interacting with their peers.* (Small group tutoring)

> **P2:** *Some tutorial classes are done in small groups, where a tutor works with a few students at the same time, allowing for group discussions and collaboration.* (Small group tutoring)

One-on-one tutorials involve personalized instruction between a single tutor and a student. This method offers maximum individual attention and allows for customized teaching strategies tailored to the student's needs. According to a study conducted by Kjellstrom and Ferwerda (2017), one-on-one tutorials promote active learning and can enhance the student's academic performance. However, the accessibility of one-on-one

tutorials may be limited due to the availability and cost of hiring tutors, especially in lower-income universities where such resources might be scarce. Whole class tutoring, on the other hand, involves a single tutor instructing a larger group of students. This method is commonly used in traditional classroom settings and can provide an efficient way to deliver information to a larger audience. According to research conducted by Bloom (1980), whole class tutoring can be effective when the tutor presents information in a clear and engaging manner. However, this method may lack the personalized attention that some students may need, especially those who require extra support or have specific learning disabilities.

Small group tutoring involves a tutor working with a small group of students, typically ranging from two to five individuals. This method allows for a balance between individual attention and peer interaction. Studies by Lou, Abrami, and Spence (1996) have shown that small group tutoring can foster collaborative learning and provide opportunities for students to actively engage with their peers. Additionally, small group tutoring can be more accessible compared to one-on-one tutorials, as it requires fewer resources while still offering personalized instruction. Overall, the accessibility of tutorial classes is influenced by various factors such as availability of tutors, financial resources, and student needs. While one-on-one tutorials offer maximum personalization, it may be limited in terms of accessibility due to cost and availability. Whole class tutoring can efficiently deliver information to a larger group but may lack personalized attention. Small group tutoring provides a balance between individual attention and peer interaction, making it a more accessible option for many students.

The tutor guidelines and policies are silent on through which methods tutorials should take place. The times for tutorials and the related environment are clearly communicated to all students.

4.2.10 Theme 10: Time

Question: When are you attending your tutorial classes?

Students' comments showed that they prefer different times for attending tutorial support services. Some of them preferred tutorials to be held during normal 'working' or teaching hours:

P1: *I attend my tutorial classes during teaching hours because I find it helpful to consolidate the concepts immediately after learning them in class.* (Formal times)

P4: *I believe attending tutorial classes during teaching hours is beneficial as it complements my regular classes, and the concepts are still fresh in my mind.* (Formal times)

P6: *I find it productive to have my tutorial classes scheduled immediately after the regular classes, so I can reinforce the concepts while they are still fresh in my memory.* (Formal times)

Others preferred tutorials to be held at other, more informal times:

P5: *Unlike weekdays, I have a more relaxed schedule on weekends, so I prefer to attend tutorial classes during that time to avoid any time constraints.* (Informal times)

P3: *I schedule my tutorial classes on weekends because it gives me dedicated time to focus solely on understanding difficult subjects without any distractions.*

One participant indicated that they preferred them to be held during their personal time:

P2: *I prefer attending tutorial classes after teaching hours because it allows me to revise the day's topics and ask any doubts I may have without the rush of regular classes.* (Personal times)

The tutor policy clearly stipulates that tutor classes should be conducted outside teaching hours, as tutorial are seen as remedial classes to go over what has been taught during main classes with the lecturer.

Previous studies on student attendance at tutorials have featured discussions on the preferred timing of tutorials, including school times, personal times, or weekends only. These studies provide insights into the implications and benefits of different timeframes for tutorial attendance.

Several authors have highlighted the advantages of organising tutorials during school times. For instance, Lin and Zheng (2018) found that scheduling tutorials during school hours may result in higher attendance rates since students are already present on campus. This can lead to increased collaboration among students and facilitate better interaction

with tutors, ultimately enhancing the learning experience. Similarly, Smith et al. (2019) reported that conducting tutorials during school times may foster a structured routine for students, allowing for better time management and reducing scheduling conflicts with other commitments.

In contrast, some researchers have advocated for tutorials during personal times or weekends only. Lee and Tanaka (2016) argued that scheduling tutorials outside of school hours allows students to fully focus on the learning materials without the distractions of regular classes. This can contribute to a more effective learning environment and deeper comprehension of the subject matter. Additionally, Kang and Kim (2020) noted that offering tutorials on weekends may accommodate students who are involved in extracurricular activities during weekdays, leading to higher participation rates and improved academic performance. Furthermore, certain studies have explored a combination of school times and personal times for tutorials. For example, Johnson and Thompson (2017); Perrault and Clark (2017); suggested incorporating both regular school hours and designated self-study periods for tutorial attendance. They found that this hybrid approach provided flexibility for students while ensuring the support of tutors during specific times. This approach also encourages autonomous learning and allows students to take responsibility for their own progress.

4.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter examined the findings of the research study and discussed their implications in depth. This chapter aimed to provide a comprehensive summary of the data analysis and interpretation, allowing me to derive meaningful conclusions from the findings. These findings were presented in relation to the research questions and objectives, shedding light on the various aspects explored throughout this study.

The first section of this chapter presented a summary of the demographic characteristics of our sample, providing a clear picture of the participants' backgrounds and qualification levels. This helped me to contextualise the results and understand potential factors that may have influenced the findings. Next, in the analysis section, I delved deeper into the data, exploring the participants' thoughts, perspectives, and experiences through interviews, an FGD, and reflective activity questions. This qualitative analysis provided a rich and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (students' reflections), allowing the uncovering of valuable insights.

Ten themes emerged from the analysis, and shed light on the challenges, opportunities, and potential solutions related to the research questions. Overall, the research findings provide valuable insights into the topic of study and contribute to the existing body of knowledge in this field. They highlight the importance of addressing the challenges identified and embracing the opportunities revealed through the analysis.

The next chapter, Chapter Five, will serve as the conclusion and recommendations section of this research study. It will provide a synthesis of the findings, drawing on insights gained from the analysis and offering recommendations for practice, policy, and future research. I will also suggest areas for further exploration, considering the potential impact of this research on the field and the potential for future studies to build upon the findings.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study revealed that students use their discretion to choose which roles to assume in class, in the process not drawing equally from varying reflections (formal reflection, informal reflection, and personal reflection). This led to them not receiving positive feedback from their tutorials. This study recommends that students should be well versed regarding knowledge of student roles in tutorial classes. Likewise, the university lecturers together with their tutors should clearly define the roles expected of students when they are attending tutorial classes. This will allow for successful implementation of the tutorial curriculum.

5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

5.2.1 Chapter One: Overview, context, and objectives

Chapter One presented the reader with an overview of the study, context, and background, as well as the objectives. The chapter briefly explained three levels of reflections (personal reflection, formal reflection, and informal reflection) which guided this study. It further explicated the rationale behind conducting this research and presented the reader with a brief synopsis of related literature, the research methodology, including trustworthiness measures and ethical considerations, and an overview of chapters found in this study.

5.2.2 Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework

Chapter Two covered the literature review, focusing on the reflections on tutorial support services. The chapter started by reviewing studies centred on the phenomenon (reflections), and discussed matters of curriculum (intended, implemented, and attained curriculum). This chapter further articulated five levels of curriculum representation: supra, micro, macro, meso and nano. The theoretical framework of Tyler's currere method was discussed in detail, applying the levels of reflections in each of the four stages. I also defined the theoretical framework and justified why it was the suitable framework for this study.

5.2.3 Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

The third chapter outlined the research design and methodology in-detail. The study adopted a qualitative research approach within an interpretive research paradigm, and a descriptive case study research design was adopted. Two sampling methods, purposive and convenience sampling, were used in this study. The study used three data generation methods: one-on-one semi-structured interviews, reflective activities, and a focus group discussion. This chapter also discussed issues of trustworthiness and how they were addressed in this study. Finally, ethical considerations were explored, as were the limitations or challenges encountered.

5.2.4 Chapter Four: Research findings and discussion

Chapter Four presented the research findings on the reflections on tutorial support services at a South African university. Ten themes were constructed, influenced by curriculum concepts and the theoretical framework. Moreover, in supporting the research findings I utilised the literature and currere framework to analyse the ten themes. Moreover, I infused my research phenomenon (reflections) in all of the themes, to support the purpose of the study and to understand which form of reflection drives students in each theme.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The summary of findings and recommendations presented in this chapter elucidate to the reader a summary of findings pertaining to the students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university. These accounts were revealed via three data generation tools, namely one-on-one semi-structured interviews, reflective activities, and a focus group discussion. Moreover, these findings relate to ten themes that emerged from the data: rationale, resources, content, goals, learning environment, accessibility, tutorial activities, content, student roles, and assessment. These were categorised according to the theoretical framework as well as curriculum concepts which students shared their reflections on. This section further recommends areas of improvement, drawing from the students' reflections.

5.3.1 Rationale for attending tutorials

The findings of this study showed that while there are three types of rationale – personal,

societal and professional (Khoza, 2015; Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009) – students have centred all rationales as the most dominant influence in attending tutorial sessions.

Their reasons for attending tutorial classes, via a personal rationale, were mainly driven by their interest, passion, and love for the subject. In other words, they were driven by personal reflection, which led them to draw from a personal rationale when attending tutorials. They were also drawing from the societal and professional rationale, and hence placed focus on reading written documents such as tutorial guidance (professional rationale) and were thus influenced by formal reflections. Two students reported having been influenced by their peers, which suggests they were drawing from the societal rationale, relating to informal reflections.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that merging all three propositions of rationale is mandatory for successful curriculum implementation (Makumane & Khoza, 2020). This indicates that understanding the reasons for attending tutorials may enhance effective teaching and learning in tutorials. Thus, the findings from this study indicate that there is a need to know why students want to attend tutorials. Rationale serves as a major orientation point for any successful implementation of curriculum (Van den Akker, Fasoglio & Mulder, 2010). Moreover, personal rationale places individual student teachers at the heart of teaching and learning (Khoza, 2016a). Furthermore, Makumane and Khoza (2020), in concurrence with Bernstein (2006), posit that social rationale places society at the centre of the teaching and learning environment. Lastly, the professional rationale is predisposed by factual knowledge, prescribed subject content and metacognition development (Makumane & Khoza, 2020).

The findings in this study showed that the students revealed all rationales, being driven by passion, interest, and love, and by friends/peers, as well as by written information to attend tutorials.

This study recommends that students should equally integrate these three propositions of rationale for a full, rounded reason for attending tutorial support services. The university should make it mandatory that they explicitly define the rationale for attending tutorial classes, so that students gain access to the guidelines/rationale of why they are attending tutorials and what benefits are derived from doing so. This will assist the students to implement the tutorial curriculum successfully.

5.3.2 Assessment

The findings of this study suggested that students were aware of all levels of assessment. Most students confirmed they take part in formative assessment, summative and peer assessment during their tutorials. This suggests that they were influenced by all three types of reflections – formal, informal, and personal. Tutorial class activities, homework, and posing questions during the tutorial lessons were mostly used for assessment. Assessment of learning aims to summarise the students' learning at the end of the learning process (Kennedy, 2006; Khoza, 2015c; Kumar et al., 2020). When students ignore certain forms of assessment, they miss the benefits of these different types of assessment.

Based on the findings of this review, it is recommended that tutors adopt a combination of these approaches to ensure a comprehensive and balanced assessment of tutorials, facilitating student growth and promoting a student-centred learning environment. Additionally, this study recommends that the institution should make sure that students are making use of these varying assessments.

5.3.3 Resources

The findings of this study indicated that students were very aware of hardware resources when attending tutorial classes, and most indicated the use of hardware resources such as tutorial guides and textbooks. A relatively large number of participants also reflected on their experiences of using software resources such as slides, internet videos and the like when attending tutorial classes. Sadly, they did not understand the theories which direct the integration of these resources in tutorial classes, with only one participant reflecting on ideological-ware resources.

In affirmation of the above, studies suggest that without proper understanding of ideological-ware resources, students cannot successfully integrate reflections which drive the use of hardware and software resources (Zulu, 2019; Umugiraneza, Bansilal, & North, 2017). Findings during data generation suggested that students were still not successful in integrating resources in supplementing tutorials.

In light of the above, this study strongly recommends that students should ensure that they understand all resources and utilise them to their full potential, since they work best in conjunction, to allow for successful reflection on tutorial support services. Furthermore, to promote effective learning experiences it is suggested that tutors consider and harness

these software, hardware, and ideology resources in tutorial settings.

5.3.4 Learning environment

The accounts of students during data generation highlighted that two of them used the face-to-face environment when attending tutorials in the classroom environment. Two other students were also aware of the online environment, and utilised Google Meet and MS Teams with other peers and their corresponding tutors. However, a blended environment was chosen by two other participants, integrating the face-to-face environment with the online learning environment. In other words, students were mostly influenced by formal, informal and personal reflections when choosing the learning environment for tutorials.

The literature maintains that blended learning is a current development in education (Cele, 2018; Zulu, 2019; Clark & Mayer, 2016). The latter mentioned authors further posit that a blended learning environment provides several learning advantages to learners, such as providing them with options to choose between face-to-face and online learning. There is compelling evidence that students attending tutorials will benefit from making use of a blended learning environment to achieve positive learning outcomes. However, in this study it was found that the blended learning environment was ignored by four of the six participants. This study recommends that the university should provide Wi-Fi in all areas, including all tutorial classes, so that learners are able to access materials provided by tutors. This will address the issue of learners lacking the data needed to participate in the online environment.

5.3.5 Students' role

The findings indicated that students' roles are categorised into those of instructor, facilitator, and researcher. In this study, participants' accounts indicated that students mainly assumed the role of a facilitator when in tutorial classes. In other words, informal reflections steered students' tutorials. Students also infused the role of instructor and facilitator into their tutorials, in this way drawing from both formal and informal reflections. However, only one of the students assumed the role of a researcher when in tutorial sessions, and thus was least influenced by personal reflections.

According to the literature, most students still use a student-centred approach when in their tutorial lessons (Inuwa, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2015). This suggests that the role of instructor is still dominant when students are implementing the tutorial curriculum, although this was

not the finding in the current study. Furthermore, the findings also indicated that the tutorial curriculum document does not provide guidelines for students on which role to assume when in tutorial classes.

Students therefore use their discretion to choose which roles to assume in class, in the process not drawing equally from varying reflections (formal reflection, informal reflection and personal reflection). This led to them not receiving positive feedback from their tutorials. This study recommends that students should be well versed regarding knowledge of student roles in tutorial classes. Likewise, the university lecturers together with their tutors should clearly define the roles expected of students when they are attending tutorial classes. This will make the implementation of tutorial curriculum a success.

5.3.6 Students' goals

The findings in Chapter Four indicated that of the three goals of tutorials, students were most aware of learning outcomes and objectives. This suggests that the participants were driven more by informed reflections (learning outcomes) and formal reflections (objectives) but lacked personal reflections (aims).

Moon (2002) posits that learning takes place if the subject is driven by learning aims. In other words, students attending tutorials without understanding the learning aims may not be successful. Hence this study recommends that students should integrate all three – broad aims (goals), objectives (specific and realistic statements of achievements expected of students) and learning outcomes (what learners are expected to achieve at the end of the tutorial lesson) – to elevate a successful tutorial system.

5.3.7 Content

The findings of this study indicated that participants were aware of the content covered in tutorial classes. Some of them shared that the content they cover is stipulated in the in-tutorial guides, such as quizzes and projects. In other words, they drew from formal reflections, which require them to read written documents such as tutorial guides and workbooks. Most of the participants are taught in tutorial classes using personal content, which suggests that personal reflections influenced the decision. This study strongly recommends that students should also have a deeper understanding of the content covered in tutorial classes in order to do well.

5.3.8 Tutorial activities

The findings in this study indicated that learner-centred activities are mostly adopted by participants because they are influenced by informal reflections, which require them to consult their peers. It is recommended that tutors need to embrace pedagogical approaches that empower students, creating a positive and inclusive learning environment.

5.3.9 Accessibility

Findings from the analysis revealed that students are very aware of the different forms of tutoring available at their institution. The majority of the participants preferred one-on-one tutoring. This means personal reflection was adopted by the students in choosing which kind of tutorials they prefer. It is recommended that tutors should consider various factors, such as resource availability, student needs, and learning goals when determining which approach to adopt.

5.3.10 Time

Studies have revealed that the use of time is an important concept when it comes to implementing the intended curriculum; moreover, they indicated that times for attending tutorials can be divided into during own personal time, during working hours, and on weekends (Cunningham & Yamasaki, 2018). Most of the participants preferred formal times (during working hours) for attending tutorial classes. This suggests that each individual student is driven to attend tutorials by formal reflections (written documents). Findings from the analysis also indicate that students want to attend tutorials during personal times influenced by personal reflections. This is in line with what the literature revealed regarding students preferring their own times for consulting tutors. Lee and Tanaka (2016) argued that scheduling tutorials outside of school hours (during their personal times) allows students to focus fully on the learning materials without the distraction of regular classes. This can contribute to a more effective learning environment and deeper comprehension of the subject matter (Bridgstock, 2016). This suggests that students used personal reflections. The findings indicate that as one of the curriculum concepts, time is used effectively and all reflections (formal, informal and personal) were adopted in attending tutorials.

5.4 SUMMARY OF KEY RESPONSES TO KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The main purpose of this study was to explore students' reflections on tutorial support services at a South African university. This purpose was guided by three research questions. The first research objective of the study was to explore students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university, and the first research question was therefore: What are students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university? The study found that students' practices when doing tutorial support services were framed by three levels of reflections, which are personal, formal, and informal. This study affirmed that students were operating at all three of these levels of reflection. As a result, students were able to unpack all of the various curriculum concepts of tutorial support services. Based on the findings from the literature, students' reflections of tutorial support services can be formulated at the personal level (personal reflection), professional level (formal reflection), and societal level (informal reflection) (Khoza, 2017; Berkvens et al., 2014).

The second objective was to explain how students' reflections influence tutorial support services at a South African university, and the second research question was therefore: How do students' reflections influence tutorial support services at a South African university? In addressing this question, the study found that when students are in tutorial classes, some curriculum concepts are not included in their tutor guides, tutor policy or other university documents, making it difficult to guide their practice. For instance, there is no policy on tutorial assessment, and as a result, tutors use any form of assessment that they want to or that they know best. This inconsistency will create problems, as students might be likely to suffer academically, since the assessment is mostly informed by informal reflection. The university needs to create a tutor policy which addresses the students' needs. This study could have a great impact on management and lecturers in developing a tutor policy that addresses these challenges and includes all the curriculum concepts.

With reference to the last research objective, which was to understand the reasons which inform students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university, the third research question was: What informs students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university? This study affirmed that the reason why students are operating through different reflections is that the university tutor policy is incomplete and inconsistent in guiding the practice during tutorial sessions. The study found that the university tutor policy is silent on curriculum concepts such as environment/tutorial

attendance, activities and many more. As a result, the reasons which inform students' reflections of tutorial services are varied. This suggests that the university is promoting all forms of reflection (personal, formal, and informal). The university tutor policy should include all the relevant concepts.

5.5 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study provides valuable insights into students' reflections of tutorial support services, there are several areas for future research that can be explored:
Firstly, further investigation is needed to understand the specific needs and preferences of different student groups, such as international students or students with disabilities, to tailor tutorial support services to their unique requirements.

Additionally, examining the long-term impact of tutorial support services on students' academic achievements, graduation rates, and employability would provide a comprehensive understanding of the benefits derived from tutorial support.

Another possible research area could investigate tutors' reflections of tutorial support services, which might reveal some interesting findings.

Further research is also warranted to explore the effectiveness of the three assessment approaches in different educational settings.

Future research should also focus on investigating the impact of tutorial class timing among different student populations and academic subjects, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how timing influences learning outcomes.

Additionally, studying the effectiveness of blended approaches that combine both physical and virtual tutorial support could provide valuable insights into optimising the learning experience for students attending tutorial classes. Future research can focus on comparing the efficacy of the tutoring methods across different subject areas, grade levels, and cultural settings to provide more comprehensive insights.

Lastly, exploring the effectiveness of incorporating technology, such as online tutorials or interactive digital platforms, in tutorial support services could be an interesting area for future research.

5.6 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This study's main was to explore students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university. The study objectives were to explore students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university; to explain how students' reflections influence tutorial support services at a South African university; and to understand the reasons which inform students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university. To achieve these objectives, I formulated three key research questions:What are students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university?; How do students' reflections influence tutorial support services at a South African university?; and What informs students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university?

The conclusion of this study of students' reflections of tutorial support services at a university, applying the four stages of currere are as follows: Firstly, based on the students' reflections, it can be concluded that the tutorial support services provided by the university have been beneficial for their overall academic experience. The students appreciated the individual attention and guidance received from the tutors, which helped them improve their understanding of the subject matter and achieve better grades. Secondly, for instance, some students felt that the scheduling of tutorial sessions could be more flexible to accommodate their varying academic commitments. Additionally, a few students expressed a desire for more specialized support, tailored to their specific needs and difficulties in a particular subject. Over and above the study achieved its set objectives.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Consent letter for the participants (students)

Curriculum Studies, School of Education,

College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus,

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Jeremiah Madzimure. I am a Master's student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I am interested in exploring students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African University. Students attending the tutorial classes at this institution have never been given opportunity to provide feedback on how effective the tutorials are or evaluating tutors who provide them with tutorials support. This has motivated me to conduct this important study. Therefore, to gather the information, I am interested in requesting any kind of relevant information seeking to address my topic.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 45 to 60 minutes, relevant documents will be analysed, and the reflective activity will be sent to you via e-mail.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the generated data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- There will be no limit on any benefit that you may receive as part of your participation in this research project;

- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to yourself;

- Real names of the participants will not be used, but symbols such as A, B, C, D, and E will be used to represent your full name;
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I can be contacted at:
Email: 223139944@stu.ukzn.ac.za Cell:
+[redacted]

My supervisor is Dr. CB Mpungose who is located at the University of Kwazulu Natal School of Education Education and Curriculum studies
Contact details: mpungosec@ukzn.ac.za Phone number +2731 260 3671

Discipline Co-ordinator is Dr. Carol Bertram,
Curriculum Studies, School of Education,
Edgewood College, University of KwaZulu-Natal
(Tel) (033) 260 5349, Email:
BertramC@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:
P. Mohun
HSSREC Research Office,
Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I…… (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

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

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT **DATE**

…… **……**

Annexure B: Semi- structured interview schedule

Students' reflections of Tutorial Support Services at a South African University

Question 1:	Why are you attending tutorials? *(reasons)*
Sub- questions	1. What personal rationale/reason that made you attend the tutorials? 2. What professional rationale/reason that made you attend the tutorials? 3. What social rationale/reason that made you to attend the tutorials?

Question 2:	With what resources are you attending tutorial classes? *(resources)*
Sub- questions	1. What software resources do you use when attending the tutorials? 2. What hardware resources do you use when attending the tutorials? 3. What ideology resources do you use when attending the tutorials?

Question 3:	How are tutorial classes done? *(accessibility)*
Sub- questions	• Are tutorial sessions conducted on? 1. One-on-one tutoring 2. Small group tutoring 3. Whole class tutoring

Question 4:	Towards which goals are you attending tutorial classes? *(goals to be achieved)*
Sub- questions	4. What are your aims of attending the tutorials? 5. What are the objectives of attending the tutorials? 6. Indicate learning outcomes of attending the tutorials?

Question 5 :	What is taught in tutorial classes? *(content)*
Sub- question	Is it personal content, formal content or informal content? Please elaborate

Question 6 :	How are you doing your tutorials activities? (Activities)
Sub- questions	4. Tutor-centred activities 5. Content-centred activities 6. Learner-centred activities

Question 7 :	How do you facilitate your own learning during tutorial classes? *(students' role)*
Sub- question	1. Is your role seem as the researcher, instructor or facilitator when attending the tutorials?

Question 8 :	Where are you attending your tutorials? *(location/environment)*
Sub- questions	1. Online platform, substantiate which platform 2. In the lecture halls, (face to face interaction)? 3. Blended learning

Question 9	When are you attending your tutorial classes? *(time)*
Sub- questions	1. During my own personal time 2. During school times 3. On weekends only

Question 10	How are tutorials assessed? *(assessment)*

Sub- questions	4. What activities do you use during assessment for learning? 5. What activities do you use during assessment as learning? 6. What activities do you use during assessment of learning?

Annexure C: Reflective Activity

This Reflective Activity is for reflections of your tutorial support services at this university.
You may use various sources to complete this activity.
Presents your reflections by following the Tyler Theory themes/questions as follows.

Why are you attending tutorials?

_____

_____

Towards which goals are you attending tutorial classes?

_____

_____

With what resources are you attending tutorial classes?

_____

_____

How are tutorials assessed?

_____

_____

What is taught in tutorial classes?

_____

_____

How are tutorial classes done?

_____

_____

How do you facilitate your own learning during tutorial classes?

_____

_____

Where are you attending your tutorials?

_____

_____

How are you doing your tutorials activities?

_____

_____

What is the time allocation for tutorials?

_____

_____

Annexure D: Focus group discussion interview

This focus group questions are for reflections of your tutorial support services at this university.

Presents your reflections by following the Tyler Theory themes/questions as follows.

Why are you attending tutorials?

_____

_____

Towards which goals are you attending tutorial classes?

_____

_____

With what resources are you attending tutorial classes?

_____

_____

How are tutorials assessed?

_____

_____

What is taught in tutorial classes?

_____

_____

How are tutorial classes done?

_____

_____

How do you facilitate your own learning during tutorial classes?

_____

_____

Where are you attending your tutorials?

_____

_____

How are you doing your tutorials activities?

_____

_____

What is the time allocation for tutorials?

_____

_____

Annexure E: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

18 October 2023

Dr Jeremiah Madzimure (223139944)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Dr Madzimure,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00006262/2023
Project title: Students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 09 October 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 18 October 2024.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Annexure F: Gate keepers' letter

VAAL UNIVERSITY
OF TECHNOLOGY

Office of the Registrar
Central Research Ethics Committee

Vanderbijlpark Campus
Andries Potgieter Blvd
Vanderbijlpark, 1900, South Africa
Private Bag X021
Vanderbijlpark, 1911, South Africa
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+27(0)16 950 7773
+27(0)16 950 9779
deborahn@vut.ac.za

GATEKEEPER'S LETTER

01 August 2023

Dear Dr Madzimure,

CREC Ref No: CREC 25-05-2023-5.2

PROJECT TITLE: *Students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university.*

RESEARCHER/PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR: Dr J Madzimure
SUPERVISOR/S & PROMOTER/S: Dr Cedric Mpungose
APPLYING INSTITUTION: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
SCHOOL: Education
COLLEGE: Humanities
QUALIFICATION: Masters in Education and Curriculum Studies (UKZN)

I am pleased to inform you that your application has been scrutinized by our structures and has been successful. You may proceed with your research on our campus.

Please note that, in all correspondence both with the university and participants you are required:

1. To make use of the Research Ethics Clearance Number, and
2. To remain strictly within the parameters of the application that you made to us (and which has been approved).

We wish you well with your research.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Mr S Vilakazi (a/Registrar)
Vaal University of Technology

1

Annexure G: Letter from the editor

Leverne Gething, M.Phil. cum laude
PO Box 1155, Milnerton 7435; tel. 021 552 1515; cell [redacted]
[redacted] e-mail: [redacted]

06 November 2023

Declaration of Editing of text of thesis:

Students' reflections of tutorial support services at a South African university.

I hereby declare that I carried out language editing of the text of above thesis on behalf of Jeremiah Madzimure.

I am a professional writer and editor with many years of experience (e.g. 5 years on *SA Medical Journal*, 10 years heading the corporate communication division at the SA Medical Research Council), who specialises in Science and Technology editing - but am adept at editing in many different subject areas. I have previously edited much work for various faculties at universities including US, UCT, UWC and UKZN. I am a full member of the South African Freelancers' Association as well as of the Professional Editors' Guild.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

LEVERNE GETHING [redacted]

Annexure H: Turnitin (plagiarism) report

STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS OF TUTORIAL SUPPORT SERVICES AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

MASTER'S IN EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

School of Education: Curriculum Studies

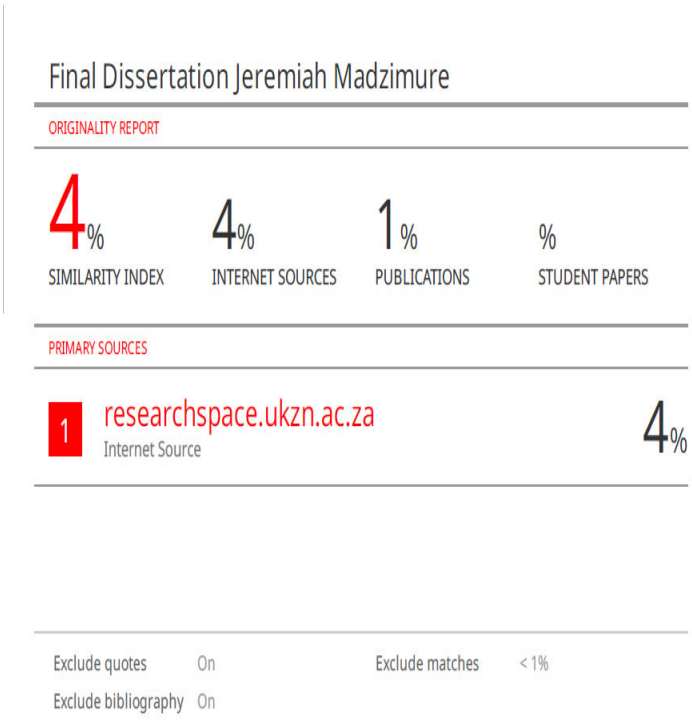
BY

JEREMIAH MADZIMURE

223139944

SUPERVISOR: DR CEDRIC BHEKI MPUNGOSE

2023



Final Dissertation Jeremiah Madzimure

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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