

**Crafting a meso practice course using elements of authentic learning for  
undergraduate social work students in South Africa**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
Philosophiae in the Department of Social Work, University of the Western Cape

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April 2017

## DEDICATION

This PhD study is dedicated to my uncle, Athie Govender, a living embodiment of care, who assumed guardianship of his sister's four young children when they were orphaned. I, the eldest of these four children, am deeply indebted to him. My uncle and my parents were teachers and now I strive to serve the needs of social work students whom I teach, incorporating elements of both authentic learning and affect.



**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION GRANTS**

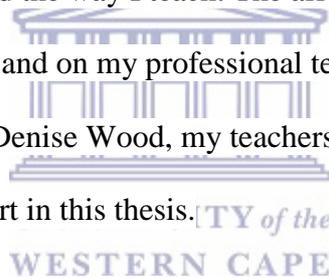
This work is based on research supported in part by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (Grant numbers 94015 and 73999).





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This learning journey was made possible by the efforts of various people who have contributed in ways both big and small to make this feat possible for me. I am truly grateful to them. It has been a tumultuous ride that has extended my learning beyond what I had thought possible and has improved the way I teach. The affective interchanges have left indelible marks on me personally and on my professional teaching practice. Professor Vivienne Bozalek and Professor Denise Wood, my teachers, my Gurus, words cannot explain the gratitude I feel for your support in this thesis.



Ngiyabonga to the students who were part of this project. Your contribution to this project has been a golden thread interwoven into the pages of the study and will be a baseline for all future courses I teach. I wish you well in all your endeavours and am confident that you will continue to make a difference in the real world.

To the educators who teach meso practice from various higher education institutions in South Africa and the field instruction supervisors, I thank you for sharing generously.

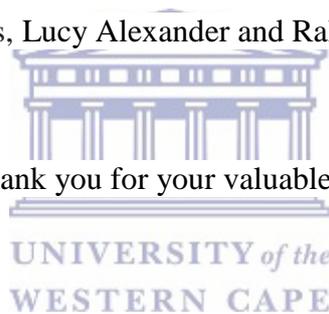
To the staff in the Department of Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand led by Edwell Kaseke and Edmarie Pretorius: I appreciate your support.

Nandri, to my wonderful, challenging and caring family — Sivan, Kuvanya, Kashmira; my siblings, Thilo, Ravini, Magash, and my mother-in law, Salo Pillay – you are the wind beneath my sails.

Friends and fellow-writers of the coffee shop group: your care is remembered and cherished. Thanks are also extended to Abigail Adams, Elmarie Papageorgiou, Jenny Stacey, Judy Backhouse, Thunga Moodley, Pungie Pillay, Sharon Moonsamy and Vanitha Bobee for believing in me. I acknowledge with thanks the research facilitators, Fhatuwani Ligege and Tshidi Ramushu

Yishar, to the editors of this thesis, Lucy Alexander and Ralph Goodman. Your skill is acknowledged with great respect.

To the examiners of this thesis, thank you for your valuable contribution that has enhanced this study.



For learning, transformation and for evidence practice to evolve, the funding of research and developing researchers is an essential element. This project was supported with funding from the National Research Fund, which has allowed me to broaden my worldview.

I thank you all for the opportunity to add to the body of knowledge, my own experience and my affect on course design in meso practice within the South African context.

## KEYWORDS

Affect

Authentic learning (AL)

Course design

Design-based research (DBR)

Group Work

Meso practice

Participatory learning and action (PLA)

Social work education

Social work with groups

Technology-enhanced learning (TEL)



## ABSTRACT

Many teaching and learning practices in higher education, including social work education in South Africa, tend to be characterised by a transmission mode of instruction, whereby knowledge moves from the expert educator to the student. This study investigates the extent to which an authentic learning framework can be used to improve the teaching of meso practice in social work to a class of 80 second-year students at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. A modified version of educational design-based research, was deployed which created a set of guidelines to inform future research and course design. Design-based research includes an iterative process, however, and the four-phased modified version of design-based research used in this study deploys just one roll-out of a redesigned course on meso practice, using the elements of authentic learning (Herrington, Reeves & Oliver, 2010). Phase 1 consisted of a review of the literature on meso practice education and the authentic learning framework. Phase 2 involved an analysis of practical problems identified by six educators and four field instruction supervisors, based on the way they teach and supervise students in the area of meso practice intervention. In Phase 3 the course was implemented and evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively by the student participants and four field instruction supervisors. Phase 4 consisted of a reflection on the entire process, to produce design guidelines using the elements of authentic learning and the inclusion of affect in course design. Mixed-methods research was undertaken, incorporating primarily qualitative data with quantitative data from a survey conducted with the students. Findings from this study have led to an augmented list of authentic learning elements, which includes the use of affect in meso practice and the development of guidelines for educators which have the potential to be relevant and applicable in other courses, contexts and disciplines.

7 April 2017

## DECLARATION

I declare that *Crafting a meso practice course using elements of authentic learning for undergraduate social work students in South Africa* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Name : *Roshini Pillay*

Date: *7 April 2017*



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R Pillay".

Signed:

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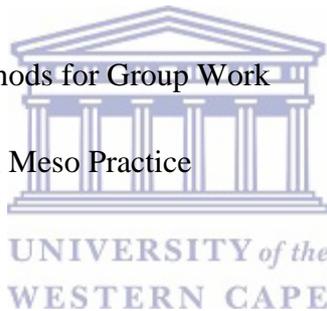
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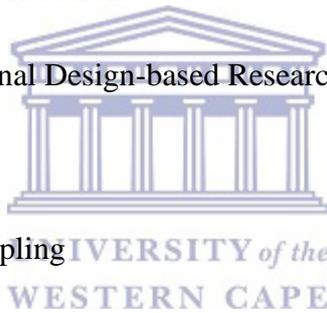
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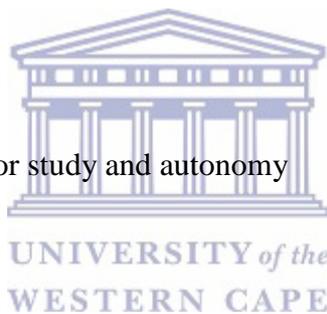
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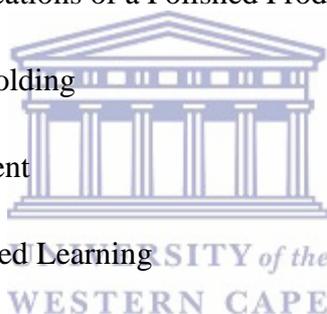


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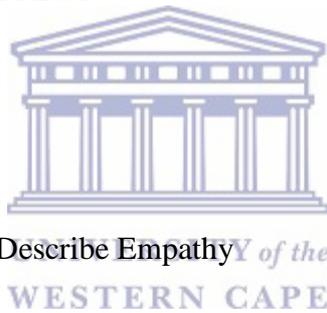


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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AASWG	Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups
AB	All Blacks
AEL	Additional English language speakers
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AL	Authentic learning
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BSW	Bachelor in Social Work
CA	Chartered accountant
CBO	Community-based organisation
CHE	Council for Higher Education
CIL	Computer information literacy
CLTD	Centre for Teaching and Learning
CSWE	Council for Social Work Education
DBR	Design-based research
DF	Discussion forum
DoB	Date of birth
DoHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DVDs	Digital Video Discs
Ed	educator
ELOs	Exit level outcomes
eLSI	eLearning, Support and Innovation
F2F	Face-to-face
FG	Focus group
FI	Field instruction
HAI	Historically advantaged institutions
HDI	Historically disadvantaged institutions
HE	Higher education
HEIs	Higher education institutions
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate

HWI	Historically white institution
IASWG	International Association for Social Work with Groups
ICSWG	Inventory of Foundation Competencies in Social Work with Groups
ICT	Information communication technology
IT	Information technology
KZN	KwaZulu Natal
LMS	Learning management system
MBD	Multiple-baseline design
MSW	Masters in Social Work
n	number
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Authority
NRF	National Research Fund
NSFAS	National Students Financial Aid Scheme
OBE	Outcomes-based education
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PMB	Pietermaritzburg
RB	Read by
RoL	River of life
SA	South Africa
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Work Professions
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority – SAQA
SGB	Standards Generating Body
TB	Tuberculosis
TEL	Technology enhanced learning
UCT	University of Cape Town
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UKZN	University of KwaZulu Natal
UNISA	University of South Africa
USD	United States dollar
UWC	University of the Western Cape
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
ZAR	South African Rand

ZPD

Zone of Proximal Development



## CHAPTER 1 - BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

*Throughout the history of education, teachers and educators have sought to use pedagogical methods that ensure students learn efficiently and effectively in classroom settings.*

Herrington, 1997, p.1

### 1.1 Social Work Education

Internationally and within South Africa there has been increasing interest in teaching methods that can prepare students from diverse backgrounds to be work-ready (CHE, 2011). One approach that has gained traction in higher education institutions (HEIs) is the creation of an authentic learning environment, which draws on “real world” examples and activities, so that students can make connections between theory and professional practice (Amory, 2014; Herrington & Kervin, 2007). The authentic learning approach is based on situated learning theory, which regards knowledge as “in part a product of the activity, context and culture in which it is developed and used” (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989, p. 33). The authentic learning approach coheres with social constructivist pedagogy (Vygotsky, 1978), as students are active participants in knowledge creation within the social environment they inhabit (Herrington et al., 2010; Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999).

In this study, consideration is given to the extent to which authentic learning can improve the teaching of meso practice in South African higher education settings. The use of an authentic task incorporating relevant context-rich features such as articulation, multiple perspectives, self-regulated learning and collaborative learning was designed. In reflecting on my motivation to undertake this study, I understand that I am both a novice educator (since 2009) and an experienced practitioner, beginning in 1989 as one who wanted to improve her own teaching and learning – to support students who achieve academic success and become empathic professionals in the discipline of social work.

## 1.2 Social Work Education in South Africa

Social work education in South Africa was introduced in 1931 at the University of Stellenbosch to address the problem of largely Afrikaans speaking poor whites<sup>1</sup> who had lost access to land and were unable to find work (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002; McKendrick, 1987; Patel, 2008). Social work has historically been a white Afrikaner-dominated occupation (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002; McKendrick, 1987), but this changed after the White Paper for Social Welfare in 1997 (Patel, 2008) when service delivery changed and became inclusive of all population groups, with more blacks entering the profession (Earle, 2008). Significant changes have occurred in the profession since the demise of apartheid, moving from a predominantly remedial casework orientation to a developmental social work approach, with greater focus on the economically disenfranchised at the macro level of intervention (Gray, 1998).

The other major change was the standardisation in 2003 of the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree across HEIs under the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), requiring students to achieve competence in 27 exit level outcomes (ELOs) on completion of their studies (Bozalek, 2009; South African Qualifications Authority, 2009). The first evaluation of the new system for compliance was undertaken in 2011-2012 by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and the next evaluation occurred in 2013 by the Council for Higher Education (CHE). This new outcomes-based approach to social work education has been criticised for being too prescriptive, reducing creativity (Bozalek, 2009; Sewpaul, 2010; Simpson, 2010) and creating a culture of “performativity” through the adoption of neoliberal managerial practices (Carnell cited in Collins, 2012, p. 115; Engelbrecht, 2015). Furthermore, there is a concern about how these standards will translate into students’ performance in practice (Collins, 2012).

Against this backdrop is the need to understand the efficacy of how social work skills might be facilitated in HE to prepare students for the workplace. As early as 1985, Collins found that new graduates were ill-equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills, noting the

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<sup>1</sup> In South Africa, the population was divided into the socially and politically constructed categories of white, African, coloured and Indian under apartheid. Sometimes African, coloured and Indian categories are also referred to as *black* and at other times only *African* is used to describe black people, depending on the political ideology of identifying who is described by the category *black*. These apartheid terms, despite being highly contested, are still commonly used throughout the country.

concerns expressed by supervisors at community-based agencies in the Witwatersrand (Wits) that the university degree did not adequately integrate theory with the specialised practice required (Collins, 1985). In a 2011 workshop these concerns were still being raised and reported, as “the supervisor felt that knowledge at university does not prepare social workers for practice” (Botha, 2012, p. 431). These studies support the need for further research into strategies employed in BSW degrees, to better prepare graduates for the workplace – an issue that continues to be identified as a priority (CHE, 2011; Maistry, 2012; Simpson, 2010; Wilson & Kelly, 2010).

South African historically white universities offering the BSW degree, such as the University of Witwatersrand where this study is based, have experienced an influx of students who were additional English language speakers (AEL) – students from diverse and low socio-economic backgrounds (Habib, 2013; 2016). In addition, since social work was declared a scarce skill by the Department of Labour (Earle, 2008), more students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were offered a 100% bursary from the Department of Social Development to pursue a career in this profession (Smythe, 2009). While the increase in students from low socio-economic groups entering higher education is commendable, many HEIs fail to design a curriculum that is relevant to the learning needs of the students, to give them participatory parity and support in successfully negotiating the relevant academic spaces (Collins, 2011). This struggle to achieve academic success is a problem acknowledged by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET), which has noted that improvements in teaching and learning are essential to help students in the HE sector, thereby curtailing the “revolving door syndrome<sup>2</sup>” (Habib, 2016; Scott, Yeld, & Hendry, 2007).

Students enrol in social work courses for various reasons and many experience difficulties in HE, because they have only had access to poor schooling, resulting in an “under-preparedness” for higher education, an over-reliance on rote learning, a lack of skills and fluency in academic language and the insufficient use of critical thinking which results in plagiarism and descriptive writing instead of critical analysis (CHE, 2010; Strydom, Basson, & Mentz, 2012; van der Berg et al., 2011).

Improvement of student success has focused the lens on teaching and learning practices in

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<sup>2</sup> The revolving door syndrome refers to the frequency with which students *drop out* of university.

general, though not specifically on social work education. A “high dropout” rate in first year, coupled with longer periods to graduation, is a feature of many South African universities and this is also the case for social work students (CHE, 2010). This has been a continuing and worrying trend, evident since 2000, with studies highlighting the high attrition rates in social work. A study that compared the number of social work students who registered in 2000 and 2001 with students in their fourth year of study in 2004 found that only 32% and 23% completed their studies<sup>3</sup> (South Africa Department of Social Development, 2006). Although graduation rates in the prescribed period (which is four years for a social work degree) may not be the best indicator of success, it should be noted that of the 60 students who were registered for social work in 2009 at Wits, only 22 were in the fourth-year class in 2012 (University of the Witwatersrand, 2013).

Educators in social work, like other South African academics, are not required to have any formal teaching qualifications, and often struggle to “create innovative and radical courses to meet the evolving requirements of students and society” (Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2010, p. 3). The lack of pedagogical training for educators is particularly relevant to social work, as student-centred learning requires a knowledge of the unique needs of students from diverse backgrounds, to enable the provision of lessons that integrate theory with practice (Teater, 2011). A preliminary review of literature for this study, which included published studies, government reports and books, suggests a paucity of research in social work education on learning strategies used in meso practice, in particular (Wilson & Kelly, 2010). The literature searches for this study also highlighted South African research that had been conducted on technology-enhanced learning (TEL) undertaken at the Universities of the Western Cape and Stellenbosch in courses on advanced ethics and an interdisciplinary course on community, self and identity (Bozalek et al., 2007; Rohleder, Bozalek, Carolissen, Swartz, & Leibowitz, 2008). Given the uniqueness of the HEI terrain in South Africa (SA), there remains a need to consider how courses in social work can be redesigned using pedagogical theory to facilitate the development of professional practice skills in undergraduate students.

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<sup>3</sup> Certain HEIs have a large number of students who register for social work as an elective in their first year.

### 1.3 South African Higher Education Context

Developing learning and designing effective courses that prepare students to critique current practices, develop “intellectual independence” (Simpson, 2010, p. 46) and challenge outmoded and ineffective procedures in the work environment is the business of HEIs in the field of social work (Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010). The literature review of this thesis focuses on the context of HE, social work education and the development of student competence in meso interventions. The theoretical underpinnings of the study – social constructivism and the use of authentic learning elements developed from situated learning in the “real world” (Herrington et al., 2010) – is also described in some depth in Chapter Three of the thesis.

Today’s HE environment is inhabited by students and educators in a world that is infused with digital information and communication options (Beetham, 2012; Yoo, 2010). The current environment of change, connections, digital literacy and scarce resources has prompted a closer examination of whether teaching and learning can be improved by the use of TEL in social work. The South African Council for Social Services Professionals (SACSSP) has recognised the value of technological skills for students and practicing social workers, and supports the use of technology as a tool in the learning environment. One of the ELOs students are required to demonstrate is the ability to plan, implement and evaluate meso practice interventions. These changes to the “SAQAfication” (Bozalek, 2009, p. 91) of the curriculum require a more learner-centred approach, as educators need to develop outcomes-based plans, considering way the knowledge will be used in the “real world”, and not just curriculum content. The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has been a matter of much debate in social work, in relation to how it shapes relationships between social work supervisors, practitioners and clients in an environment that is “technologically rich but socially poor” (Ley, 2012, p. 677). ICTs have been used in the last decade in social work for communication, on-line counselling, data storage, research and as an aid to teaching (Watling & Rogers, 2012). The use of TEL has created new opportunities for flexible learning (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). Discussion forums and social media platforms such as Twitter are examples of virtual spaces that support ongoing communication amongst students and educators. The official research site offers instruction in a predominately face-to-face environment. However, TEL is part of the departmental teaching and learning plan, and point 12 states that: “*By 2012 ... all courses will have an active eLearning presence and ... will have an appropriate blend of contact and*

*electronic learning components that mutually support and enhance the learning experience”* (University of the Witwatersrand, 2010, p. 21). However, the university needs to develop its TEL maturity (University of the Witwatersrand, 2011).

At a macro level, SA HEIs need to produce graduates who are responsible citizens who can operate in a country that is rapidly moving from raw material production to knowledge and information production (CHE, 2011). South Africa is described by Kajee (2005) as both a developing and a developed country that is a major player in technology in Africa, but a minor player globally. SA HEIs have undergone significant change post-1994, and the number of African students entering public HE has increased from 49% in 1995 to 63% in 2007, though this is not proportional to the demographics of the country, where 79% of the population are African (CHE, 2009). Also, as Scott, Yeld, and Hendry (2007) have found, only 5% of black students are succeeding in HE in SA.

Although the use of a digital environment has been described by researchers such as Garrison and Kanuka (2004) as potentially transformative, explosive and disruptive, this is a highly contested view, as technology is no panacea that can of itself radically change education, as was anticipated in the 1980s (Herrington et al., 2010; Ng’ambi, Bozalek & Gachago, 2013). Furthermore, although there has been an increase in the use of technology in recent years in South African HEIs, there has been little transformation of teaching and learning (Ng’ambi et al., 2013). Educators should not see TEL as providing a different medium for presenting the same content (Laurillard, 1995; 1998). The potential for TEL to achieve quality learning outcomes is realised through ensuring the course design process is informed by learning theories that support the needs of students (Herrington & Oliver, 2000).

#### **1.4 Meso Practice**

Historically, social work has been split into micro (casework), meso (group work) and macro (community work) interventions by founders, Mary Richmond & Jane Addams (Leskosek, 2009) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Meso intervention is powerful because people provide mutual aid to each other (Corey, 2012; Shulman, 2006). Meso practice is also called “social work with groups and group work” and is “aimed at meeting socio-emotional needs and accomplishing tasks” (Toseland & Rivas, 2009, p. 12). In group work, members are supported to achieve

personal growth and well-being. At the University of the Witwatersrand, the meso practice course is taught at second-year level and carries eight credits towards the BSW degree, which is made up of 480 credits (University of the Witwatersrand, 2014a). The course content includes the principles and purposes of meso practice, programme planning, skills and techniques of facilitation, meso processes and dynamics, group roles and stages of meso practice development.

## **1.5 Problem Statement**

Current teaching and learning methods in social work education rely on teacher-centred traditional practices of instruction (Collins, 2011), which are too inadequate and outdated to cater for the diverse needs and backgrounds of students (Bozalek et al., 2013). These concerns prompt questions as to whether teaching and learning outcomes in meso practice can be improved through a more student-centred approach, using authentic learning methods and TEL (Herrington et al., 2010). Teaching and learning should be structured according to the subject matter, which in this study is the education and training in meso practice of students, a field that is under-researched and has “diminished over the past three decades” (Kurland et al., 2004; LaPorte & Sweifach, 2011; Lindsay & Orton, 2009; Trevithick, 2006).

It is imperative that greater research on meso interventions is conducted, as it directly covers four of the five practice areas in social work: individual, family, group, community and organisational work (LaPorte & Sweifach, 2011; Wilson & Kelly, 2010). In addition, since SAQA regulations and the National Qualifications Framework for the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree have been standardised, meso intervention will continue to be used by students and practitioners, which lends support to the argument that it should be researched with care (Sakaguchi & Sewpaul, 2009; Teater, 2011). Social constructivist theory applied to meso practice education supports collaborative work and peer-educator communication, which can be assisted by TEL with a learning management system and social networking tools which can be used to inform each other in a constant cycle of praxis (Greig & Skehill, 2008; Teater, 2011). This study uses a modified Design-based Research (DBR) approach, using qualitative and quantitative methods to carefully consider the process of course design and implementation (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2012). The use of a phased,

modified version of DBR is seen as an appropriate research approach to explore teaching and learning in meso practice education.

## 1.6 Aim of the Study

*The aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which authentic learning elements can improve the teaching of meso practice in a South African higher education setting.*

- a. *Theoretical Aim:* To explore how the elements of authentic learning contribute to the teaching of meso practice in South African Higher Education settings
- b. *Strategic Aim:* To develop guidelines for course design and development of facilitation skills in social work education with specific reference to the meso level of intervention to prepare students for the profession.

## 1.7 Research Questions

To what extent do the elements of authentic learning improve the teaching of meso practice in a South African Higher education setting?



### 1.7.1 Sub-Questions

- i. How is meso practice education currently being conducted by educators and FI supervisors in some South African higher education contexts?
- ii. How can the elements of authentic learning improve the teaching of meso practice?
- iii. What additional elements may be required for the teaching of meso practice?
- iv. How do the findings contribute to the development of guidelines for the teaching of meso practice?

## 1.8 Objectives of the Study

*Phase 1: Conduct a literature review on social work education in the area of meso practice education and authentic learning.*

*Phase 2: Analyse the practical problems for teaching meso practice education by conducting interviews with a sample of field instruction (FI) supervisors and educators in South African higher education institutions to obtain a situational analysis.*

- Explore the perceptions of FI supervisors and educators about supervision and praxis through interviews.
- Develop a framework for praxis using authentic learning elements to guide the redevelopment of the meso practice course.
- Apply the framework of authentic learning and the insights from interviews with FI supervisors and educators to the design of the meso practice course.

*Phase 3: Implementation of solutions in practice - enactment phase.*

- Implement the meso practice course.
- Evaluate the students' perceptions of the meso practice course by means of a survey.
- Discuss the implications of the findings from the evaluation.
- Conduct focus groups and individual interviews to describe the experiences of the students after the implementation of the meso practice course, using a set of questions.
- Conduct semi-structured interviews with the FI supervisors post-student completion of the theory course and field work.
- Discuss the findings from the focus groups and the interviews with the FI supervisors after students have completed practical work

*Phase 4: Reflection to produce design guidelines for further course development and skills facilitation.*

- Reflect on the implementation of the meso practice course and the use of TEL.
- Reflect on the authentic learning elements and changes/additions to these for meso practice.
- Develop guidelines that were informed by the findings of the previous stages.

## 1.9 Research Methodology

### 1.9.1 *Modified Design-based Research (DBR)*

Modified educational DBR was used to inform the design and development of a meso practice course, to create a teaching and learning environment with the aim of producing new theories, artefacts, and practices that potentially impact on teaching and learning in a natural setting (Barab & Squire, 2004; Herrington, McKenney, Reeves, & Oliver, 2007). This research paradigm, called modified DBR, is a relatively new movement that acknowledges the complexity of research in the education field (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). The context of the inquiry is used to gain an understanding that has meaning beyond the immediate setting. DBR is very pragmatic research cannot be conducted in isolation from practice and participants. In DBR, the educator becomes the action researcher in order to develop their own knowledge of teaching and learning using pedagogy (Laurillard, 2008). DBR begins with the assumption that the current learning practices or methods require change and refinement through the use of innovative designs. The combination of theory and practice are used to create an intervention that addresses a specific problem and determines the characteristics of its potential solutions by using an iterative process of testing and refining of solutions to create design principles and guidelines for educational practice. DBR is a more socially responsible alternative to an exclusively qualitative or quantitative approach for exploring teaching and learning in an educational setting (Barab & Squire, 2004; Herrington et al., 2007). The use of DBR has specific value for social work education, as students and researchers encounter and collaborate with multiple stakeholders and students prepare for practice. While DBR is time-consuming, as it is comprised of four phases (depicted in Figure 1), it is the most suitable research design for the current study.

### 1.9.2 *Authentic Learning*

Jan Herrington recommends the creation of an authentic learning environment which draws on “real world” examples and activities, so that students can engage in praxis by working on an authentic task (Amory, 2014; Bozalek et al., 2013; Herrington & Kervin, 2007). The evolution of authentic learning from situational or mediated learning aligns with social

constructivist pedagogy, as students are active participants in knowledge creation within the environment they inhabit (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning begins with the subject matter around which students are trying to construct meaning, which is why understanding the multifaceted, complex nature of South African society is of value to social work students (Teater, 2011). The development of meso practice skills may occur naturally when students work collaboratively on a complex task that places multiple demands on them. Essentially, a rich authentic learning environment comprises nine elements which are simulated in the classroom, and use TEL to give students an opportunity to think and behave as professionals do in the “real world” (Herrington, 2013). The educator has to design an appropriate multifaceted task around which students collaborate over a number of weeks (Herrington et al., 2010). While working on the task, the students have access to expert thinking from many sources, and reflect on both the task and the process to create a professional and polished product (Amory, 2014; Herrington, 2013; Herrington et al., 2010).

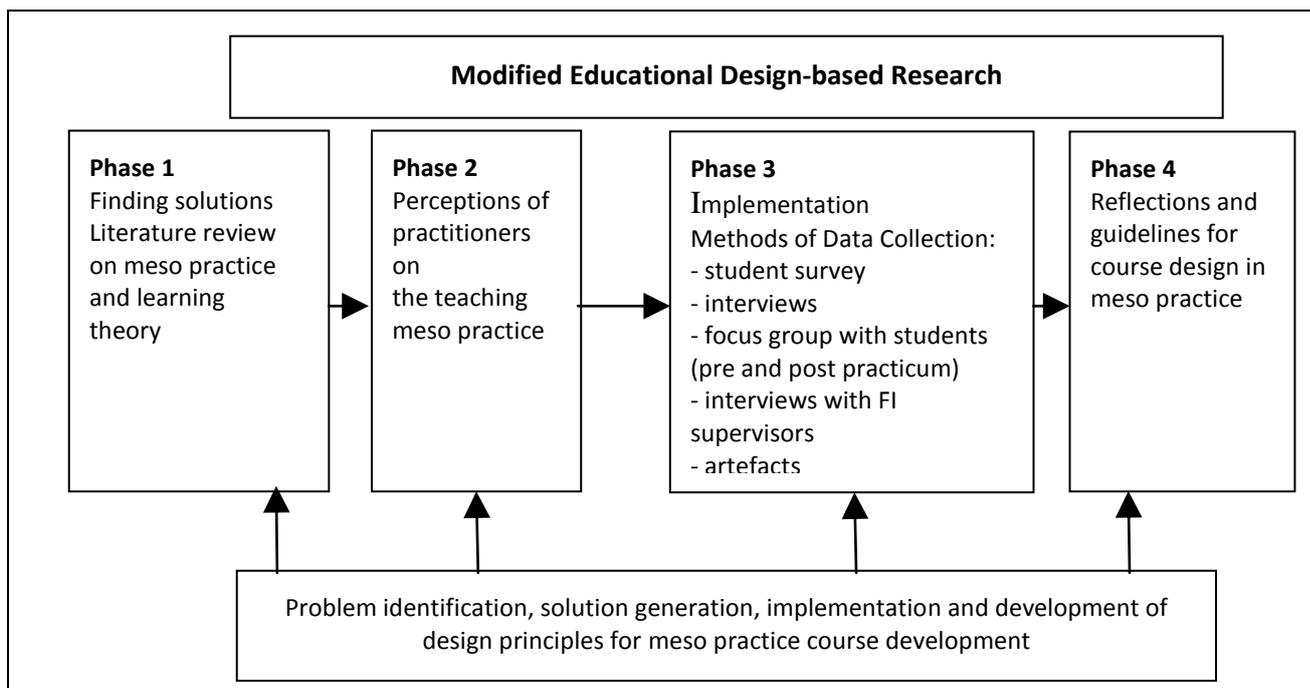
### ***1.9.3 Research Setting***



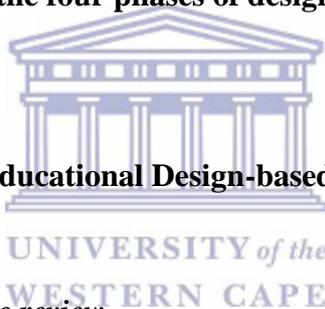
The researcher undertook this study over a five-year period (2013-2017) in the Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape in Johannesburg, South Africa.

### ***1.9.4 Design of the Study***

A modified educational DBR method was used that comprised the following four phases as illustrated in Figure 1:



**Figure 1: Adapted from the four phases of design research by Reeves, 2006, p. 59**



## **1.10 Phases of the Modified Educational Design-based Research Study**

### ***1.10.1 Phase 1: Literature review***

A literature review was conducted on meso practice education and authentic learning, to understand more about meso practice education and the learning theories that would be pertinent to the design. The process of obtaining relevant studies on the field required multiple searches in books and periodicals as well as conducting Google Scholar searches. The material focused mainly on English-language peer-reviewed articles regarding the teaching of meso practice. The literature review also included an exploration of the use made of elements of authentic learning and meso practice education which informed the redesign of the meso practice course (Herrington et al., 2010).

### ***1.10.2 Phase 2: Understanding the context from practitioners' viewpoints***

A qualitative method was used to understand the perceptions of 10 practitioners regarding the teaching, supervision and development of praxis in meso education for undergraduate social work students. The interviews provided a situational analysis of how meso intervention is

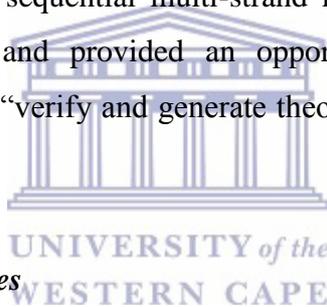
taught at some HEIs in SA.

### ***1.10.3 Phase 3: Implementation and data analysis***

The following quantitative and qualitative methods were used for data collection in this phase:

1. An electronic survey was administered to the students (n=66);
2. Eight focus groups were conducted with the students (n=62);
3. Six individual interviews were conducted with students (n=6)
4. Five individual interviews were conducted with the FI supervisors (n=5)
5. One focus group was conducted with the students after they completed the practicum (n= 7)

The design can be described as sequential multi-strand modified and educationally based (QUAL→ QUANT→ QUAL) and provided an opportunity to ask confirmatory and exploratory questions in order to “verify and generate theory” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006, p. 20) or guidelines.



### ***1.10.4 Phase 4: Guidelines***

The final phase included reflection on the use of elements of authentic learning and the use of affect in meso practice education. Careful thought about information gleaned from the prior phases was used to inform the development of guidelines for future courses. Data triangulation, using different sources of information from various role players in the study, was used to reflect more deeply using more than one method to better understand the phenomenon (Feilzer,2010). The guidelines emanating from this study will be disseminated through open-source online resources, workshops with educators, manuals, and peer-reviewed journal articles.

## **1.11 Ethics**

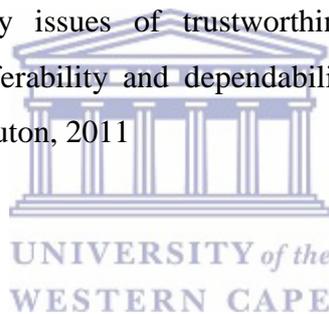
Procedural and practical ethics were followed to guide interaction with the human participants. Procedural ethics included permission to conduct the study from the Head of Department in Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand (Annexure B) and obtaining ethical clearance from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) Research Ethics

Committee (Annexure A). Practice ethics that were complied with are: respect for autonomy, confidentiality, privacy and dignity and upholding the principle of beneficence, which means that no harm was done to participants (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

I bring an emic perspective in my role as an educator in social work and as an employee at a HEI. Procedural and practice ethics were upheld. During all stages of the research ethical guidelines were followed: from the designing of the study and development of the data collection instruments, especially when collecting data, during transcription and analysis and, finally, when reporting and publishing the findings so that confidentiality was upheld.

## **1.12 Trustworthiness**

The study focused on the key issues of trustworthiness, representivity, consistency, confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability, based on the 1985 model of Lincoln and Guba (Babbie & Mouton, 2011)



### ***1.12.1 Reflexivity***

Reflexivity was required throughout this study in which I am an educator, a participant and the designer of the research process, in order to chart the phases of research and the process of my own professional identity development. Reflection is seen as an active process of looking inward or self-introspection, to obtain understanding through self-examination (McKenney & Reeves, 2012; Searby & Tripses, 2011). Reflexivity, unlike reflection, requires “both an ‘other’ and some self-conscious awareness of the process of self- scrutiny” (Chiseri-Strater cited in Pillow, 2010, p. 177). Thus, I needed to be conscious of how my self-location, position and interests as a 51-year-old Indian woman influenced the phases of the research (see Appendix 1 on my personal reflections). Listening and writing with positional, textual and ethnographic reflexivity helped me to develop an awareness of how my own assumptions and position may be brought to bear on the research process (Macbeth, 2001; Pillow, 2010).

### 1.13 Theoretical Foundation - Social Constructivism

Theories of learning should guide any endeavour to understand how students learn, so that courses are designed to support them (Laurillard, 2008). One such learning theory is Vygotsky's social constructivism, which proposes that people make sense of the world based on their prior experiences and their interactions with other more knowledgeable others (1978). Learning is seen as an active process of constructing new knowledge through interacting with more knowledgeable others, and thereby changing previous opinions, ideas and concepts (Kanuka & Anderson, 1998). Thus, learning and the use of TEL are socially and culturally mediated, as learning takes place through the interaction of ideas, tools (use of technology), language, and other artefacts generated and valued by others (Spear, 2009). TEL allows for greater participation by students beyond the classroom, as students can develop and share ideas, refine practice skills and reflect on the process of group dynamics (Treleaven, 2004). The online learning platform provides students and the educator with a self-reflective tool to review work and obtain feedback regarding learning activities (Graham & Misanchuk, 2004; Herrington et al., 2010). TEL can create "a complex system of people, relationships and artefacts" (Johnson & Wetmore, 2009) in which learning occurs. From a social constructivist perspective, it is people and society who shape learning, from conception to production using tools, described by Vygotsky as including "language; various systems of counting; mnemonic techniques; algebraic symbol systems; works of art; writing schemes, diagrams, maps, and mechanical drawings; all sorts of conventional signs" (cited in Daniels, 2005, p. 8). The role of the educator is to create the enabling environment to assist the students to use their past experiences and information to construct meaning in a socially interactive environment (Pear & Crone-Todd, 2002). A central concept of Vygotsky's theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to aspects that an individual can learn on their own, compared to learning that is supported by an educator or a more knowledgeable peer. In the scaffolding process the educator initially provides detailed steps to accomplish a task, and gradually shifts responsibility for the students to complete the task on their own. Regular assessment and feedback are provided by the educator to the student about the quality of their learning.

## 1.14 Contribution of the Study

This is the first study that has considered the extent to which the elements of AL are appropriate in course design for meso intervention with South African social work undergraduate students, using a modified educational DBR method. The study has resulted in the implementation of an original course design to enable the development of meso intervention skills for undergraduate students. Findings from this study have led to an augmented list of authentic learning elements for meso practice and the development of guidelines for educators that can be transferred to other courses. The study adds to the existing body of knowledge on HE teaching and learning, specifically in the teaching meso practice education.

## 1.15 Definitions of Terms

**Articulation** is the ability to verbalise, deliver a presentation and to argue or defend one's position.

**Authentic e-learning** is the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in a teaching and learning environment, coupled with characteristics of authentic e-learning in blended or fully online courses.

**Authentic learning** is a framework that suggests that practical knowledge is best obtained in learning settings that have the following characteristics: an authentic context; an authentic task; expert performance; multiple perspectives; collaboration; reflection; articulation; coaching and scaffolding; assessment (Herrington et al., 2010).

**Design-based research** is “a series of approaches, with the intent of producing new theories, artefacts and practices that account for and potentially impact learning and teaching in naturalistic settings” (Barab & Squire, 2004, p. 11).

**Coaching** is a method used by the educator and the students to support learning, either through face-to-face communication or mediated through TEL (Herrington et al., 2010).

**Meso practice** is the planned, purposeful and professional activity of a social worker in which members take part in face-to-face or online communication, share common goals and use the group experience to achieve the goals of the group and the individuals (Ross &

Deverell, 2010).

**Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)** is the use of various open-ended visual and flexible activities and learning methods, done with small groups of people, and may contribute to developing reflection and critical consciousness (Bozalek, 2011b; Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010)

**Reflection** is the solitary, internal thinking process and the collaboration on tasks that include sharing one's thoughts with others in which people shape their choices and meanings (Herrington et al., 2010; Searby & Tripses, 2011).

**Scaffolding** comprises the activities and tasks designed by an educator to be appropriate to the Zone of Proximal Distance (ZPD) of the student, so as to provide the support necessary for that student to develop the competence to function independently (Vygotsky, 1978).

**Social constructivism** is a theory that states that people learn through being active participants in the construction of new knowledge by building upon the foundation of previous experience and their own version of reality (Hoover, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

**Situated learning:** Learning should be embedded in the social and physical space within which it will be used, and knowledge and skills should reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life, including collaboration and observation (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Herrington & Oliver, 1995).

**Technology enhanced learning (TEL)** is the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) for the improvement of teaching and learning through creating learning opportunities for students, whenever they choose (HEFCE, 2009).

## 1.16 Structure of the thesis

The study is presented in self-contained chapters and includes the following chapters.

### *Chapter One*

Chapter One locates the teaching of meso practice within the South African HE environment. Information is provided on the choice of topic and on researching my own teaching practice in the area of meso practice. This chapter addresses the research question as to which elements of authentic learning can improve the teaching of meso practice within the South

African HE context, as well as the various objectives that were linked to the other phases of the study.

### ***Chapter Two***

This chapter reflects on the various definitions of group work and meso practice. Consideration is given to a document on the standards for meso practice that was developed in 1999 by the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups, which includes various aspects that are critical of the content development of the meso practice curriculum. The complexities of HE in South Africa are discussed in this chapter. Specific reference is made to the role of the educator who teaches meso practice using activities to ensure experiential teaching and learning.

### ***Chapter Three***

This chapter focuses on learning, which is an active, social, constructive, cognitive process that occurs through purposeful interaction with the environment, other people and objects (Anderson-Meger, 2011; Smith & MacGregor, 1992). The authentic learning framework (Herrington et al., 2010) is developed from various pedagogical theories that are explored in this section. The use of TEL in social work is considered, as well as each of the nine elements in authentic learning.

### ***Chapter Four***

This chapter describes the research methods used in the four phases adopted in this study as outlined in section 9.1 of Chapter One. A modified version of educational DBR, which is aligned to the research questions and objectives of the project, was used. The study focuses on the meso practice course implemented during the year 2015. A phased mixed method research design was used to obtain a better understanding of how meso practice is taught and how student supervision by other educators in HE is enacted.

### ***Chapter Five***

Chapter Five describes the perceptions and practices of practitioners who were interviewed regarding the methods they used to teach meso practice to undergraduate social work students. This chapter provides an understanding of how group work or meso practice was

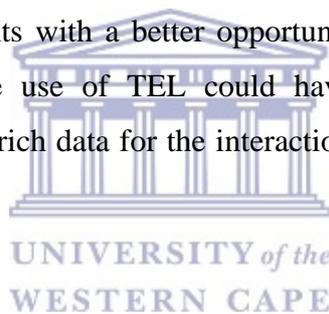
conducted in four South African higher education institutions (HEIs). The views of these practitioners served to provide suggestions on how the course should be redesigned.

### ***Chapter Six***

In this chapter, consideration is given to the meso practice course, considering the learning design, the use of a learning management system called Sakai and the elements of authentic learning. Phase 1 and 2, as well as my own experience of teaching the course, influenced the course that was developed, implemented and evaluated. Information is provided on the course outline and assessment methods used in the course.

### ***Chapter Seven***

In this chapter, the elements of authentic learning that were incorporated into the course design are described. The use of students working in groups to teach meso practice was significant, as it provided students with a better opportunity to engage as a student, group leader and member. While, the use of TEL could have worked more effectively, the discussion forum posts provided rich data for the interactions between students and educator in the course



### ***Chapter Eight***

This chapter explores the importance of affect for meso practice education and how it can be ascertained through the use of PLA techniques. The role played by educators and students in understanding emotions and feelings are explored, including the skills related to meso practice intervention that were developed by participatory learning and action (PLA) techniques. The chapter concludes that authentic learning has been shown to be a very effective method for course design and does acknowledge the importance of reflection. Authentic learning does not include the relational aspects of affective interchanges in teaching, learning and in course design, especially for social work education and other disciplines that are vital.

### ***Chapter Nine***

In DBR an important outcome is the production of guidelines that can be used to support further iteration of the course, as well as well as guidelines for others to use for their own course development. This chapter reviews the initial design principles that were developed at

the onset of the course, and the data analysis that was conducted after the course, which was developed in order to create the final proposed course guidelines in this penultimate chapter of the study.

### *Chapter Ten*

In the final chapter of this thesis, the set of design guidelines and the links between teaching meso practice and authentic learning within the South African HE context are covered. Future areas of research are suggested. The findings suggest that the use of authentic learning and affect have the potential to lead to learning, professional growth and the development of students who are more reflective in demonstrating meso skills in social work education within a South African context.



## CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW, SOCIAL WORK AND MESO PRACTICE EDUCATION

*sharing the same park bench*

Abels, 2013, p. 262

### 2.1 Introduction

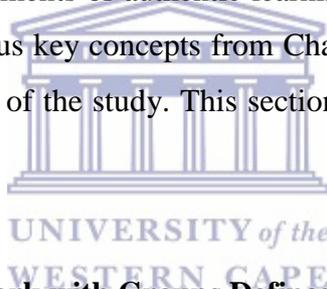
Course design in Social Work education, especially in South Africa, changed between 1994 and 2015 as a result of various factors such as alignment with the South African National Qualifications Authority, the increase in student numbers and the under-preparedness of students. Incorporating social justice in curriculum development was another area that warranted consideration, which implies understanding the inequalities created by apartheid and the way teaching was shaped by these factors (Badat & Sayed, 2014; Fraser, 1996). The new Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree is criterion-based, and has twenty-seven exit level outcomes (ELOs). The new programme also offers greater access to students from resource-scarce backgrounds (Collins, 2013). Searching for new ways to address these changes that consider current student-centred learning theories requires an understanding of current literature and real-world conditions. In light of these factors, this study makes use of modified educationally-designed research to create a course in meso practice or group work.

Chapter Two presents an overview of the following main topics: the international context of social work education; the history of group work; the development of standards for group work involving social work education; the context of South African society and social work education; Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand; curriculum developments in group work; the role of the educator; types of teaching methods for group work and the use of activities in meso practice.

The literature review provides an overview of how recent research has contributed to the development of this study. The objective of this literature review is to critique relevant

research about meso practice education and to influence the redesigning of this practice, based on some of the problems identified. The goal of this literature review is not to find solutions to these problems but to discover how other studies experienced these or similar problems (McKenney & Reeves, 2012).

The study focuses on the teaching of meso practice through social work with groups in social work education within South African Higher Educational institutions (HEIs). Accordingly, in the literature review, I have adopted a global and contextual perspective, considering how a meso practice course could be redesigned to help social work students in their quest to develop basic practice skills with which to conduct their first promotive and preventative groups during field instruction from August to October 2015. When redesigning the course, consideration was given to various factors such as a knowledge of the educational context, the students' context, aspects of meso practice intervention, as well as pedagogical knowledge which informs the elements of authentic learning and course-design information. In Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 various key concepts from Chapter 1 are elaborated upon, which underpin the theoretical concerns of the study. This section commences with a discussion of definitions for group work.



## **2.2 Meso Practice /Social Work with Groups Defined**

Meso practice is defined by Toseland and Rivas as

*Goal directed activity with small treatment and task groups aimed at meeting the socioemotional needs and accomplishing tasks. This activity is directed to the individual members of a group and to the group as a whole within a system of delivery (2009, p. 12).*

Significant to this definition are the organised and planned aspects of such interventions that are focused and goal-directed to meet both individual and group needs. Thus, at the heart of group work is the powerful position which acknowledges that “multiple relationships are the source of change” (Abels & Abels, 2009, p. 69). Another comprehensive definition of group work is “helping individuals and groups develop, expand their social capital, and build connections to improve personal and civic welfare” (Abels & Abels, 2009, p. 278). This definition reinforces the natural outgrowth of social work with groups, historical

development, with its emphasis on mutual aid and the interconnections that exist between people. This is a keystone that has endured through the passage of time for group work, since meso practice is mutual aid.

Expanding on this, meso practice is a significant intervention that is often short-term in duration in social work, and has certain unique aspects such as the various stages or phases of a group and the tasks performed by them. The foundations of group work are “social reform, democratic participation, social action, mutual aid, concern for vulnerable and oppressed populations” (Birnbaum & Auerbach, 1994, p. 333). Thus, meso practice is linked to social justice and finds ways for people to come together to address social and emotional issues and needs.

Positive words and feelings used to describe meso practice from the perspective of a member are: empowering, fun, powerful (Clements, 2008). Other notable terms used to describe meso practice include “making a joyful noise” (Malekoff, Salmon, & Steinberg, 2006), being in the same boat and “sharing the same park bench” (Abels, 2013, p. 262). Significantly, these phrases suggest a degree of interconnectedness or mutual aid (Shulman, 2006) that is enduring and steadfast in the practice of social work with groups. Group work is seen as significant to the profession, as evidenced in its being part of the international definition of social work, which is considered in the next section on global issues in social work education.

### **2.3 The International Context of Social Work Education**

In 2014, both the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) reached agreement on the following comprehensive international definition of social work:

*Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014).*

Social work principles include “collective responsibility and the respect for diversity”, which are values that are central to helping people manage and resonate with meso practice interventions. In addition, issues that dominate the current international social work educational context include the need for social work students and practitioners to understand the diversity of the people they work with, and to adopt a social justice view, thereby enhancing the well-being of people within the spaces they inhabit: all may be achieved by people connecting in groups (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). By the same token, the role of educators in social work should be to encourage critical, reflective skills in students so that they may develop as *Public Good Professionals* (Walker & McLean, 2010) who are able to identify and address sources of oppression and poverty and advocate for social justice. Being a citizen of the world requires students to exhibit attitudes and behaviours that reflect concern, understanding and advocacy for social change and social justice in a world that separates people as a result of their socio-economic status.

Public Good Professionals are multi-dimensional human development practitioners who are able to act in congruence with the following four areas which also cohere with the values and ethics of the social work profession:

1. Recognition of the full dignity of every individual.
2. Acting for social transformation and reducing injustice.
3. Making sound, knowledgeable, thoughtful and imaginative professional judgements.
4. Working/acting with others to expand the comprehensive capabilities (“fully human lives”) of people living in poverty (Walker, McLean, Dison, & Vaughan, 2010).

In an ideal world capabilities are real, and people have the actual *freedoms* (opportunities) to do and be what they value doing and being, and to choose between different kinds of lives (Sen, 1999a; 1999b; 2009), but in reality access to these capabilities is thwarted by circumstance. Well-being should be evaluated in terms of what people value being and doing, and they should be enabled to increase their freedom to be, in those ways. However, in many places in the world these capabilities are contested, and this is especially true of South Africa, where there are many challenges in HE that call for transdisciplinary solutions (Habib, 2016; Padayachee, 2015).

Undoubtedly, the changes in society warrant adaptation to competing priorities to ensure that the generalisable undergraduate curriculum be appraised, updated and modified for the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree to remain relevant in the South African context. Therefore, preparing students to function in the workplace is imperative, and focus needs to be given to key performance areas of government, employers, accrediting bodies and training institutions, when making changes to the curriculum. On the other hand, developing a curriculum exclusively based on the needs of these stakeholders could be detrimental to the profession of social work, which may be swayed towards greater privatisation and the adoption of neoliberalism (Sewpaul, 2013), so it is imperative that critical and radical theory remain part of the curriculum.

Moreover, it is suggested that clients/service-users whom social workers serve are consulted regarding what should be included in the curriculum (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). Similarly, it is crucial to incorporate creative and innovative practices into teaching of social work that moves towards more student-centred methods. Because learning is seen as behaviour change arising from experience, it should be experiential, active, cooperative and collaborative (Collins et al., 1989; Hoy, Davis, & Anderman, 2013; Steiner, Stromwall, Brzuzy, & Gerdes, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). It should include drawing on past experience and meaning-making to support learning such as often occurs through social interaction, and which also resonates with meso practice (Burton et al., 2008). New strategies include the careful and thoughtful use of technology as an additional method of teaching that foregrounds pedagogy, instead of the blind use of technology-based decisions by management at HEIs (Caird & Lane, 2015; Conole, 2013; Teater, 2011).

A well-known author and social work educator of group work, Roselle Kurland, once said, “Be bold, [have] faith in social work, [have] faith in people [and have] faith in group work and yourself” (Steinberg, 2007, p.283) when conducting group work. However, changes internationally and nationally call on educators to *do more* and to adopt a more careful and nuanced approach to curriculum review and course design, so that learning opportunities cohere with standards and outcomes for the BSW degree and the needs of students (Bozalek, 2009; Collins, 2012). To understand these needs, consideration needs to be given to the history of social work with groups.

## 2.4 History of Group Work

Konopka (1983) attributes the foundation of group work to a talk by Grace Longwell Coyle entitled “On Becoming a Professional” presented in 1949. In this talk, group work was seen as developing as part of the “history of social agencies evolving within a changing society” (Konopka, 1983, p. 2). Social work with groups spans many years and has developed to meet many needs (Sweifach & LaPorte, 2013). Group work has been called a field, a movement, a path to a social work method, and more recently, an intervention (Konopka, 1983). Practical elements of group work are found from 1914 in courses on the settlement movement, which consisted of programmes to address the social costs of industrialisation and recreational movements, made up of activity programmes and created to address social concerns in the community (Shera, Muskat, Delay, Quinn, & Tufford, 2013). Various authors concur that group work developed out of three movements: the settlement, recreation and the progressive worker educational movement (Brenton, 2005; Konopka, 1983; Lazar, 2007). As early as 1952 the first policy statement defined social work as casework, group work and community organisation, and these three methods were unchanged until 1969 (Birnbaum & Auerbach, 1994). Group work developed from various professions such as education, psychology and social work (Konopka, 1983), and today we see that group work is still an important part of education, psychology, nursing, political science, psychiatry and human resources. This PhD study is about teaching group work education through the use of face-to-face and online groups, which again link the professions of social work and social work education.

The first set of ten standards in group work was developed by Bogardus (1936), and included solving problems, organising leisure activities, keeping records, training volunteers and research. However, most researchers refer to the standards developed in 1999, by the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups (AASWG), which is currently called the International Association for Social Work with Groups (IASWG), as the first set of standards (Shera et al., 2013). Despite the early prominence accorded to the use of groups, the practice of group work has waxed and waned, and often group work has been relegated to the periphery of social work (Abels & Abels, 2002). A factor that contributed to the decline in the teaching of group work was the 1969 decision by the Council for Social Work Education (CSWE) to create a generalist curriculum, and integrate casework, group work and community work.

According to Abels, the adoption of generic practice was seen as “genericide” for group work in particular (2013, p. 261). This could be linked to what Konopka, (1981) calls “control vs freedom”, questioning the value of linking group work to social work, seeing that the foundation of social work stems from authoritarian and bureaucratic developments such as the settlement houses in the western world and the *poor white* problem in South Africa (Patel, 2008). It is also linked to granting greater importance to case work and clinical aspects than to group and community work in South Africa (Mason, 1987). Konopka notes,

*the acceptance of something as revolutionary as social group work was too hard for this [social work] profession ... [which] wanted its practitioners to be totally in charge as practitioners saw themselves as an expert person providing services to clients with a lower status* (1983, p.18).

Thus the movement of power dynamics from the group worker to the group is significant, and is an aspect that warrants attention when conducting meso practice: when teaching it, this could be translated as offering teaching which is student-centred.

Birnbaum and Auerbach (1994) also express concern about the dearth of group work courses offered at Masters level by many training institutions. In 1963, group work was very popular, so much so that in the United States it was offered by 76% of graduate programmes; but by 1970, this number had decreased to 47%; later in 1974, there was a further drop to 22% and in 1981, only nine graduate schools had concentrations in group work (Rubin, as cited in Clements, 2008). Post 1982, the “Statistics on Social Work Education no longer reported the number of graduate schools offering concentrations in group work”, which indicates that group work had really waned (Birnbaum & Auerbach, p. 326, 1994).

This reduction of group work in the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum over the years has resulted in a concomitant drop in the training and preparedness of social work graduates engaging in group work intervention (Clements, 2008). One of the impacts of this decline in group work training of future social workers has been that social work students are “poorly prepared” for group work, and faculty (social work lecturers) are ill-equipped to teach social work with groups (Macgowan & Wong, 2015). These and other factors support research in the area of group work education.

Despite the decline of group work education for social work students in western countries, it remains a method that “challenges dominant political sensibilities, individualism, competition, dualism and autocratic values” (Drumm, 2006, p. 19), and should be as important, in its capacity to further a social justice approach in society today, as it was when it was first established. The value of a social justice approach supports the development of a determination to remove separation based on race, ethnicity, gender, class sexual orientation and ability (Ibrahim, 2010). Meso practice is an intervention that values social justice and resonates in South Africa because of its apartheid past. The following section deals with the standards relevant to group work that were alluded to in the historical development of group work: in this section, these will be developed.

## **2.5 The Development of Standards for Group Work**

In 1999, the AASWG) created a statement of standards which explained the various competencies against which group workers could be measured, these standards having been updated and published in 2006, and updated again in June 2010. Professional standards for group work are defined as guides for a practice that includes the skills, values, ethical considerations and knowledge, against which all group workers can be measured (Gitterman & SalmGobodoon, 2009; LaPorte & Sweifach, 2011; Sweifach & LaPorte, 2013).

The Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups (2010) has developed a new set of standards regarding the values, knowledge and skill base which inform the practice of social work with groups. The introduction of the standards document notes that these are general and descriptive rather than prescriptive ways of practice that can apply to a variety of settings and types of groups. The group types range from task, treatment, support, psychoeducational and community action groups. The document alludes to similarities with the Code of Ethics developed by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

The first section of these standards refers to the core values and knowledge required to conduct group work practice. Its two core broad-ranging values include a respect for persons and their autonomy, and the creation of a socially just society. The core knowledges section is much more comprehensive and encompasses a knowledge of individuals, group and group behaviour knowledge, and knowledge of the functions of a group worker, stressing the need

for specialised education and mutual aid.

In sections 2 to 5, the standards documents unpack the various phases of the group process, and provide information on the tasks, skills and required knowledge for each phase. The phases are divided into a pre-group, beginning, middle and end phase. The ethical considerations are discussed in section 6 and section 6B, which now include the use of electronic communication, such as computers and the telephone, as tools to conduct group work. Section 6 notes that new skills include new knowledge in technology and the way these tools are used to communicate. This standards document confirms the value of technologies for people requiring information and for the professional to share information about practice and emerging approaches (Strozier, 1997).

Cohen and Olshever, when formally reviewing these standards in 2010, suggested that they were useful, comprehensive, easy to understand and culturally and nationally relevant (Sweifach & LaPorte, 2013). The applicability of these standards by school social workers was reviewed by Sweifach and LaPorte (2013), as these social workers make extensive use of group work to conduct groups on social skills, self-esteem, anger, family problems, bullying and socio-economic support, to name a few. School social workers thus seemed to be a suitable group to ask about the use of these standards for group work. In the quantitative study by Sweifach and LaPorte (2013) conducted in the United States using an online survey instrument, there were 508 respondents of whom 89% were women, most of whom were over 30, with more than 6 years of experience in school social work (Sweifach & LaPorte, 2013). While these respondents felt that training institutions for social workers devoted little time to teaching group work, they rated their own proficiency in group work as *very good*. Despite this, the majority of the respondents (77%) were unaware of the standards. The respondents who knew about the standards obtained their knowledge from one or more classes provided by training institutions.

Clearly, despite the skills, values and knowledge noted in the standards being used by school social workers in their practice, the document itself was relatively unknown. As a result, Sweifach and LaPorte (2013) advocated for more formal group work training to improve practice and create better ways to disseminate information on the standards, especially by training institutions. For these reasons, it is suggested that the educators of social workers interweave the standards into the teaching and learning of group work.

Another addition to the social work education field is Macgowan and Wong's (2015) validated instructional approach, using an educational model called multiple-baseline design (MBD), which can be used by group work educators to build student confidence in core competencies during group work. In this case study, a 70-item Inventory of Foundation Competencies in Social Work with Groups (ICSWG) was conducted with 26 MSW students enrolled in a one semester course on group work. The instrument was administered multiple times to determine the items and skills that were important for group work. The primary text used was the book by Toseland and Rivas (2009), and didactic and experiential teaching methods were used. The course included skill-based exercises, enabling students to demonstrate their skills proficiency in simulated group interactions. The objective was to increase the students' confidence in the standards, and the tool measured each item of the standards. This study made use of a controlled outcome test and showed how the students grew in confidence throughout the course. The inventory could be adapted for undergraduate students and used in other areas to determine the applicability of the standards.

Consideration also needs to be given to the disadvantages of a global standard for group work. The main criticisms of the adoption of global standards in social work as a profession is that these standards are often developed from a hegemonic western perspective which disregards indigenous cultural and historical practices (Roy, Pullen-Sansfacon, Doucet, & Rochette, 2013; Sewpaul, 2010). In addition, the Global Standards for Social Work Practice with groups has areas under review, and the document refers to *problem members*. This is neither politically correct nor in keeping with the current strengths-based approach: the group leader should not be seen as the all-powerful expert (the standards refer to all the tasks and activities of the group worker), and there should instead be greater respect for the diversity and contributions of all members (Roy et al., 2013). Like all standards, these documents require regular amendment to keep abreast with changes. From global standards, the focus moves closer to home, to provide a snapshot of some relevant features of South African society.

## 2.6 South African Society

More than twenty years after the dismantling of apartheid, South Africa remains a society in the process of rapid transition, but vast inequalities remain. South Africa has a wide range of social challenges that warrant social work intervention, including labour disputes with their often violent consequences, as observed in the gunning down of 34 mineworkers by police at the Lonmin Platinum Mine (Naicker, 2016; Smith & Alexander, 2013), and a high unemployment rate of 25.5% (Steyn, 2014). Other social factors include a high prevalence of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), with the estimated overall HIV prevalence rate of 12.7% of the total South African population. (Stats SA, 2016). There is also rising evidence of substance abuse, high levels of violent crime, xenophobia (Misago, 2011) and widespread child and women abuse (Sewpaul, 2013).

Within this challenging environment, the country has made progress in granting free access to education at primary and secondary school levels, though not at HE levels (Spaul, 2013). There are also many other serious challenges arising from poverty that will remain in the long term (Van der Berg et al., 2011). Despite progress being made to open the doors of HE to more students, the intergenerational effects of poverty, inequality and unemployment continue to be transmitted (Naicker, 2016). A South African child not only has to work harder to overcome the disadvantages at birth arising from their family circumstances, but having done so, finds that these re-emerge when seeking employment as an adult (World Bank, 2012). Towards the end of 2015 and during 2016 there were many disruptions in the HE sector resulting from the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements that began at the University of Cape Town and became a national #FeesMustFall movement (Naicker, 2016). Factors that resulted in the shutdown of many South African HEIs were the need to accelerate transformation at the historically-advantaged universities and to “increase the number of black academic staff” (Naicker, 2016, p. 54)

At the University of the Witwatersrand, a historically advantaged HEI, the following six points were aspects that required deliberation, as part of a document called #TransformWits. They included the following (Zidepa, 2015):

1. Africanisation of institutional symbolism and institutional memory
2. Radical transformation and Africanisation of all academic curricula

3. Fast-tracking of the Africanisation of staff members
4. Curtailing of worker discrimination and outsourcing
5. Prevention and an end to financial exclusion of students
6. Transforming institutional structures that impede black students.

These six points require urgent deliberation over the next few years, as factors such as race, gender and poverty are significant variables that impact on South African student *dropout* (attrition) and low graduation rates, as is well documented (Breier, 2010; CHE, 2010; Murray, 2010; Van der Berg et al., 2011). Early years schooling contributes to these challenges, as schools that served predominately white students under apartheid have remained performing post-1994, while schools that served mainly the black community have remained underperforming and have been unable to transmit the necessary numeracy and literacy skills (Spaull, 2013). These disparities have created two different education systems and reinforce a type of apartheid, even though it is no longer law.

Other factors that have contributed to black schools remaining underperforming are disorder, distrust, rebellion, and a lack of co-operation. In addition, according to Fiske and Ladd (Spaull, 2013), in some lower socio-economic families, the belief is that schooling is a type of political subjugation which is reinforced by the non-performance that is apparent in certain black schools. These schools have high underperformance, high grade repetition, high dropout rates and high educator absenteeism (Spaull, 2013). Other elements that are not so easy to measure, but contribute to this dysfunction, are ill-discipline, inefficient management, and the low cognitive demands made on pupils in course design (van der Berg et al., 2011), all of which are remnants of apartheid.

The stark inequalities of the past can be observed in the notable disparity in the average spending on education per year between “black” and “white”<sup>4</sup> children: in 1982 the apartheid government spent R146.00 or \$13.02 United States Dollars (USD) educating a black child,

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<sup>4</sup> In South Africa, the population was divided into white, African, coloured and Indian, where African, coloured and Indian are referred to as “black”. These socially and politically constructed apartheid terms, despite being highly contested, are still commonly used throughout the country. The use of race as a form of classification and nomenclature in South Africa is still widespread in the academic literature. This serves a functional (rather than normative) purpose and any other attempt to refer to these population groups would be cumbersome, impractical or inaccurate (Spaull, 2013, p.2).

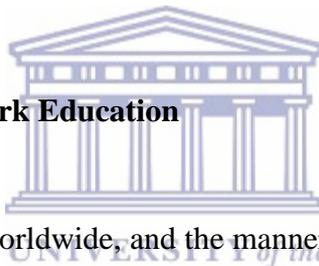
while R1, 211.00 or \$108.13 USD was spent per white child (De Waal cited in Badat & Sayed, 2014). These inequalities still persist, and result in students often entering HE underprepared and taking longer than the regulation time to complete their degrees. Challenges faced in HE are that while there is almost double the number of students who have been granted entry to institutions of higher learning, there are high dropout rates, and students are not able to complete their qualification in the regulation time (Wilson-Strydom, 2011). A study conducted by Scott et al. (2007) found that of the students who enrolled at universities in 2000, only 30% graduated within five years and 56% had dropped out. These challenges are attributed to a “complex web of social injustices” (Wilson-Strydom, 2010, p. 408).

An additional challenge experienced by students at the University of the Witwatersrand is that many of the students are not first language English speakers, but the institution only offers instruction in English. The University of the Witwatersrand language policy noted that “English will remain the only medium of instruction at the University, until such time as it can be used together with Sesotho” (University of the Witwatersrand, 2003, p. 3). Given various social injustices, both in the HE environment, as well as society as a whole, the need for social work professionals is evident and this has resulted in the need to train more students as well as the imperative to adopt innovative, pedagogically sound, radical and emancipatory approaches to education, research and practice (Ferguson & Smith, 2012). This is reinforced by the declaration of social work as a “scarce skill” in South Africa since August 2003, resulting in bursaries still being offered for this degree by the Department of Social Development (Earle, 2008). Earle’s findings indicate that in 1999, 1,829 students were registered for the four-year social work degree and that this figure rose to 4,085 students in 2005, suggesting an increase of about 123%. Unfortunately, there has not been a concomitant increase in resources, including the number of social work educators employed at HEIs. Educators are therefore challenged to teach larger numbers of students from diverse backgrounds, but with the same resources. In addition, concerns are raised about the quality and outcomes of programmes and the throughput of students (CHE, 2012). Undoubtedly the process of transformation in HE has been fraught with a multiplicity of challenges from the apartheid era, including a low participation rate in HEIs: only 18% of 18-24 year olds were enrolled in 2011, and these students remain unequally resourced (Bozalek & Boughen, 2012; CHE, 2012; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2014). Despite the increase in the number of students in all university programmes, there has been a related high dropout rate of first year students,

and Walker (2012) advises a critical scrutiny of the institutional and pedagogical arrangements that have been put in place to support students from previously disadvantaged communities to succeed in HE and experience participatory parity.

Notwithstanding these challenges, social work educators must ensure the optimal management of scarce resources – time, money and equipment – while facilitating the development of students’ professional skills. To rise to these challenges, social work educators must design imaginative and creative curricula, including the meaningful use of emerging technologies to support learning and skills development in an evolving workplace (Barnett, 2004; Beetham & Sharpe, 2007; Treleaven & Voola, 2008). Social work educators need to design a curriculum that prepares students for fieldwork when they qualify as registered social workers. Thus, it is imperative to understand how social work education has evolved in South Africa.

## 2.7 South African Social Work Education



Social work education is taught worldwide, and the manner in which courses are designed for this group of professionals impacts on the quality of services rendered to clients/service users. Social work education has evolved from teaching only disciplinary knowledge to developing competencies that include synthesis, inquiry, reflection, social good and problem-solving (Simons & Cleary, 2006).

In 1924 the first South African Social Work two-year diploma was introduced at the University of Cape Town and was later formalised by the Report of the Carnegie Commission of Inquiry into the poor white problem (Seekings, cited in Smith, 2014). Dr H F Verwoerd was instrumental in the development of social work in South Africa and worked at the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch in 1933 (Du Toit, cited in Nicholas, Rautenbach, & Maistry, 2011; Smith, 2014). In a paper delivered by him in 1939 called *Social Workers in South Africa and their Training*, Verwoerd advocated for the creation of a three-year university degree (Du Toit, cited in Nicholas, Rautenbach, et al., 2011, p. 43). The social work qualification at HEIs was implemented in 1937 (de Jager, 2013; Earle, 2008; Nicholas et al., 2011). Historically therefore, South African social work

education and the profession were created to address the poor white problem and support the apartheid government of the day (Ferguson & Smith, 2012; Gray & Mazibuko, 2002). Until 1987, the social work degree was three years in duration, according to the South African Council for Social Service Professionals, except at the University of the Witwatersrand, which adopted a four-year qualification from 1937 (Smith, 2014).

The curriculum during the 1930s had a strong British and American focus and was mainly restorative, with a heavy focus on micro practice or individual work. Social work was often taught in separate institutions, developed for different race groups, such as the University of Durban Westville for Indians and the University of the Western Cape for coloureds. Since the dismantling of apartheid in 1994, social work in South Africa has seen many changes, both in the areas of practice identified through the use of outcomes-based education (OBE), and the type of information that is taught to students (Sakaguchi & Sewpaul, 2009).

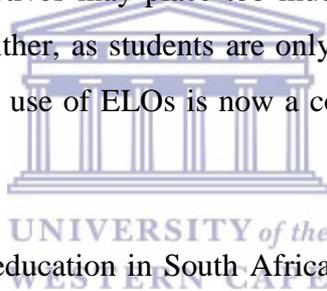
The primary focus on casework interventions has changed to adopt a greater social developmental approach that considers the well-being of all the population groups within a dynamic process of economic development (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002; Midgley & Conley, 2010; Patel, 2008). These changes have resulted in universities revising the content taught and adopting anti-discriminatory and developmental practices post-1994. Also, the White Paper on the Department of Welfare (1997) paved the way for the alignment of social work with the national goals within a democratic society.

Subsequently, the South African Social Work curriculum has achieved alignment with the international standards set by the International Federation for Social Workers. The Standards Generating Body (SGB) for Social Work and the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree were registered in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in 2000 (Lombard, et al. 2003). Since 2007, students have been required to register for a full-time four-year qualification and the curriculum has had to comply with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA's) outcomes-based education rules and standards. The social work curriculum includes twenty- seven ELOs in which students needed to show competence in order to qualify.

Since the introduction of the OBE curriculum for social work in South Africa, there have been challenges to meet. For example, in a study conducted by de Jager (2013), it was found

that students who had been exposed to the OBE curriculum were underprepared for realities in the field. A further limitation was that the outcomes are predetermined and mechanistic, which was exacerbated by the power relations between educator and student. In addition, social justice and participatory parity issues could arise, as students from historically disadvantaged, low socio-economic backgrounds are under-prepared for the HE environment, as well as the power structures in the system (including assessment), that could place these students at a disadvantage (Bozalek, 2009; Simpson, 2010).

On the other hand, the advantages of outcomes-based education are that educators and students have a clear picture of the course from the beginning, as they have pre-knowledge of the course objectives and can develop a plan for the requirements of the course (Centre for the Enhancement of Learning & Teaching, 2015). Also, learning objectives allow the educator to adjust the teaching methods and the types of assessment to meet the objectives. However, rigid learning by objectives may place too much emphasis on performativity, so that spontaneity and creativity wither, as students are only trained in specific areas (Carnell cited in Collins, 2012). Thus, the use of ELOs is now a common feature of the social work curriculum.



While the focus on social work education in South Africa has shifted from micro to macro practice, meso practice is still a significant outcome in the BSW degree and is found within the third ELO of the BSW qualification. The third ELO reads as follows: “Plan and implement appropriate social work intervention strategies and techniques at micro, *mezzo* and macro levels”. In addition, the aim of the BSW qualification is to assist individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities (South African Qualifications Authority, 2009). In this document meso practice is spelt as “mezzo” and special mention is made of assisting groups of people in social work. Within the BSW degree, specific standards have been laid down against which students are assessed, and these will now be discussed.

## **2.8 South African Social Work Standards**

The following are the standards that apply to social work students (Lombard, Grobbelaar, & Pruis, 2003). The purpose of the four-year BSW professional qualification that drives the social work curriculum in South Africa is to equip social workers with skills to challenge structural sources of poverty, inequality, oppression, discrimination and exclusion. These are

the South African Social Work Standards (Lombard et al., 2003, pp. 9 - 10):

1. *Knowledge and understanding of human behaviour and social systems, and the skills to intervene at points where people interact with their environments in order to promote social well-being.*
2. *The ability and competence to assist and empower individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities to enhance their social functioning and their problem-solving capacities.*
3. *The ability to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the functioning of individuals, families, groups and communities by enabling them to accomplish tasks, prevent and alleviate distress and use resources effectively.*
4. *An understanding of and ability to demonstrate social work values and the principles of human rights and social justice while interacting with and assisting a range of human diversity.*
5. *The understanding and ability to provide social work services which empower people who are vulnerable, at risk and unable to protect themselves.*
6. *A knowledge and understanding of both South African and global welfare, and the ability to implement a social development approach in social work services.*
7. *An understanding of the major social needs, issues, policies and legislation in the South African social welfare context and the social worker's role and contribution.*
8. *The skills to work effectively within teams, including social work teams, multi- and interdisciplinary teams as well as multi-sectoral teams.*

The successful completion of the BSW degree qualification will enable the learner to be registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSSP) and practice as a social worker.

While these standards are generic, they have multiple links with the teaching of meso practice and are required to be included within the meso practice course. Moving from a national perspective on social work, consideration is next given to how social work is taught at the University of the Witwatersrand.

## 2.9 Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand

The vision of the Social Work Department at the University of the Witwatersrand is to be the centre of excellence in social work education and training in South Africa, regionally and internationally, and to promote social change, development and the well-being of people, through research, teaching and community service (University of the Witwatersrand, 2012).

This vision aligns with the University's strategic goal to be a leading research-intensive university, with capabilities that contribute to global and developmental solutions and "produce global citizens who are passionate about intellectual and social engagement" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2015, p. 10). Therefore, the development of individuals and the empowering of communities through teaching, research and service are seen as pivotal in social work. Teaching and learning should, ideally, include collaboration, student-centeredness, professionalism and reflection. In order to achieve these teaching and learning objectives, the Department of Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand strives to develop a structured teaching and learning environment that fosters student-centred learning and promotes staff development. However, the Department of Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand, like most HEIs in South Africa, does not require its teaching staff to have a qualification in the field of education. Staff are, therefore, encouraged to improve their teaching practices through self-development, research, contributions to committees and undertaking peer and student evaluations. All new educators are required to attend a Teaching Role workshop at the Centre for Teaching and Learning Development (CLTD) at the University. In addition, educators are expected to attend in-house training on the research supervision of students, as all educators are allocated an average of five postgraduate students per annum.

Worldwide, social work is regarded as a "practising profession" (Teater, 2011) and the theory and field instruction courses for a BSW degree require some adherence to the principles of the theory of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Teater, 2011). This theory posits that students develop and create their own knowledge, based on their experiences within the social environment, so that knowledge is not just shifted from one individual to the next. Sound pedagogical teaching practices are important, and while the Department of Social Work does not have its own teaching and learning policies, there is an alignment with the

policies of the University and the requirements of the SACSSP, as well as SAQA standards. All the courses in the undergraduate programme in the BSW degree are aligned with the ELOs and associated assessment criteria which are recorded in the respective course outlines. At a national level, the Department of Social Work of the University complies with the policies stipulated by the SACSSP, SAQA and the Council for Higher Education, which accredits the degree.

At the university level there are specific policies for teaching and learning, such as a Teaching and Learning Plan (2010-2014) and the Teaching and Learning Plan (2015-2019), which notes that the University is:

*An IT-Savvy University: Wits will position itself as an IT-savvy university that uses technology to enhance all its core processes, including providing new and innovative ways of engaging students and staff in academic activities* (University of the Witwatersrand, 2014b, p. 3).

These plans suggest good support for the use of Technology Enhanced Teaching. Moreover, other university documents that concern teaching and learning include: academic aims and values, commitment to scholarship, principles of teaching and learning and the strategic research plan. In addition, the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning has proposed the adoption of a code of conduct that lays down minimum standards of good teaching (University of the Witwatersrand, 2014b). Members of staff in the Social Work Department sit on the Teaching and Learning Committee of the School of Human and Community Development.

Other significant details of the institution are that it is a contact institution predominantly using face-to-face (F2F) lectures and some technology-enhanced learning (TEL). The methods of teaching and learning include: lectures, self-study, research, role-plays, class discussions, collaborative group work, article critiques, guest speakers, videos, PowerPoint presentations and practical work. Students receive study-guides and course outlines showing how learning objectives in each module link with ELOs of the BSW degree. In this PhD study, focus is placed on the meso practice course in the social work programme for second-year students that was redesigned to incorporate the principles of situated learning (Brown et al., 1989) and authentic learning (AL) (Herrington et al., 2010) to develop students' ability to function in the workplace.

## 2.10 Curriculum Development in Group Work

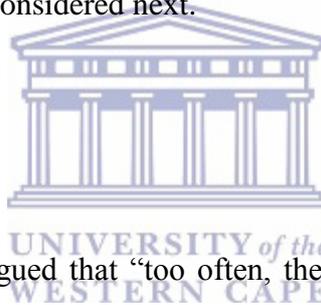
Curriculum development is the planning and developmental process of deciding on educational goals and how they will be achieved (Roberts, 2015). The following factors play an important role in curriculum design and teaching practices: “educational goals and purposes; the subject matter and discipline; teaching, learning and students; educator identity; institutional context; stakeholder and socio-political context” (Roberts, 2015, p. 542). An important yet simple objective that is discipline-specific to meso practice education is to understand the difference between one-to-one counselling and conducting social work with groups (Clements, 2008). The intervention of meso practice should be understood in relation to three domains: cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Therefore, it is vital that there should be synchronicity and / or congruence between thinking, feeling (affect) and responding. A criticism of university education is that often, greater focus is placed on the cognitive domain (Herrington et al., 2010) at the expense of the affective and psychomotor or practical domains. Historically, writers such as Birnbaum, have noted that “discussion is very scarce on the issues of methodology for teaching group work” (1984, p. 50). Birnbaum (1984) has identified the following five objectives, types of learning experience and the role of the educator in group work.

1. *Understand the process of group development.*
2. *Develop skills in observation and diagnosis of the group process.*
3. *Understand the conditions that contribute to effective group functioning.*
4. *Develop leadership skills as a group member who promotes effective group functioning.*
5. *Recognise the tasks a group worker needs to perform in order to manage group processes and enhance group development.*

The methods suggested for teaching group work include lectures, experiential groups and group-building activities in the classroom (Shulman, 1986; 1987). Lectures, subscribe to the traditional transmission or didactic way of teaching (termed *chalk and talk*) are educator-centred, which is not recommended, especially in the teaching of meso practice (Strozier, 1997). A preferred method is the use of experiential groups that offer greater scope for students to experience the process of group development and provide students with an

opportunity to practise their skills and leadership styles. In addition, experiential groups allow for personal development, role-play, collaboration, discussion and debate between the students and the educator (Herrington, et.al, 2010; Strozier, 1997). These experiential groups enable students to evaluate both their own behaviour and that of the other group members. Reflection can be encouraged through the completion of a weekly log, so that connections are made between didactic and experiential learning. In the weekly log, students would write about their experiences in the group and their reflections, both on the process and being in the process. In Birnbaum's course, the log was shared only between the educator and the student. The advantages of using this method, according to Birnbaum (1984), is that the combined experience of classroom and experiential group-learning helps students recognise the role of leadership, enabling students to rehearse what it is like to be a group leader in a safe space. An important person in the teaching and learning process is the educator, whose job it is to organise the teaching and learning context, so that all the students can use higher-order learning (Biggs, 2012), which is considered next.

### **2.11 Role of the Educator**



Sir Rhodes Highburg in 1966 argued that “too often, the educator has degenerated into an uneasy mixture of classroom chum, social worker and amateur counsellor” (Harden & Crosby, 2000, p. 334). This statement, made nearly 50 years ago, is outdated and irrelevant, as I do not see the educator's role as being degenerate if the educator sees the student as a whole person, or has an awareness of the students' personal problems and how these struggles impact on their studies. On the contrary, I see the educator demonstrating an ethic of care by teaching in a manner that is more thoughtful and compassionate (Sherman, 2016).

While I am aware of the power dynamics and boundaries that exist between student and educator, I am also aware that some students choose the profession of social work to heal themselves, and personal accounts of students include adverse childhood experiences and trauma (Collins & Van Breda, 2010; Dykes & Green, 2015). It is this awareness of the challenges experienced by students that should motivate educators to implement good teaching practices and change their relationships to others with compassionate responsibility (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2014).

Often the relationships that develop in collaborative work are complex, complicated, mercurial, unpredictable and include issues of power, social justice and participatory parity. Zembylas notes that there is a need to create pedagogical spaces “in which educators and students identify, narrate, explain, advocate or resist certain aspects of their emotional, historical and material lives” (2014, p. 11). To achieve these pedagogical spaces referred to by Zembylas, the educator should adopt a flexible and active role, and should be a subject expert who is familiar with a variety of teaching methods, who may at times play the role of group worker and/or group consultant, and at other times watch with curiosity for opportunities to extend the deep learning of students (Biggs, 2012; Collins 2012).

Therefore, good teaching is about facilitating the ability of students to think deeply at a cognitive level, as opposed to superficial learning. Marton and Saljo (cited in Biggs, 2012) see surface learning as students reading by anticipating the questions and trying to remember a list of disjointed facts with little understanding of what the author was intending. On the other hand, deep learning occurs at a cognitive level, as a deliberate attempt is made to understand the meaning that the author is conveying to obtain an understanding of the bigger picture (Biggs, 2012; Collins, 2012). Authors in meso practice, Birnbaum (1984) and Dennison (2005), see the classroom as the group and the educator as the group worker. However, the educator would only be able to play the role of a group worker if the size of the class were small (fewer than 20 students); it would however be possible if there is a considered use of technology, whereby the educator could monitor online discussion forum groups and play the role of leader at different points in time. This aspect will be further discussed under the subsection on the use of TEL in Chapter Three.

Furthermore, Birnbaum (1984) posits that the educator “provides task and group building functions, identifies when a student performs a leadership act and points out how it was helpful” (p. 56). The role of the educator suggested by Birnbaum (1984) is educator-driven, but a more nuanced student-centred approach would be to encourage students to engage in some reflection and meaning-making, so that aspects of further learning could be achieved by a more knowledgeable class member and through self-discovery. Birnbaum acknowledges that the “instructional role associated with the integration of didactic and experiential teaching is very demanding and at times stressful” (1984, p. 56). While these types of didactic and experiential teaching were the methods used to conduct group work teaching, little mention was made of any pedagogical theory that informed this practice, and that is

where this article fails to show the link between pedagogy and the teaching methods used in group work.

Most authors concur that group work teaching should be a combination of in-class didactic and experiential teaching and learning (Birnbaum & Wayne, 2014; Clements, 2008; Dennison, 2005; Shulman, 1999). A similar view is held by Knight (2014), who suggests the use of case examples, written assignments such as the group proposal and classroom exercises to integrate textbook material into the real world.

Kolb (2014), who developed the experiential learning model which is useful for the teaching of meso practice, posits that people learn through direct experience, and obtain a direct understanding of the phenomenon as they work and reflect on their meaning, to develop their knowledge. The use of experiential learning reinforces learning through action, engagement and active experimentation, and by observation and reflection on how others act. The teaching and learning space should allow for students to act and reflect on how they engage with one another, and identify group work skills, values and roles. Despite this, the classroom group strategy is limited because there are some aspects of the classroom environment that are different from group work in the real world, with clients. In real life, groups have a multiplicity of variables that cannot be controlled, such as challenges with venues, the need for resources and the views of management at the agency where the student has been placed. In addition, in the real world there is no educator who can intervene if there is a problem or dispute, nor would the supervisor be immediately available. Nevertheless, Shulman (1987) acknowledges that the classroom group can mimic the real world, and does provide a rich safe training ground for students when it is coupled with an *authentic task* (Herrington et al., 2010).

## **2.12 Types of Teaching Methods for Group Work**

Berger (1996) suggested the following four methods of teaching group work. The first method is often described as a traditional educator-centred method called “didactic” and it is structured, the opposite of experiential learning, where there is learning by doing. The second method is through observation, which is a type of social learning that occurs from watching others, and occurs naturally in everyday activities. The third method is called experiential

participation, in which learning is paired with an exercise that includes activity in collaboration with others. Experiential group leadership is the fourth type of learning, whereby students learn by concrete experience, observation and active experimentation, and take on the role of group workers.

Berger (1996) noted the following factors which would help determine the method used as a criterion for sequencing the methods:

- The academic and professional level of development of the students
- The number of students in a class
- The diversity amongst students
- Availability of observable groups
- The methods adopted by students to enhance their learning
- The length of the course
- The teaching and learning philosophy of the educator
- The vision and mission of the academic institution

Berger's factors enable the educator to influence teaching, but offer limited pedagogical insight into how these factors influence learning. In addition, some of the concepts such as learning styles are now outdated and lacking in evidence, as they hold the teaching constant; furthermore, assuming a *learning styles* perspective of students creates a "blame-the-student theory of teaching" which is a deficit model (Biggs, 2012, p. 43), which places little emphasis on actual course design and the role of the educator.

An innovative suggestion for teaching which is more student-centred is made by Middleman and Goldberg (1984) through the development of perceptual-imaginative capacities, encouraging visualisation and a more creative use of the imagination. Furthermore, Dennison (2005) expanded these methods of teaching into a five-part teaching strategy, which includes the following:

1. A didactic component. This occurs at the start of each class session, in which the theory is covered using the traditional instructional method of a short lecture using a PowerPoint slide presentation.
2. Experiential group participation. This use of an experiential method of teaching recommends that students be divided into small learning groups. In these groups students are reminded that the groups are mainly for training purposes and that the students are not expected to self-disclose if they choose not to.

3. Utilisation of actual group intervention from a therapeutic plan. This allows the students to experience the sequencing and selection of interventions that the educator had planned for each of the small group sessions. Cognisance is given to the stage of the group process reached, and the development of rapport and trust between class members in the respective groups. Emphasis is placed on the “small-learning-group packet” that contains a task-sheet with the techniques and skills in which the students should have developed proficiency through engagement with the activities (2005, p. 60).
4. Experiential group leader role. Here group leadership is rotated and the leader conducts the tasks during the sessions, leading and facilitating discussion within the group and providing feedback to the class when requested.
5. Integrative learning discussions. In these, the educator develops processing questions for each of the groups, so that students are able to reflect on their integrative learning, and this process helps prepare students for the groups they will conduct (Dennison, 2005, p. 59 - 62).

The suggestions for teaching made by Dennison (2005) encourage active engagement by the students in the classroom, though the educator-to-student ratio was 1:25 compared to the South African ratio, which is 1:80-100, as found in many undergraduate classes. Furthermore, although this model encourages educators to provide students with the opportunity to work in groups, the assumption is that such activity is very closely directed by the educator. The benefits of this strategy were that student anxiety towards learning the material was reduced, the class was attentive, there was an integration of theory and practice, and bonds between students within groups were trusting and intimate.

When developing a course one needs to be mindful of a challenge that exists in teaching group work as “evidence suggests that there is discontinuity between what students learn about groups in the classroom and what they do in the field (Knight, 2000). Some of the reasons cited are that students do not have sufficient opportunities to practise in the field (Clements, 2008; Knight, 2000, 2014). This finding was contradicted in a study by Goodman, Knight, and Khudododov (2014), who maintained that students were not adequately prepared to support their field practicum experiences, and areas of improvement should be found in the way the theory is integrated into practice. Herrington, Reeves and Oliver’s Authentic Learning approach (2010) recommends that course design make use of students’

collaboration and cooperation in working on a real-world task in a classroom and an online space, so that skills are learnt before students go into the field. The content of group work courses suggested by Dennison (2005) includes the theory of group work, stages of groups, roles of facilitators, goals of groups, norms and problems with conformity and examples of treatment groups which are groups requiring clinical intervention. The meso practice course was developed from the writings of these and other practitioners (Anderson & Kanuka, 1997; Corey, 2012; Northen & Kurland, 2001; Toseland & Rivas, 2009; Zastrow, 2009). Arising from this, combining course design with various activities is the next topic.

### **2.13 The Use of Activities in Meso Practice**

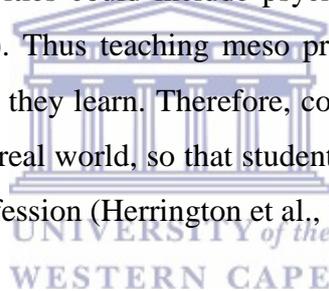
The history of group work points to a link between the recreation and progressive educational movement (Abels, 2013) whereby members came together and engaged in collective activity, and in this way, developed a sense of belonging and a sense of community (Rosenwald et al., 2013). Activities that are often suggested in meso practice include games, drama, music, discussions, hikes and creative drawing. These activities enable the group worker to draw out the thoughts and feeling of members during such collective engagements (Shulman, 2006). Moreover, Knight (2014) gives the following examples of activities she has used successfully in group work as a means to better understanding and supporting members: drumming, cooking, roller-skating and theatre. Some of the activities described by Knight (2014) reinforce the need to see people as whole, with the potential to be creative and with strengths and careful use of activities, allowing for fun, mutual aid, trust and healing within the group (Brenton, 2005). Another opportunity for the use of meaningful, enjoyable activities is the creation of satisfaction for and by members, and in so doing focusing on positive aspects instead of ill-health, pain and sadness. The “group breath” as a value attributed to meaningful activities is an integral component of meso practice and works together with conversations (“the group breath”) (Middleman & Wood cited in Rosenwald et al., 2013, p. 324).

Whitaker’s seven categories of group activities are:

1. Activities done for fun.
2. Activities that generate interaction and can be used as a basis for helpful intervention later.
3. An activity that provides for skills rehearsal.

4. An activity that is analogous to something else.
5. An activity that provides an alternate route or perhaps a more certain route to something than could otherwise happen in discussion.
6. Exercise or activity as an accelerating device, causing something to happen more quickly than it perhaps otherwise would.
7. Activity or exercises which help members empathise with each other, or with people with whom they interact (Whitaker as cited in Lindsay & Orton, 2009).

The use of activities such as drawing and drama may allow for the expression of some feelings that are best understood by actions (Corey, 2012). In activities, members are able to be creative, spontaneous and present, so that they are better able to understand their selves, their lives and their coping mechanisms. The use of activities in meso practice is a way to engage members, allow members to share information about themselves and connect with each other (Knight, 2013). Activities could include psychodrama, games, art and sport, to name a few (Corey et al., 2010). Thus teaching meso practice is enhanced when students engage in similar activities while they learn. Therefore, course design should replicate some of the activities conducted in the real world, so that students are able to rehearse and develop skills mastery in their chosen profession (Herrington et al., 2010).



## **2.14 Conclusion**

In Chapter 2, consideration has been given to group work or meso practice, and how this subject is defined in social work, as well as how it is taught. International and local positions are shared to provide contexts. While meso practice may be waning in certain parts of the world, it forms an integral part of South African social work education. Critical to course development teaching and learning are the role of the educator and the methods used for teaching, including the use of participatory learning and action techniques that provide students with learning that is experiential. This, then, leads into Chapter 3, which explores aspects of learning and the foundational theories on which the authentic learning framework is developed.

## CHAPTER 3 - THEORIES OF LEARNING AND THE AUTHENTIC LEARNING FRAMEWORK

*Tell me and I will forget.*

*Show me and I may remember.*

*Involve me and I will understand*

Xun Kuang, AD 818

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on learning theories with a specific focus on social constructivism, situated learning and cognitive apprenticeship. Chapter Three also addresses considerations of how learning occurs in groups through collaboration, which may or may not lead to the development of a community of practice. These theories and concepts are significant to learning and underpin aspects of the framework of Authentic Learning (AL). Thereafter, the lens moves to the use of technology-enhanced-learning (TEL) in the field of social work and, more specifically, in the area of meso practice education. Learning as an active, social, constructed and cognitive process that occurs through purposeful interaction with the environment, and other people and objects, underpins the theoretical understandings discussed in this chapter (Anderson-Meger, 2011; Smith & MacGregor, 1992). Chapter Three concludes with draft design principles that will provide the foundation for redesigning the meso practice course.

### 3.2 Learning

One view of learning, motivated by behaviourist theories, sees it as an observable change in behaviour, and behaviour as a consequence of past behaviour and not only the result of immediate stimulation (Burton et al., 2008). Another view of learning, which has cognitive roots, sees it as a change of understanding in the person and a changed relationship with the

world (Barnett, 2004). In these instances, change can be measured to determine the difference between learning and non-learning outcomes (Jarvis, 2006). There are four processes that support observational learning, which include attentional, retentional and motor reproduction processes, as well as motivation (Bandura cited in Burton et al., 2008). *Attentional* processes are what is observed, and this includes complexity, prevalence and functional value, which in turn impacts on attention. In this way, the individual's sensory capacities, "arousal level, perceptual set and past reinforcement history mediate the stimuli" (Burton et al., 2008, p. 12). *Retentional* processes are about the information that must be retained and remembered; people use imaginal and verbal cues, as well as overt and covert rehearsal, to remember information. Motor reproduction processes refer to the organisation of responses "through initiation, monitoring and refinement based on feedback" (Burton et al., 2008, p. 12). Behaviour must be performed, cues must be received and acted upon to make changes (Burton et al., 2008). The next factor that impacts on learning is that motivational behaviour is valued and more easily adopted than behaviour that is unrewarding. According to social learning theory, students will more easily engage in behaviours that are self-satisfying and receive external reinforcement, such as good marks, passing an examination or being liked by group members (Bandura & Walters, 1977). The social learning theory views espoused by Bandura and Walters (1977) are contested by critical social theory, which maintains that learning requires a critical understanding, and regards "educational discourse as framing the way students experience learning and empowers them" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 12). It is important that educators are aware of the theoretical assumptions and underpinnings regarding how learning is understood when designing courses.

Social constructivism views teaching and learning as "culturally situated, historically informed and imbued with power and control" (Wood, 2015, p. 3). The theory of social constructivism describes meaning making as occurring through social interaction, where knowledge is created and constructed, and not just a process of internalisation of information (Hoy, Davis, & Anderman, 2013). Social constructivism places the learner at the "centre of the educational process" (Hoy et al., 2013, p. 10). Thus the learner is no longer viewed as a passive recipient of information where learning occurs through a linear step-by-step, process-product approach, which is what occurs in the transmission model (Wood, 2015). Instead, social constructivist theories, such as those proposed by Vygotsky (1978), and educational theorists such as Dewey (1938), argue that learning is an active social process. Lave and Wenger (2003) also adopt a social constructivist approach, incorporating additional concepts

such as communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation (Brown et al., 1989; Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991; Collins et al., 1989) which are expounded upon later in this chapter.

### 3.3 Situated Learning

Situated learning is seen as a theory that can bridge the gap between knowing and doing (Resnick, cited in Herrington & Oliver, 2000); it is suggested that much of the knowledge at universities does not have direct relevance, as the knowledge obtained consists of “abstract and decontextualized formal concepts” (Brown et al., 1989, p. 32).

Concept, culture and activity are important for understanding how information is taught and how information is used in the real world outside the classroom (Brown et al., 1989; Herrington, Herrington, Oliver, Stoney, & Willis, 2001). The theory of situated cognition developed by Brown, et al., (1989) promotes learning “within the nexus of activity, tool and culture” (Brown et al., 1989, p. 40) and suggests that focused teaching and learning within the classroom should support a learning of knowledge in a way that is similar to the way it is used in real life. Learning should include aspects of the situation which “co-produce knowledge through activity” (Brown et al., 1989, p. 32). This theory of learning was developed by looking at successful learning situations, which included apprenticeship, collaboration, reflection, coaching, multiple perspectives and articulation (McLellan, 1991 cited in Herrington, 1997).

Situated learning and social construction acknowledge that learning is a social activity. Furthermore, it is more than just learning by doing, as the student enters into a community in which the apprentices or newcomers learn from the *masters* or the members who have been in the community longest. Through engagement with the community, real life learning results in students who are able to think creatively, solve problems and use knowledge in an “appropriate and adaptive way” (Herrington, 1997, p. 2).

The theory of situated learning incorporating apprenticeship, collaboration, reflection, coaching, multiple practice and articulation forms the basis for the nine elements of Authentic Learning (AL) (McLellan as cited in Herrington & Oliver, 1995). In addition, learning is

related to practice and the application of such knowledge (Schön, 1983; Teater, 2011; Wood, 2015). According to Lave and Wenger (2003), learning is a social activity, and when a member moves into a community of practice, they learn a way of doing, develop their identity, create artefacts and assimilate knowledge in the practice area from the experts and other members in that grouping (Smith,1999; Wenger, 2006).

Communities of practice, learning networks or thematic groups are terms used to describe groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Communities of practice view learning as occurring in relationships which are part of society and occur in projects, institutions, and associations (Wenger, 1998). The size of these formal or informal groups may vary, and while some groups may meet face-to-face, other groups meet online. These “communities of practice have been around for as long as human beings have learned together” (Wenger, 2006, p. 3) and people may enter and leave a number of communities of practice in their lifetime. Three aspects that are crucial to describing a group as a community of practice include the following (Wenger, 2006):

1. The domain of interest should be common; there should be shared competence and an appreciation of the *collective competence*, as well as learning from each other.
2. The community members engage in collective and collaborative activities whereby members help each other and work together. In this way, members learn from each other and engage in some of the following activities:
  - a. problem solving
  - b. information-sharing
  - c. sharing personal understanding
  - d. repurposing assets
  - e. management and synergy
  - f. conversing about developments
  - g. keeping records and documenting projects
  - h. undertaking visits to project sites
  - i. researching, planning and identification of constraints
3. Members are seen as practitioners who share resources, experiences, stories, tools and ways of addressing recurring problems, and there is sustained interaction among these members over a period of time.

Thus, learning is fostered through mutual exchange.

Despite the benefits of situated learning identified in this chapter, critiques have been levelled against this theory. For example, Anderson, Reder and Simon are of the view that some aspects of situated learning are “overstated and that some of the educational implications that have been taken from these claims are misguided” (1996, p. 5). They argue that the assumption that action should necessarily be grounded in the concrete situation in which it occurs is not correct, and they doubt that knowledge transfers between tasks because, they claim, if knowledge is context-based, then learning will not transfer between contexts. They are of the opinion that training can occur through abstraction in an environment that is devoid of social complexity as suggested by situated learning. Although Anderson et al. (1996) concede that situated learning has improved the link between what is taught in the classroom and the real world, they regard certain claims by situational learning theorists, Lave (1988) and Rogoff (1995), that situated learning theory is dependent on the social context, as “overstated”, as they argue that aspects of cognition are “context independent” (Anderson et al., 1996, p. 10). For example, they point out that the arithmetic and reading practice that occur in the classroom provides students with the skills required to use these skills in real life, since it is possible that these skills are automatically transferred from one context to the other. They also assert that learning transfer is enhanced when training involves multiple examples and students are encouraged to reflect on the potential for transfer.

Anderson et al. (1996) concede however that training by abstraction is of little value when unsupported, given that research has shown how abstract instruction combined with concrete examples is a powerful method of teaching. They argue, however, that there are some tasks which are best learned outside of the social situation. An example they cite is of an accountant who needs to interact with clients, but does not need to learn about tax code or the use of a calculator while engaging with the client or any other team members. They argue, furthermore, that collaboration on projects may produce conflicts and power dynamics that could hamper learning. Learning is promoted by teaching tasks and subtasks, as well as “individual training and training in social settings” (Anderson et al., 1996, p. 10). Thus, Anderson et al. (1996) provide an argument for a more cognitive individualist perspective, whereby the learner has to “remember strategies, rules and patterns” (Hung, 2001, p. 283) while working independently.

Cobb and Bowers (1999) are also critical of the merits of cognitive theory and situated learning theory, finding that “many of the instructional recommendations made in the name of situated learning theory are unsubstantiated” (p. 13). For example, they argue that the claim that all learning must occur within the social context in which it is found cannot be substantiated, given that some learning does occur independently. Cobb and Bowers further argue that the study conducted by Anderson et al. (1996) needed to extend beyond the issue of cognitive behaviour, and should also have considered the quality of the students’ interaction and the importance of greater integration between theory and practice. The design-based approach suggested in this study considers that course design for meso practice education adopts a more sociocultural view of classroom learning, based on relationships, and demonstrates how educators research their own practice as they teach. The position adopted in this study is that while cognitive behavioural aspects of learning cannot be disregarded, aspects of context and collaboration are important considerations in course design.

The arguments presented by Anderson et al. (1996) do not, however, acknowledge that professional practice, especially for social work in the real world, is complex and messy, and that students are required to explore multiple perspectives and understand various barriers to social justice (Rule, 2006; Teater, 2011). Furthermore, Anderson et al. (1996) provide little acknowledgment of the value of such discourse which occurs between students as they form a community of learners and work on “real world inquiry problems involving higher-order thinking with an authentic audience beyond the classroom” (Rule, 2006, p. 6). While the use of AL may occur in the classroom and in online spaces, these tasks and activities offer significant links with the outside community (Herrington, Reeves & Oliver, 2007). Thus, the complex task within an AL environment is of value for student learning because it can “enhance the transfer of deep lifelong learning” (Herrington et al., 2010, p. 91).

### **3.4 Collaborative Learning**

This section focuses on how learning occurs in groups through collaboration: it can occur through various activities, such as in-class discussion, online discussion forums, role-plays, group tasks and projects. The students’ level of competence is critical to the design of collaborative activities. Activities that lead to surface learning are those activities which are not suited to the student’s level and are at a “low cognitive level that yields fragmented

outcomes that do not convey the meaning of the encounter” (Biggs, 2012, p. 41). Good teaching, while being student-centred, rests in the hands and minds of the educator and focuses on facilitation of the higher order cognitive skills by students (Biggs, 2012).

It has been argued that limited cognitive demand leads to poor attendance by students because of the commonly used didactic lecture format (Evans & Matthew, 2012). While there is a place for the lecture, course design should include activities in which students actively learn by dialogue, articulation and debate, and derive meaning from the social context (Herrington et al., 2010). Activities designed to engage students in a student-centred and social constructivist environment, coupled with elements of deep learning, creative thinking, critical thinking, reflection and problem-solving would be suitable for effective teaching and learning (Brown et al., 1989; Collins, 2013; Conole, 2013; Na Li, 2012; Salmon, 2002; The Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). These are aspects of teaching and learning whose elements form part of the AL framework.



### **3.5 Authentic Learning (AL)**

The historical development of authentic learning may be traced back to situated learning theory, which respects an apprenticeship-type of learning and is therefore most suitable for the profession of social work, which requires students to understand the principles and theories, and display competence in these skills in fieldwork. The situated learning theory of Collins, Brown, and Holum (1991) and the cognitive apprenticeship model of learning (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989) see learning as experiential, with the role of the educator described as a facilitator, responsible for overseeing the students’ learning. Advantages of the elements of AL are that they lead to a more real world and a contextually relevant type of learning (Herrington et al., 2010). Another advantage of authentic learning is the use of TEL for teaching and learning, which is important within the 21st century workplace (Perron, et al., 2010).

AL theory suggests that knowledge is best acquired in learning settings that have the following nine elements:

1. An authentic context
2. An authentic task

3. Expert performance
4. Multiple perspectives
5. Collaboration
6. Reflection
7. Articulation of acquired competencies in the public domain
8. Coaching and scaffolding
9. Assessment which is discussed amongst the educator and the students (Herrington, et al., 2010).

AL provides a conceptual framework and in itself is not a theory, but is based on theories which underpin its principles. The value of a framework compared to a theory is that a framework is more flexible and seeks to “expose, describe, categorise” and find patterns that are relevant to a specific type of research design (Phillips cited in Teräs, 2016). Authentic learning considers students’ active engagement in the learning process and is different from traditional learning, where the lecturer verbally communicates large chunks of information to students who are the passive recipients of this information (Teräs, 2016).

AL activities are grounded in “real world” tasks and a social work educator, for example, can develop activities similar to those which a social worker might perform in the work environment, based around a social condition which could contain the messiness found in real-life circumstances. The use of collaborative activities helps to create a task that is loosely-defined, allowing for groups to find their own paths and solutions. In developing a complex task, Herrington et al. (2010) suggest that solutions to the tasks would not be found in a single textbook or resource. In addition, authentic tasks should be conducted over an extended time period, examined from multiple perspectives and use many different resources. Students and their educators engage in collaboration and reflection throughout the learning process. Active student participation increases agency and contributes to making the students more workplace ready. Achieving this with class sizes of 80 -100 students can be a challenge. Nevertheless, course development that considers the elements of AL offers a creative and courageous way of meeting the needs of diverse students, to achieve success at university and for practical learning (Hardman & Amory, 2015; Herrington et al., 2010).

Other features of an authentic task are that solutions require the integration of learning from different fields of study, and assessment methods are carefully integrated into the course

design. The final product of an authentic learning experience should be suitable for presentation in a public forum, for example, and have recognisable value to the world (Herrington, & Oliver, 2000).

One of the limitations of designing authentic learning tasks is that the processes are time-intensive. Therefore, educators working in a resource-constrained environment may find it challenging to conduct multiple assessments, provide regular feedback and assist students in creating high quality artefacts that can be showcased in public. However, technologies can be used to support student collaboration and reflection, and to give students access to a multitude of resources and expertise. In addition, the type of integrated assessment may not conform to the summative and formative assessment requirements of some HEIs.

In the sections that follow, each of the elements of authentic learning is considered.

### ***3.5.1 The Nine Elements of Authentic Learning***

Each of the nine elements will be elaborated upon in the following subsections.

***Element 1: Provides an authentic context that reflects the way knowledge will be used in real life***

An authentic context refers to the physical or online environment which reflects the way knowledge will be used in the real world, with all its complexity. The environment needs to be rich and complex so that students can “solve realistic problems” (Herrington & Oliver, 2000, p. 13) with purpose and the motivation to learn (Herrington & Kervin, 2007). The educator is expected to make links between course outcomes, as well as providing the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by students when developing an authentic context (Herrington et al., 2010). The development of an authentic task is vital for the authentic learning context and will be considered next.

***Element 2: Provide an authentic task***

The second element of authentic learning argues that authentic activities should be related to real-world concerns and these issues should be complex and ill-defined. Herrington et al. (2010) advocate that authentic tasks should be ill-defined, comprehensive, complex and

completed over a sustained period of time. As the task will be ill-defined, students would have to find their own paths and develop sub-tasks to find solutions to the main task (Herrington et al., 2010). Herrington and Oliver (2000) suggest that courses should offer ways to “bridge the gap between theoretical learning in formal instruction of the classroom and the real-life application of the knowledge in the work environment” (p. 2). Also, the authentic task needs to be undertaken “over a sustained period of time” (Herrington et al., 2010, p. 32), so that students have the opportunity to revisit the problem and investigate different solutions. The task should require that the other elements of authentic learning be included and that students would be required to work on the task in groups, as well as independently. Thus, in the specific meso practice course, an attempt was made to use a real-world social condition that relates to the field of social work, such as age-disparate relationships, which have been found to be a factor in the spread of HIV and AIDS in Africa (Shisana, Rehle, Simbayi, Zuma, Jooste, Zungu et al., 2013).

***Element 3: Provides access to expert performances and modelling of processes***

The third element of AL, expert performance, refers to the provision of expert performance and the modelling of skills, processes and ways to conduct an intervention (Herrington & Oliver, 1995; Pu, Wu, Chiu, & Huang, 2016). Expert performances are enabled by using multiple sources such as information from textbooks, PowerPoint slides and a resource-rich learning management system (Herrington & Parker, 2013). Other sources of expert performance could be YouTube videos to demonstrate how groups are conducted in different settings. Within the situated learning model of instruction (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) expert performances are created when the teachers explain the reasons for their teaching and role-model the desired behaviours. Most social work educators are qualified and registered social workers who have worked in the field and are able to teach by drawing upon these experiences (Pillay, Bozalek & Wood, 2015). Therefore, the educator in a social work class may legitimately play the role of an expert, who is capable of enriching teaching with practical experiences and examples.

These narratives of social work educators’ experiences contribute to drawing the student into the social fabric through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 2003) and helping students absorb the skills required for their profession. These shared real world experiences enhance student agency and facilitate the development of the attributes students

require in a complex world (Edwards, Rowe, Barnes, Anderson, & Johnson-Cash, 2015). Beyond the educator, other students with varying degrees of expertise also contribute to the AL experience when they share and collaborate with others. TEL supports expert performances as students create and share information on a topic which is then posted on the Internet or on a learning management system (Herrington & Oliver, 1995). The use of TEL also provides opportunities for the observation of experts in the field or mature practice, so that learning from more knowledgeable sources occurs.

***Element 4: Provides multiple roles and perspectives***

The development of an authentic task provides students with an opportunity to examine the ill-defined problem or social condition, appropriate and relevant to social work, from a number of different perspectives. Working in groups is one way of encouraging this element of viewing a problem or social condition from various angles by requesting that students engage in substantial information-seeking, making use of multiple resources and strategies to learn more about that social condition. The information collected by different students could provide greater richness and diversity than an individual endeavour. Furthermore, students with differing levels of expertise are enabled to pool their resources, which may include information obtained from journals, YouTube videos, newspapers and/or textbooks. The use of multiple roles can be facilitated by inviting students to consider the social condition from the perspective of a client in that situation, from a group leader conducting a group on the social condition and from the perspective of a student social worker, learning more about a real-world issue. The sharing of resources and debates also allows for a greater diversity of viewpoints and the gathering of rich information from many sources. It teaches students ways of evaluating and being discerning about the information that will be used in the final product. In this way, exploring a social condition from multiple perspectives and roles “challenges, inspires and empowers learners to take risks and exceed personal limitations” (Herrington et al., 2010, p. 73) In addition, students can post and share information on the learning management system, and this would provide an opportunity to crisscross the learning environment.

***Element 5: Supports collaborative construction of knowledge***

The two words, “collaborative” and “learning”, within the ambit of this research represent achieved activities where students work in groups on a task with a specific educational

objective within a social context (Zurita & Nussbaum, 2004). The use of collaboration stems from the social constructivist theory of Vygotsky, which was alluded to earlier in Chapter Three. Vygotsky (1978) stated that learning occurs through scaffolding in the Zone of Proximal Development. Therefore, intervention by a more knowledgeable other (a student or educator in the group) can bridge the gap between what a person can do individually, as opposed to what they are able to do with the help of another person. Here the group members come into play, as learning can be taken to a higher level as a result of this intervention within the “zone” (Seligmann, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). Group diversity in terms of knowledge and experience contribute positively to the learning process (Gokhale, 1995). Further theoretical underpinning of this type of learning may be found in situated learning, which is learning by an apprentice from an expert (Brown et al., 1989).

Some researchers point out the difference between collaborative learning and cooperative learning. In cooperative learning, tasks are pre-allocated, students work independently and then put information together at a later stage. Collaborative learning, on the other hand, occurs when students work together by engaging in the joint problem-solving of a task, whereby there is sharing of information, synchronously and asynchronously (Treleaven & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2001). An important component of collaborative learning is the use of TEL, whereby students and educator are able communicate, share and create knowledge, using an online discussion forum (Herrington et al., 2010).

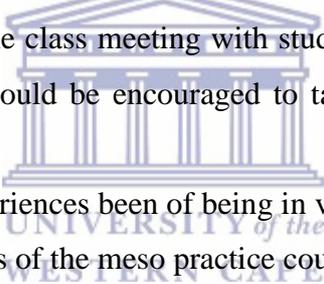
#### ***Element 6: Promotes reflection***

The skill of reflection is essential to most social work interventions. There are many ways one can describe reflection, but a simple metaphor is that of a mirror which will assist the student to develop “critical evaluation and self-awareness” and get a better understanding of “your knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Bassot, 2013, p. 6). The seminal work of Schön (1983) is often cited when discussing reflection, as he makes a distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action is regarded as the thinking process in which we often engage at an unconscious level while we are studying, working, and living and it can be described as thinking on one’s feet. Reflection-on-action is the process of looking back and evaluating what has occurred, the positive and negative aspects, the areas of development. This yields the type of professional knowledge which, if built into a course of study, would guide how you respond next time in a similar situation (Bassot, 2013; Schön,

1983).

Understanding the concepts of reflection, reflectivity and reflexivity can be confusing, and Bassot attempts to provide simple explanations of each of these terms:

*Reflection* is the thinking process we engage in as students and educators. *Reflectivity* is the deliberate act of engaging in the process of thinking, in order to analyse or evaluate an aspect of professional practice. *Reflexivity* is the higher level of self-awareness needed to practice in an anti-discriminatory way, which Fook (2004) describes as the ability to look inwards and outwards, recognising every part of ourselves, including our context, and the way social work is practiced (Bassot, 2013). Students need to develop the skills of critical reflection and the course would need to be designed to ensure reflection throughout the course – not only at the end of the course. Suggestions that can assist students to develop reflection include asking students to keep a reflection log, as well as comparing their reflections with others in their groups. For the educator, didactic methods could be used to explain the need to reflect and the educator can begin and end the class meeting with students sharing their own reflections on the process. Also, students should be encouraged to talk in pairs and ponder questions similar to the following:

- 
- What have your prior experiences been of being in various groups?
  - What are your expectations of the meso practice course?
  - What are your desires and fears about meso practice and the group you have been placed in?
  - Based on the social condition of your group, what have your experiences been and how does it make you feel to work with these social conditions?
  - How do you feel the group is progressing? What can be improved and what behaviours of yourself and the group members inhibit progress and growth?
  - What has been your biggest learning experience during this course?
  - What are you looking forward to most when you conduct a group?

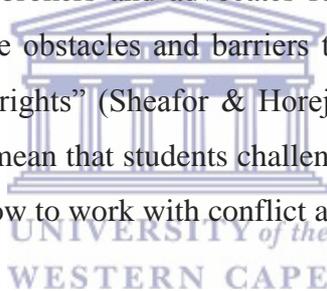
The above questions could be used to provide students with opportunities for deep reflection by giving relevant prompts to help explore their experience of the course.

***Element 7: Promotes articulation so that tacit knowledge can be made explicit***

Articulation ensures that knowledge is made more explicit. Working in groups allows

students to talk to one other and in this way explain concepts to the group – which helps shape their own learning (Zeman & Swanke, 2008). The discussion between students provides opportunities for articulation and debate, and may develop students’ presentation skills and give students the opportunity “to articulate, negotiate and defend their growing understanding” (Herrington & Kervin, 2007, p. 228) through language, using speech or text. Also, articulation around meso practice and aspects of the selected social condition serve to induct students into the vocabulary, and the relevant discourses that may transpire within a community of social work practitioners who share stories, resources and different points of view (Wenger, 1998).

Importantly, articulation occurs when students conduct presentations on their projects and defend their positions to a wider audience beyond the group members with whom they work (Herrington et al., 2010). These skills are of value to social work as social workers assume various roles such as educators, brokers and advocates for the rights of the clients/service users they work with, to “remove obstacles and barriers that restrict a class or category of people from realising their civil rights” (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2010, p. 55). Encouraging the element of articulation may also mean that students challenge their own cherished beliefs and develop new understandings of how to work with conflict and discomfort (Boler, 2005).



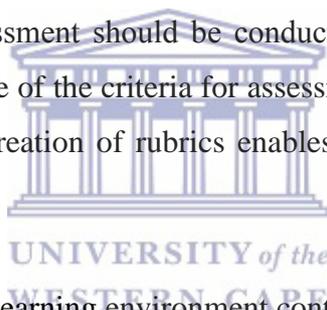
***Element 8: Provides coaching and scaffolding at critical times***

This element refers mainly to the educator who designs the course to take students through the content from simple to more complex aspects, by breaking down the information into its “component parts” (Herrington, 2010, p. 35). In addition, the role of the educator becomes more that of a coach, by offering support, encouragement, guidance and motivation, but also withdrawing into the background when students display competence and acquire the necessary skills. The learning management system (LMS) offers another way in which learning is encouraged, extended and assisted. The use of discussion forum groups provides students with a platform to share and create knowledge and content that is co-created with the guidance of the educator. The presence of the educator at the discussion forum of the LMS is important to create a social presence, as well as steer the discussion to support student learning (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison & Archer, 2001). The educator’s role in the element of coaching and scaffolding is important, but does not preclude the advice, guidance and contribution of more knowledgeable students who can also offer scaffolding, so that learning

is supported when students require support and assistance. Recommended attributes of an educator are flexibility, excellence in relation to content and practical knowledge, and a passion for group work.

***Element 9: Provides for authentic assessment***

The final element of authentic learning is the use of authentic assessment. Assessment needs to be woven into the course so that there are opportunities for assessment throughout, and students are given the option of submitting a draft and having it approved before the final submission. The submission of a draft creates opportunities for feedback, both for the educator and the students. The educator is able to mediate a self-evaluation of the advice and suggestions provided, and the student is able to understand ways to demonstrate and change learning patterns (Boud, & Molloy, 2013). Herrington (2006, p. 3) advises that students need to develop improved versions so as to “craft polished performances or products in collaboration with others”. Assessment should be conducted in a seamless and transparent manner, so that students are aware of the criteria for assessment. Feedback is provided by the educator and students, and the creation of rubrics enables students to know the criteria by which they will be assessed.



Assessments within an authentic learning environment containing multiple types of formative and summative criteria are used (Herrington et al., 2010). Assessments should consider the product, the presentations and the written work of students. In addition, aspects of assessments should consist of activities that are required in the world of work, to encourage students’ engagement with tasks such as keeping an activity log and a register, as well as contacting group members. In this way students may understand the contributions of various members of the team.

Having provided an overview of the nine elements of authentic learning, the following sections on course design and the use of technology provide insight into how these elements can be incorporated into a course such as meso practice for undergraduate social work students.

### 3.6 Course Design

The term course design is appropriate for social work education specifically, as it encompasses both theory and practice, and includes aspects suggesting that the process of designing courses should be creative, skilful and reflective (Beetham & Sharpe, 2007). There are many factors that need consideration in course design, including the alignment between course objectives, the teaching/learning activities and the assessment tasks (Biggs, 2012).

Deep learning, as has been noted, occurs when there are deliberate attempts to understand meaning, as well as some relevant prior knowledge, so that information relates to other knowledge, and a conscious effort is made on the part of the student to relate the new knowledge to prior knowledge (Hay et al., 2008). The deep approach to learning makes use of activities that are appropriate for handling the task, so that appropriate outcomes are attained as students delve more deeply and interpret meaning in terms of the bigger picture (Biggs, 2012). If the aim of good teaching is to encourage students to think deeply, the role of the educator is to design activities that allow students to engage deeply. This can be done by developing courses that support and promote meaningful contextualised learning, giving students the opportunity to practice these skills in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2003). More specifically for this study, given that social work students will be required to work with clients from their second-year within the BSW degree, course design that promotes the skills that enable students to experience the complexities and messiness of the real world become important.

Rule (2006) argues that an authentic learning environment should include the investigation of real world problems which students feel an emotional connection towards. Thus, the course content should be aligned with activities from within the profession. Furthermore, the educator should integrate new material with existing information that students already know (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). The educator should thus understand the students' past experiences in planning the curriculum and the content. An example would be to begin with a familiar activity, so that students are able to see the value of their past knowledge and its use to support them in the current task (Brown et al., 1989).

The use of collaborative learning activities can serve to immerse students in challenging tasks

and questions (Herrington et al., 2010). Design considerations include developing group dynamics by enabling students to work independently and collaboratively with some degree of cohesion. In doing so, students are able to embrace the diversity that each member brings to the group. Collaboration, cooperation and conflict in project teams results in members seeing things from different perspectives, building rapport between students and developing leadership skills. The educator can role-model respect for diversity and can acculturate students into the profession by highlighting the value of the multiplicity of experiences, backgrounds and cultures which members of the group bring. This is another way in which students can form links within the discipline through shared vocabulary, discussion, reflection, evaluation and validation of community and collaborative practices (Brown et al., 1989). The use of TEL has also commonly been used to achieve some of the elements of AL (Özverir, 2014).

### **3.7 The Use of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) in Social Work**

The profession of social work has been slow to embrace the use of technology for education, compared to other disciplines such as education, health and information technology (Perron, Taylor, Glass, & Margerum-Leys, 2010). Factors that have contributed to the slow adoption of technology by the social work profession include financial constraints, issues regarding medico-legal ethics, the dearth of training and “social work's historical reliance on face-to-face communication” (Berzin, Singer & Chan, 2015, p. 4).

There have been social work educators who have seen little value in using technology for teaching in social work, such as Kreuger and Stretch (2000). This view is similar to the early argument of Clark (1983), who had warned that technology as a vehicle for only the delivery of content has almost no effect. In the same way as a delivery truck used to transport food has no impact on a person's nutritional health, so the provision of notes and hand-outs through the medium of technology makes little or no difference. It is important to realise that the position of Clark (1983) was that the use of technology should be linked to instructional design, pedagogical approaches and educational practices, as there are various ways to use technology, and its effectiveness lies in how educators use it to allow students to achieve learning outcomes.

Other key features of TEL include the goals of instruction, pedagogy, educator effectiveness, the subject matter, the students and the fidelity of technology implementation (Bates, 2015). In practice, this would require the designing of courses that could function optimally within a technological system. What is recommended is a “technological infrastructure that enables high fidelity communication and collaboration” (Herrington et al., 2010, p. 67). Thus, the LMS should be user-friendly and accessible to students. Notably, one of the greatest advantages of using technology is to support students' efforts to achieve excellence, instead of acting as a tool to deliver content.

On the other hand, some educators have been able to identify important advantages to using technology for teaching in social work (Ballantyne, 2008; Bellefeuille, Martin, & Buck, 2009; Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2014; Rohleder et al., 2008; Toseland & Larkin, 2010). This suggests that social work education is “embracing and valuing online teaching and learning” (O’Neil & Jensen cited in Berzin et al., 2015; Fulton, Walsh, Azulai, Gulbrandsen & Tong, 2015, paragraph 7; Simon & Stauber, 2009); these educators describe the future landscape of social work with groups, as being intricately linked with technology, which would create innovative ways for engagement, intervention and assessment.

The use of TEL in social work education is growing, and there have been two meta-analysis studies conducted on the value of technology for promoting learning which have found small differences between blended learning and face-to-face instruction. These studies found that the students who were exposed to TEL performed only marginally better than students taught only using face-to-face methods. However, these results need to be viewed with caution as blended conditions often include additional learning time and instructional elements (Tamim, Bernard, Borokhovski, Abrami, & Schmid, 2011). Furthermore, the study by Tamim et al. (2011) found that technology used to support cognition had a greater effect on learning and academic success than technology used for the presentation of content. Thus, the potential for TEL to achieve quality learning outcomes may be realised through ensuring that the course design process is informed by learning theories, to create a bridge between classroom learning and technology in practice (Ballantyne, 2008; Herrington & Oliver, 2000; Berzin et al., 2015). Other limitations of TEL include the uncritical use of technology, such as reading lists and the online submission of essays which makes the use of technology “more pedestrian than transformative” (Waldman & Rafferty, 2008, p. 588). Other factors that are important include the unequal ownership of personal technology devices such as smartphones, tablets

and laptops (Bozalek & Ng'ambi, 2015). In South Africa, the use of TEL in HE has been described as an environment fraught with challenges and opportunities. Bozalek and Ng'ambi (2015) explain that the “South African higher education landscape is sandwiched between systemic contextual problems inherited from past educational policies and a generation of timeless possibilities enabled by emerging technologies” (p. 4). Some of the challenges include students who have poor access to technology and poor computer skills (Nash, 2009), and the differences between “resource-constrained as opposed to resource-rich HEIs” (Bozalek & Ng'ambi, 2015, p. 5). An awareness of these challenges allows educators to respond critically, responsibly and carefully. But despite these potential constraints, as Beetham & Sharpe (2007) argue, the educator should not avoid or disregard the advantages of technology in learning design.

It can also be argued that social work students need to develop what are termed *technical skills* and acquire the proficiency to manage programmes and work within a multidisciplinary team (Rowe, 2012). At an international level, the Council for Social Work Education (CSWE) has recommended the integration of computer technology with social work education (Perron et al., 2010). At a local level, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) makes specific reference to the development of social work skills by the use of technology in the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree. The fourth ELO states that social workers should be able to:

*Access and utilise resources appropriate to client systems' needs and strengths. Range of resources may include physical, financial, technological, material and social ... (SAQA, 2015, p. 3).*

Although these imperatives of the CSWE and SAQA are important, neither organisation offers explicit guidelines on how technology should be integrated into the curriculum. Thus, it is encouraging to note that the White Paper for Post School Education and Training notes the need for

*rapidly increasing ways of designing educational programmes to meet the needs of learners and the demands of the country... and adds that “As digital technology, and therefore e-learning, has become more accessible in South Africa ... and is seen as a means to expand access, reduce costs and enhance quality ..., improve communication and generally optimise student engagement” (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013, pp. 49-50).*

Ultimately, the major challenge for social work educators introducing TEL into their teaching will be for them to adopt a reflective way of using TEL to foster effective pedagogy, enhance practice and meet the contextual needs of the students (Pillay, Bozalek, & Wood, 2015). A point often overlooked is that courses designed to integrate TEL can also assist students in learning and developing technical skills and in using technological resources such as email and PowerPoint, as well as selecting information from the Internet and working with clients who are influenced by technology (Perron et al., 2010). Although the National Association of Social Workers (2005) has published a set of ten standards for the use of technology by social workers, there are no specific guidelines for social work educators.

Internationally, countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States of America have stressed the development of graduate attributes, so that students may develop the requisite knowledge, attitude and skills required in the world of work (Bozalek & Watters, 2014). Seen as among the important attributes for graduates are

*the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop, during their time with the institution and consequently shapes the contribution they are able to make to their profession and society* (Bowden et al., cited in Bozalek & Watters, 2014, p. 1071).

The University of the Western Cape (2009) has developed two tiers of graduate attributes. Tier 1 includes the following generic attributes which have value in course development and the second attribute aligns with an ethos of professional social work practice (Bozalek & Watters, 2014, p. 1071):

1. Scholarship and a critical attitude to learning.
2. Critical citizenship and the social good: a relationship and interaction with global communities and the environment.
3. Lifelong learning.

Graduate attributes are qualities that also prepare graduates to be agents of social good in unknown futures and may include technological skills and digital literacies (Barnett, 2004). While not making explicit use of technology, there are institutions of HE and employees that do see digital literacy as an important graduate attribute (Griesel & Parker, 2009; University of the Western Cape, 2009). As an illustration, Zeman and Swanke (2008) and Anderson-

Meger (2014) found that the use of technology assisted social work students to develop competencies in technology and better prepared them for a technologically global context. Similarly, Romano and Cikanek (2003) noted that incorporating activities designed to engage students through the use of technology helped to increase their awareness of computer applications with groups, and had the potential to increase their interest in using technology in their future careers. In the next section, attention moves to studies that have been conducted using technology in social work education for groups.

### *3.7.1 The Use of TEL and Meso Practice*

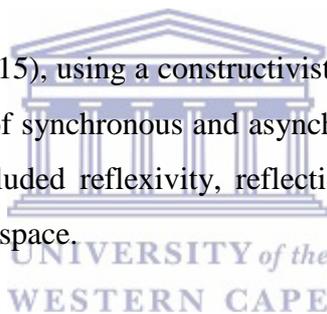
The use of technology offers flexibility in time and space for asynchronous and synchronous text-based communication among people, which is a significant factor in encouraging the various elements of AL such as collaboration, reflection and multiple perspectives in meso practice education. Group work, by its very nature, is collaborative. As a result, the skills used in group work include paying careful attention to group dynamics and interaction, and this leads to the acquisition of practical skills (Page, 2003). While the use of different forms of technology in group work is not new (social work practitioners have long used audio devices and videos for training, and other interventions) (Smokowski, 2003; Strozier, 1997), the current links with technology may offer a plethora of options for creative, transformative and innovative teaching and learning options to the educator.

To illustrate how technology has been used in teaching social work with groups, Romano and Cikanek (2003) conducted a study in which students were required to use two computer-based applications during a group theory and skills course, and incorporate Internet searches into their assignments. The researchers describe the following four instructional components used in the training of graduate-level group workers. The first is making use of asynchronous communication using the discussion forum application in a learning management system. The second is synchronous communication using a chat room. The third approach involves in-class discussion with no use of technology. The fourth approach is to use technology for presentations.

Romano and Cikanek (2003) noted that while there is a need for more research to be conducted on the use of technology in TEL, it does offer the potential for counselling in

human services. They recommend that group specialists learn about these applications and be trained on how computer-based applications can improve their practice (Romano and Cikanek, 2003). The results of the study highlighted some of the advantages of teaching with technology, as the asynchronous discussions helped students to understand the course material better and increased student awareness of peer attitudes about the course. Other advantages were that communication between student and teacher was improved, as was class cohesiveness, when TEL was used (Koh and Hill, 2009). Of significance in the study by Koh and Hill (2009) was that students who rarely spoke in class rated the use of discussion forums highly, which is a similar finding to that observed in a South African study by Bozalek (2007); she found that students who were second language English-speakers and were reticent to speak in class, engaged more freely and confidently in asynchronous text-based communication. It is suggested that online text communication provided these students with time to put their thoughts into writing.

In another study, Fulton et al. (2015), using a constructivist epistemology in a blended course for older persons, found the use of synchronous and asynchronous communication facilitated higher order thinking which included reflexivity, reflection and application of knowledge within a cohesive and safe online space.



Another use of technology that is developing, although not as fast as online individual therapy, is the use of online groups using video conferencing for psycho-educational and support groups, arising from its convenience (Kozlowski, & Holmes, 2014). Should this trend continue, there will be a greater need to adapt the BSW curriculum to include content for online meso practice groups. The potential for using the authentic learning framework for the creation of courses for online meso practice courses is significant, and has value for subsequent iterations and other social work courses to be created.

### ***3.7.2 The Challenges of TEL***

Teaching with technology can also pose challenges to the educators and field instruction supervisors who are accustomed to a reading-based consciousness (Liechty, 2012) and are not proficient in the use of TEL. Also, the lack of professional development, knowledge and training on how to use technology in HE sometimes leaves teaching staff “scared to embrace

technology” (Hardman et al., 2014). Educators may face technical problems created by lack of student access to reliable Internet connections, slow broadband speeds making connection to the university’s online system difficult and students who do not have devices or Internet connections where they reside (Perron et al., 2010; Pillay & Gerrand, 2011). These challenges result in frustrated educators and students, exacerbated by a lack of available technical support (Hanson, 2009; Herselman & Hay, 2003). This is significant, as it could alter student attitudes towards motivation, learning and participation.

Another major challenge regarding the use of TEL is the amount of time required by the teacher and the student. In a study using WebCT for 22 social work students, the teachers experienced workload stress, as “issues of availability and ‘virtual boundaries’ also emerged, as instructors attempted to balance facilitating learning moments against student problem solving” (Zeman & Swanke, 2008, p. 610). This arose from significant amounts of unplanned personal time spent responding to students’ posts and requests.

Other general challenges involving the use of TEL by students could include the uncritical use of information from the Internet which is not referenced or correctly edited, as well as the brevity of chat communication and emoticons. This uncritical use of TEL requires skilled educators who are knowledgeable in computer literacy and pedagogy to create innovative course designs that are aligned with learning outcomes and the complex authentic tasks suggested by Herrington et al. (2010). Knowledge of these challenges “allows teachers to respond critically, responsibly, and carefully” when using TEL (Beetham & Sharpe, 2007, p. 5).

In spite of these challenges, the world is advancing technologically, and HE will be making increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). There is a view that “technology shapes society” and as educators we need to find ways that can work to our advantage to support the learning of our students (Johnson & Wetmore, 2009, p. 93). Technology, as used in education, daily living and counselling, can be an area of transformative growth if used carefully and with purpose (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013; Perron et al., 2010; Watling & Rogers, 2012). Social work education has had to adjust the curriculum to keep abreast of these changes and equip students with “appropriate digital literacies” (Watling & Rogers, 2012, p. 73.) It is contended that the development of better links between educators teaching meso practice using technology and

social workers in the field could include the formation of a community of practice (Hickson, 2012). This could result in the development of better practices in group work and better training of field instructors, as well as a sharing of educational material, actual cases and collaboration for research. Greig and Skehill (2008) argue that the use of TEL in social work should be done in a systematic and coordinated way, so that staff and students develop skills, and in so doing, adopt a team approach which is preferable to an individual approach.

After this an overview of some learning theories that underpin the AL framework, as well as the way that TEL can be used in social work education, I will now have described how the following draft design principles from the AL framework was incorporated within the redesigned social work meso practice course.

### **3.8 Draft Design Principles**

The following are the draft design principles that were used to design the meso practice course in the Department of Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2015.

- *Authentic activities provide the opportunity to collaborate*  
Provide opportunities for students to collaborate and share ideas and information (Lave & Wenger, 2003; Herrington et al., 2010). Encourage rapport and group cohesion, both in face-to-face and online spaces (Corey, et al., 2010; Rourke et al., 2001).
- *Real world relevance*  
Include activities in which each of the groups of students choose a social condition from within the South African context, in which they are interested, and motivated to learn more about. In this way, the social condition is part of the current context and cultural milieu with which the students feel connected (Rule, 2006).
- *Authentic activities provide the opportunity to develop skills in social work*  
Foster discipline-specific professional values and make use of real-world examples. Use experiential learning and role play to allow students to engage and perform in class. Students learn about meso practice while working in a group and become inducted into the profession of social work (Wenger, 2006).

- *Authentic activities provide the opportunity to reflect*  
Engage students in activities that facilitate critical reflection and link this type of reflection to the discipline-specific values of being a reflective practitioner in social work. Encourage students to pay attention to both reflection in and on the process (Schön, 2011). When using deep reflection, acknowledge the role played by emotion. Create safe spaces in the learning environment.
- *Authentic activities provide opportunities for creative problem-solving*  
Allow for problem-solving creativity and flexibility, and allow students to find their own paths to finding solutions (Herrington et al., 2010).
- *Authentic activities are conducive to communication and learning*  
Encourage debate, articulation and role modelling by the educator and the students (Herrington et al., 2010; Wenger, 1998; Zeman & Swanke, 2008). Allow for conflict and encourage students not to take criticism personally.
- *Authentic activities should be examined from different perspectives*  
Allow for competing solutions and diversity of outcomes, thus encouraging flexibility and acknowledgement of the views of group members (Brown et al., 1989; Herrington et al., 2010).
- *An authentic task is ill-defined and complex*  
Encourage self-regulated learning and collaborative learning, giving students the opportunity to choose their learning path and their own topic, and take ownership of their own learning and the learning of their members (Herrington et al., 2010; Vygotsky, 1978).

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has described theories including situated learning, cognitive apprenticeship and learning within a community of practice upon which the authentic learning framework is based. Chapter Three has provided a focus for the nine elements of authentic learning and shown how these elements can be used to inform course design guidelines. Consideration has also been given to the use of TEL in social work and, more specifically, in the area of meso practice. Chapter Three includes eight draft design guidelines that were developed from phase 1 of the literature review, my own experiences and the views of the practitioners who were interviewed in phase 2 of the study. After providing a theoretical context for the

authentic learning framework, the focus of Chapter Four moves to the research methods used for this mixed-methods study, using modified educational design-based research (DBR).

## CHAPTER 4 - METHODOLOGY

*Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose -*

Hurston, 2006, p. 143

### 4.1 Introduction

The various phases and procedures that were adopted in this modified design-based research (DBR) study for the meso practice course conducted in 2015 are explained in Chapter Four. Rich detail of this process is provided to allow for replication in another setting and by another person, and to ensure a degree of trustworthiness. A modified version of educational DBR was used, which is aligned to the research questions and objectives of the project. The aim of the research study was to investigate the extent to which authentic learning elements could improve the teaching of meso practice in a South African HE setting. The strategic aim was to develop guidelines for course design and development of facilitation skills in social work education, with specific reference to the meso level of intervention to prepare students for the profession. DBR has been modified so as not to include iterations of the course design, but rather focus on one implementation cycle. Chapter Four builds on the literature review section found in Chapters Two and Three, with specific reference to the theoretical underpinnings of the study. In this chapter, the various types of research method that were undertaken in each phase of the study are made explicit by describing the methodologies employed.

I have been teaching the meso practice course since 2011, have made various adaptations along the way, and continue to do so. This study focuses only on course implementation during the year 2015 with a group of 80 second-year social work students. A four-phase mixed method design was adopted, which was initiated together with stakeholder interviews and feedback in order to obtain a better understanding of how meso practice was taught and

how student supervision was conducted by other educators in South African HEIs.



## 4.2 The Use of Mixed Methods Research

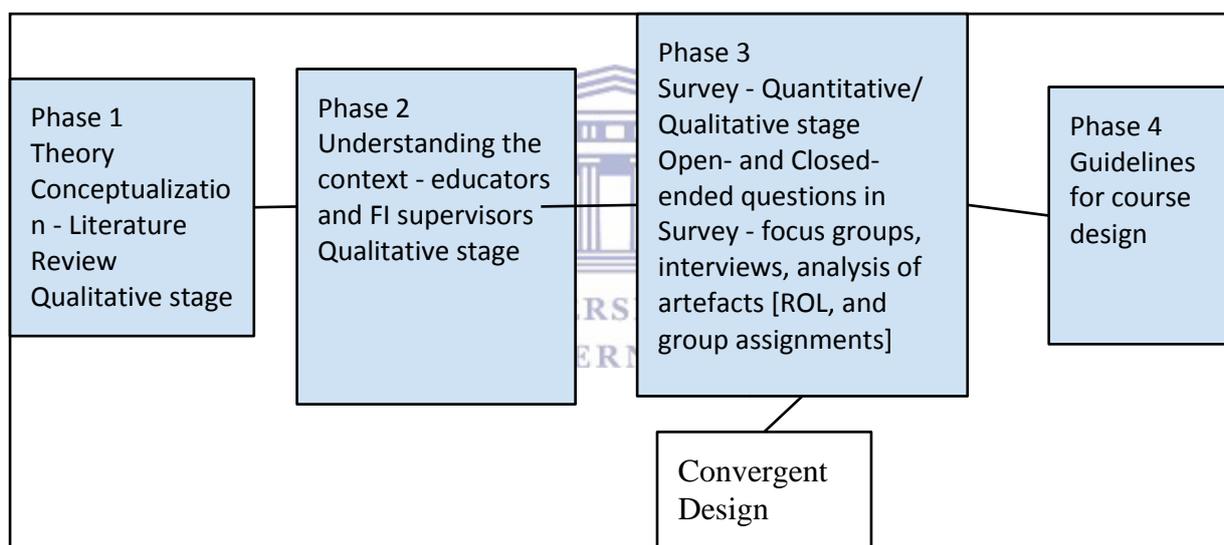
Mixed methods research has been increasing in popularity and this prompted the development of the Journal of Mixed Methods in 2007 dedicated to these types of studies (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007; Herrington, 1997). The use of mixed methods in an educational environment has significance as multiple methods are often used to describe and measure the various factors that have a direct and indirect impact on teaching and learning. Creswell and Plano (2011) offer the following five historical stages that mixed-methods research has followed. The formative period occurred during the 1950s to 1980s, followed by the paradigm debate period from the 1970s to 1980s. The next phase was the procedural development period late in the 1980s to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and later the advocacy and expansion period that began in the 2000s. In 2005 began the reflective period of mixed methods research. Mixed methods research has been lauded as a response to the ongoing debates about the merits and demerits of quantitative and qualitative research but there has been little agreement about a framework for this type of research (Bryman, 2012). The mixed methods design is defined by Collins and O’Cathain (2009, p. 3) as:

*studies that ‘combine qualitative and quantitative approaches into research methodology of a single study or multi-phased study’ (Tashakkori & Teddlie: 17-18) and ‘as a research design in which QUAL [i.e. qualitative] and QUAN [i.e. quantitative] approaches are used in types of questions, research methods, data collection and analysis procedures, and/ or inferences’ (Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003, p.711)*

At an elementary level mixed methods research is used to describe research that integrates qualitative and quantitative research which includes data collection, data analysis within a project (Bryman, 2012). This research study adopted a phased mixed methods approach as the four phases do not necessarily inform the other phases directly. In the second phase interviews were conducted with educators and field supervisors to understand the teaching and supervision of undergraduate students regarding the theory and practice of the meso practice intervention. In subsequent phases of the research use was made of a survey and interviews for data collection. The final phase of the study will be reflections of the entire process to create guidelines

Mixed methods research is undertaken in various disciplines including education, as it provides richer, deeper and broader insights into a wide range of interests and perspectives (Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Sutton, 2006; Rocco et al., 2003). The qualitative and quantitative methods that are used provide statistical trends and the stories give a more complete picture of the research findings. The advantages of mixed methods research include rigour and a way of integrating the survey data with the qualitative data from interviews and focus groups. When bringing the survey, student interviews and focus group discussions to bear on one another, a convergent design was used and the findings were analysed through the lens of the AL framework. Figure 2 provides a visual chart showing the phases of the research, each of which is elaborated on in the following sections of this chapter.

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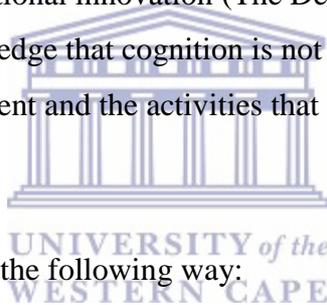
**Figure 2: Four Phases of the Modified Design-Based Research Study**

Figure 2 illustrates the use of qualitative and quantitative methods in the various phases of this study. DBR approaches can use qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research in a pragmatic desire to work collaboratively on improving learning from an informed theoretical perspective (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006; Reeves et al., 2005). The educational DBR method adopted for this study placed greater emphasis on the qualitative strand than was present in all four phases, to describe and investigate the various factors that have a direct and indirect impact on teaching and learning in the meso practice course. More extensive use was made of qualitative methods, which seek to understand phenomena that occur in natural settings and allow for the phenomena to be studied from multiple perspectives, with the researcher as a participant (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In addition,

qualitative research allowed for the voices of the various participants to be heard, which helped to create greater ownership and achieved respondent triangulation (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). In DBR, there is a greater emphasis on content and pedagogy rather than technology, and the educational environment is changed to meet pedagogical outcomes, while special attention is given to the human interactions in a nurturing learning environment (Reeves et al., 2005). In order to set the scene and provide further explanation of educational DBR, the research approach employed in the study is here provided.

### 4.3 Design-based Research

DBR has been traced to the work Ann Brown and Allan Collins in 1992 and can be used for creating novel learning and teaching environments, creating and reviewing theories of learning that are context based, advancing and consolidating design knowledge and increasing the capacity for educational innovation (The Design- Based Research Collective, 2003). Learning theories acknowledge that cognition is not located only within the individual thinker but includes the environment and the activities that are part of the learning process (Barab & Squire, 2004).



Educational DBR is described in the following way:

*a systematic study of designing, developing and evaluating educational interventions - such as programs, teaching-learning strategies and materials, products and systems - as solutions to such problems, which also aims at advancing our knowledge about the characteristics of these interventions and the processes to design and develop them (Plomp, 2007, p. 10).*

DBR is an approach that considers the creation of theory and guidelines that are developed when studying, teaching and learning about artefacts produced in a natural setting such as a classroom (Barab & Squire, 2004). It is a research method that combines scientific investigation with systematic development and implementation of solutions to educational problems. DBR is used to solve practical problems and create "usable knowledge" (McKenney & Reeves, p.7). It is a research method that is both a rigorous and reflective process of trial and refinement of the learning environment. DBR has been described as socially responsible development research that focuses on complex problems in HE and integrates known and hypothetical design guidelines with TEL as a solution to its complex

problems (Reeves et al., 2005). In addition, there is collaboration between researchers and participants, and a commitment to theory construction and explanation (Reeves et al., 2005). DBR begins by considering problems in education that have no clear solutions, and the methods that are used to explore solutions include a review of literature and working with practitioners to

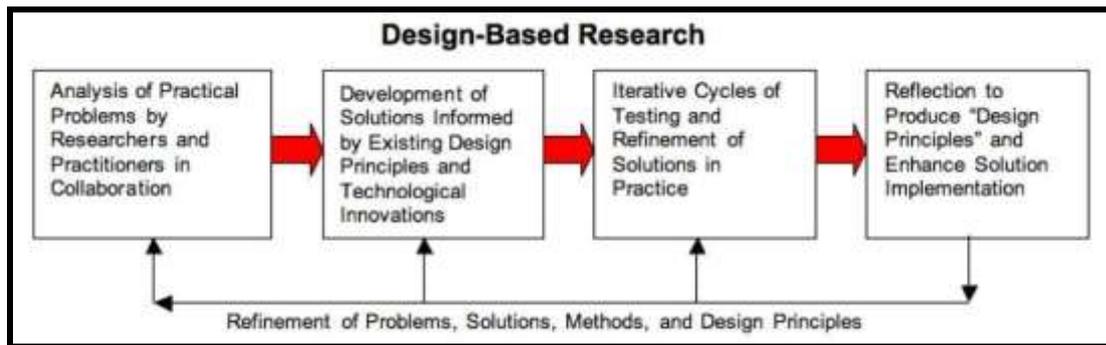
*design and develop workable and effective interventions by carefully studying successive versions (or prototypes) of interventions in their target contexts, and in doing so they reflect on their research process with the purpose to produce design principles (Plomp, 2007, p.13).*

Thus, the use of DBR is a nonlinear-process (Gustafson & Branch, 2002). The criticism of DBR include the absence of the standards for identifying when a design should be pursued or disregarded and the excessive amounts of data collected and analysed (Dede, 2004)

#### **4.4 Phases of Design-based Research**

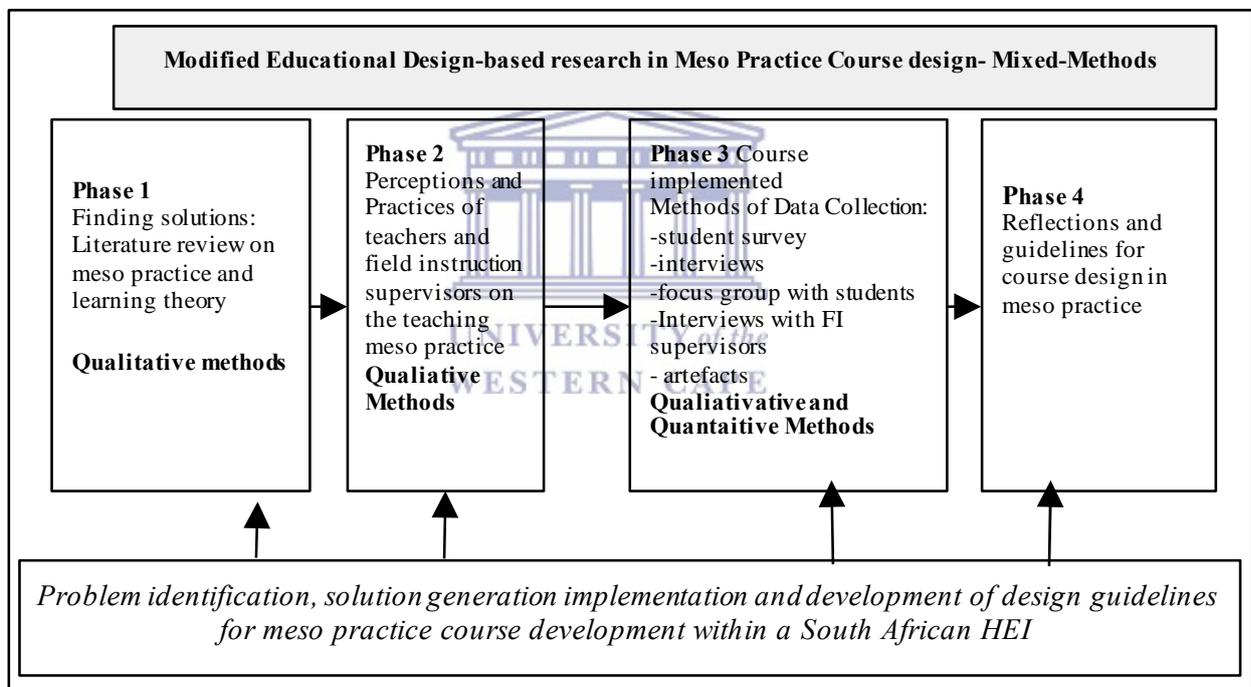
The modified version of DBR used in this study involves four phases which will be elaborated upon in this chapter. In the first phase, teachers and practitioners were asked about the ways they teach meso practice and the challenges they encounter. The second phase involved the development of solutions informed by draft design guidelines and technological innovations. The third phase involved the cycles of testing and refinement of solutions in practice (modified in this study to focus on the implementation and evaluation of the course). The final and fourth phase involved reflection to produce design principles as illustrated in Figure 3. In this study, a modified version of educational DBR was used which excluded iterations of the course, but rather focused on a single implementation cycle of design, implementation and evaluation of a course. It is acknowledged that the modification of DBR to exclude subsequent iterations is a limitation of the study.

The DBR approach has been succinctly summarised by Reeves (2006) into four phases, as depicted in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Four phases of design research (Reeves, 2006, p. 59)**

The model used in this study is a modified version of Figure 3, which is illustrated in Figure 4 and will be discussed in the following section.



**Figure 4: Modified Educational Design-based Research depicting methods and data**

As Figure 4 depicts, in the first phase of this study a review of literature of meso practice and learning theory related to authentic learning. In Phase 2, interviews were conducted with educators and field supervisors to understand the teaching and supervision of undergraduate students regarding meso practice education. In subsequent phases of the research, use was made of a survey and focus group interviews with the students, as well as face-to face interviews with the field instruction supervisors for data collection. Artefacts that were

produced as a result of this study included: discussion forum posts; PowerPoint presentations; student drawings of their timeline and their River of Life (RoL); PhotoVoice pictures and a poster. The final phase of the study consisted of reflections on the entire process, with the creation of design guidelines as the final deliverable.

#### **4.5 Limitations of Educational Design-based Research (DBR)**

A significant limitation of DBR is the long-term engagement and refinement of the process, which can take between two and five years, with the increased likelihood that researchers may leave the study prior to its completion (McKenney & Reeves, 2012; Reeves et al., 2005). DBR differs from experimental research, which is regarded as “not the most fruitful path for a design field like instructional technology” (Reeves et al., 2005, p. 1028). DBR can also be confused with action research, where educators “study their own teaching practice to solve personal challenges in the classroom” (Reeves et al., 2005, p. 107). However, the difference between action research and DBR is the use of “design knowledge that others may apply” (Reeves et al., 2005, p. 107) and the use of theory to develop design-based principles. Another limitation of DBR is that it is not conducted in a controlled laboratory setting, but rather occurs in the real world, with real people who are multifaceted (Teras & Herrington, 2014). The theory and guidelines produced by educational DBR are contextual and require further research, using more traditional research approaches. However, DBR does consider “practical solutions to classroom problems” (Reeves et al., 2005, p. 107) that other educators can replicate by searching for design knowledge that others may apply.

#### **4.6 Data Planning Matrix**

LeCompte and Preissle (cited in Herrington, 1997) recommend the use of a data matrix to show the linkages between the different phases of the study, the data sources and the methods used for analysis. Table 1 shows each of the phases, which are divided into the respective research methods used: the rationale, the research question, the year the phase of research was conducted, the data sources used and the data analysis methods undertaken.

**Table 1: Data planning matrix-Table adapted from Herrington (1997)**

Research method	Rationale	Research questions	Year	Description of data sources	Data analysis methods
Qualitative	Phase 1 <i>Development of solutions informed by the literature review on the teaching of meso practice and the use of AL elements</i>	How can the elements of AL improve the teaching of meso practice?	2013-2014	Research and theoretical papers on: meso practice education - situated learning -authentic learning	Thematic content analysis
	Phase 2 <i>Analysis of the practical problems for teaching meso practice education by conducting interviews with a sample of educators and field instruction supervisors in South African HEIs to obtain a situational analysis</i>	How is meso practice education currently being conducted by educators and FI supervisors in some South African higher education contexts?	2014	Face-to-face interviews with 6 educators of meso practice and 4 field instruction supervisors	Thematic content analysis
	Phase 3 <i>Implementation of solutions in practice, which is also the enactment phase</i>	How can the elements of AL improve the teaching of meso practice?	2015	Face-to-face interviews with the student n=5. Focus groups with the students in 8 groups	Content analysis using ATLAS.ti

Research method	Rationale	Research questions	Year	Description of data sources	Data analysis methods
	Phase 3	How can the elements of AL improve the teaching of meso practice?	2015	Discussion forum posts - 698 Student-authored posts - 23 Educator-authored posts - 175	Content analysis using ATLAS.ti
	Phase 3	How can the elements of AL improve the teaching of meso practice?	2015	Visual Artefacts - group assignments - PowerPoint slides - PhotoVoice pictures - RoL drawings -time lines -student narratives	Content analysis using ATLAS.ti and visual analysis
<b>Quantitative</b>	Phase 3	How can the elements of authentic learning improve the teaching of meso practice?	2015	Student survey: - 8 open-ended and 43 closed-ended questions	Descriptive statistics and content analysis using ATLAS.ti for the open-ended questions
	Phase 3	What additional elements are required for the teaching of meso practice?	2015-2016	Post course evaluation Interviews with 6 Field Instruction supervisors	Qualitative analysis using thematic content analysis and coding using ATLAS.ti
	Phase 4 <i>Reflection to produce course guidelines for the next iteration and other courses</i>		2016	Post course and field placement focus group with 7 students in 2016	Qualitative analysis using thematic content analysis and coding using ATLAS.ti
	Phase 4	What are the guidelines that are	2016	Development of guidelines	

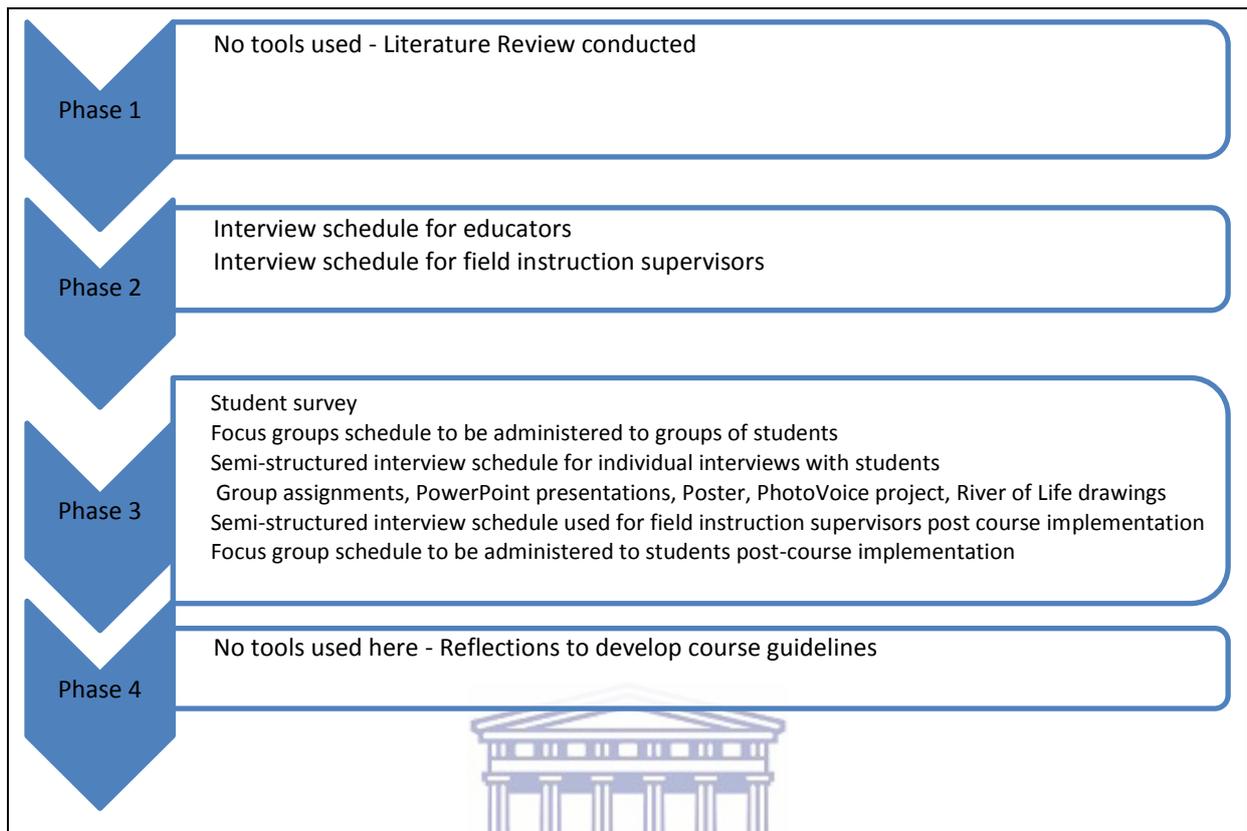
Research method	Rationale	Research questions	Year	Description of data sources	Data analysis methods
		suggested for the teaching of meso practice?			

#### ***4.6.1 Population and Sampling***

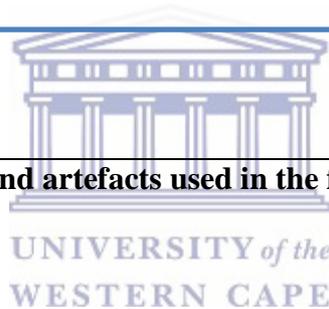
A population refers to all participants or all possible units by virtue of their relationship with the research questions that have similar characteristics and are able to provide “the most relevant, comprehensive and rich information” which can be included in the study (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013, p. 5). Whereas a sample comprises elements or “a subset of the population considered for inclusion in the study” (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2011, pp. 223-224). A sample is thus drawn as it is often too costly and time-consuming to interview all the members of the population. In the qualitative aspects of the study use was made of purposive sampling, and in the quantitative part of the study which was the survey, the entire population was used. The various data collection tools in the phases of the study are described next.

#### ***4.6.2 Data Collection Instruments***

This research study made use of various data collection instruments. Figure 5 illustrates the instruments that were used according to the phases and will be elaborated upon in the following sections:



**Figure 5: Instruments and artefacts used in the four-phase modified DBR study**



#### **4.7 Phases of the Modified DBR Study**

The four phases that made up this study are depicted in Figure 4. In this subsection a fuller discussion is provided on the various methods that were used to obtain a sample or if the entire population was used, as with the survey that is discussed under subsection 4.5.3.1. Additional information that is covered includes the instruments that were used for data collection and how the information was analysed.

#### **4.8 Phase 1 Literature Review on Meso Practice and Authentic Learning**

In Phase 1 a literature review was undertaken using qualitative methods to consider meso practice education and authentic learning. The literature review has been documented in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. In Chapter Two consideration was given to the development

of social work education in South Africa, after which focus was placed on meso practice education internationally, locally and within the research site. The role of the meso practice educator was considered. In the following literature review, Chapter Three focused on some theories of learning such as situated learning and collaborative learning. After this, each of the nine elements of authentic learning were considered. Next, the use of TEL within social work was described. The literature reviews in Chapters Two and Three were conducted through a process of evaluation and synthesis of seminal and recent literature in order to establish the field, the context of the study and how similar problems were addressed (Herrington et al., 2010; Leedy & Ormond, 2013). A qualitative paradigm was used in Phase 1.

#### **4.9 Phase 2: Interviews with Practitioners**

In Phase 2 a qualitative paradigm was chosen to investigate the teaching of meso practice so that it could be studied in the real world in all its complexity and detail (Leedy & Ormond, 2013). Interviews were conducted with six educators and four field instruction supervisors to understand their methods and experiences in meso practice education, who in DRB are referred to as practitioners. In DBR this is seen as an exploratory phase of the research, whereby the researcher and practitioners consider the problems of meso practice education. Individual interviews were conducted in Phase 2, with social work colleagues who teach and supervise undergraduate social work students in South Africa.

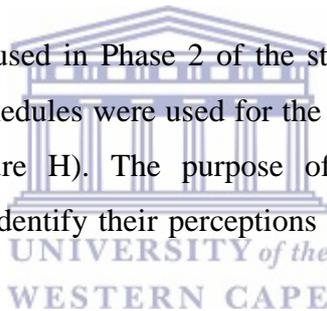
##### **4.9.1 Sampling**

In Phase 2 of the study use was made of non-probability sampling based on the availability of subjects (Babbie, 2013). The sample was purposively selected and comprised of social work educators based in contact HEIs in South Africa, teaching or supervising meso practice with undergraduate students. Purposive sampling requires the selection of relevant participants “whose study will illuminate the questions under study” and is based on the study’s purpose and resources (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Purposive sampling is also called judgemental sampling (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Babbie, 2013). The disadvantage of purposive sampling is that a vital characteristic may be omitted and that the researcher may show “subconscious bias in selecting the sample” (Gray, 2009, p. 153).

The inclusion criteria for the educators were that the respondents should be employed at a HEI, and were responsible for teaching meso practice to undergraduate students. These inclusion criteria included the geographical proximity of the participants to the chief researcher and their willingness to be interviewed. The six educators were chosen from four public HEIs that offered residential instruction to students, including the research site. Three of the institutions are described as historically advantaged and one as a historically-disadvantaged HEI. The four field instruction supervisors were selected from a population of twenty-three field instruction supervisors who were appointed in 2013 to supervise second-year social work students at the University of the Witwatersrand. The inclusion criteria specified that each participant needed to be registered as a social worker and have had work experience and student supervision experience of more than two years. An invitation was sent to eight supervisors who met these criteria, and four responded positively to the invitation.

#### **4.9.2 Interviews**

The data collection instruments used in Phase 2 of the study included two semi-structured interview schedules. Separate schedules were used for the educators (Annexure G) and field instruction supervisors (Annexure H). The purpose of these tools was to guide the interviewers and participants to identify their perceptions and practices adopted by teachers and supervisors of meso practice.



The instruments were piloted by an educator at an HEI and with a field instruction supervisor not used in the study. The data obtained from the pilot testing contributed to the refinement of the final schedules. Additional questions were added, such as the following dream question:

*Step back from the current situation and assume that you have retired and were reflecting on the teaching of meso practice. What would be your recommendations be to a new lecturer who is teaching in this area of social work intervention?*

Additional details that were incorporated included the race of the participant; for the educators, specifically, details about the class sizes; hours of instruction; theoretical approaches; learning objectives; and the resources used in meso practice education. These details provided a greater context for teaching space and aspects such as race, which were seen as important within the context of transformation in South African HE spaces (Habib, 2016). The interviews were recorded on a voice track recorder and later transcribed verbatim. Interviews with the practitioners offered rich data.

### **4.9.3 Advantages and constraints of interviews**

Interviews allowed the interviewer to ask more relevant questions in a friendly, safe and informal space. In all instances the interviews were conducted in person, as this contributed to “increasing rapport between the interviewer and interviewee” (Creswell, 2009, p. 179). The other advantages of interviews were that participants could be directly observed including their non-verbal reactions and they were able to provide historical background (Creswell, 2009). In addition, the use of interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule provided the interviewer with control over the line of questioning. The limitations of interviews were that the information provided was not objective, as it consisted of the “filtered views of the interviewees” (Creswell, 2009, p. 179). Furthermore, the information was collected at a designated place, rather than in a natural field setting, and the presence of the interviewer may have resulted in bias and the provision of socially undesirable responses.

### **4.9.4 Interviews - data analysis**

The data from the interviews, and the focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis. Coding was undertaken according to schemas or systems to find the manifest themes (visible surface patterns) and the latent themes (underlying patterns) (Rubin & Babbie, 2013). Anonymised direct quotes and themes were used from the transcripts for the written report. Trustworthiness criteria were applied to the research process through sharing the data with my supervisors to ensure some degree of reliability. The advantage of thematic analysis is that it is both economical and a flexible method that allowed better understanding of the richness of the data and of the possibilities for correction (Babbie, 2013).

The eight steps described by Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2009) were used for the analysis of qualitative data in all of the phases. These were the steps that were followed:

The first step is to develop a sense of the information of all the verbatim transcripts by means of the reading and writing connections one makes. Next it is recommended that one transcript be carefully read to consider the underlying meaning beyond that literal analysis. This process should be followed by a reading of all the transcripts and a list compiled of all the topics. From these topics, one should strive to discover patterns and identify topics that can be combined or are connected to each other. These themes are placed in alphabetical order

and a preliminary analysis is conducted. The researcher should then attempt to triangulate the data to determine how the different data sets contribute to each other and this is seen as a form of comparative analysis (Patton, 2002). Some of the codes that emanated from this phase included the role of a meso practice educator and the methods used for teaching.

Data analysis provides descriptions of the context or people, and includes a detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting. Researchers generate codes for these descriptions and use the codes to generate themes or categories. The results of the data were illustrated using visuals, figures, and/or tables as adjuncts to the discussion. In some instances, direct quotes were used to ensure that the voices of the participants are foregrounded in the study.

#### ***4.9.5 Phase 3 - Course Implementation and Evaluation***

The major part of the data was collected in Phase 3 during the period 2015 to 2016. During these phases the redesigned meso practice course was implemented and evaluated using multiple data sources. In the following section information is provided on the various data collection methods used, which were:

- A survey
- Individual interviews with students
- Focus groups with students
- Individual interviews with field instruction supervisors after the course and after students had conducted field work
- A focus group with students after they had conducted fieldwork

In addition, the various artefacts created during the course, such as the group assignments, the River of Life drawing and the PhotoVoice pictures, form part of the data of this phase.

#### ***4.9.6 Student survey***

Phase 3 involved the use of an electronic survey (Annexure J) to determine the experience of the students undertaking the course. A survey provides quantitative or numeric descriptions of trends, attitudes, or opinions of the population by studying that grouping. In a survey, data provides a slice of life at a particular moment in time and this is seen as static. Information often included is about the characteristics, opinions, attitudes and previous experiences, by

asking questions and analysing the results (Leedy & Ormond, 2013).

### ***Population***

In Phase 3, the entire population of second-year students who were enrolled for the meso practice course in 2015 were invited to participate in the survey. Of a population of 80 students, 66 students took part in the survey, excluding the students who were absent from the class or chose not to participate. There was no sampling used as the entire population was included.

### ***Survey instrument***

The electronic survey questionnaire was administered to the entire class, using the SurveyMonkey application comprising 43 closed-ended and 8 open-ended questions, using a 5-point Likert scale and a few short answers (Annexure J).

### ***Development of survey instrument***

SurveyMonkey allows for customisable online survey tools and includes basic data analysis, sample selection, bias elimination and data representation tools. The survey was initially designed on the Ms Word programme and amendments were made, giving consideration to open- and closed-ended questions. The similarity between an online survey and pen and paper survey was found by Bryman (2012) when conducting research on illicit drug-use with university students. Moreover, in survey development, the use of a dichotomous scale offering the respondent two choices is very limiting. However when the respondent is presented greater options with the use of a trichotomous scale, this provides for greater variation in responses. Thus, in this study, use was made of a five-point scale to offer more options to the respondents. The limitations of using closed-ended questions are that they may expose the respondent to guessing and are based on recall. The advantages of close-ended questions are that they are very specific and direct. In addition, students were reminded to answer the questions in relation to the meso practice course.

I considered the following steps when developing the survey. Firstly, the individual interprets the question and deduces the intent, next there is a search of the memory bank for the relevant information. Thirdly, there is “integration of whatever information that comes to mind in a single judgement which then results in translation of the judgement into a response by selecting one of the alternatives” (Krosnick & Presser, 2010, p. 265).

When designing the survey consideration was also given to the following aspects:

- Use was made of simple language, excluding words that have a double meaning and sentences that lead the respondent in a particular direction.
- All sections of the survey began with the use of closed-ended statements that were pleasant and easy to answer.
- Each of the eight sections ended with an open-ended question.

In addition, the survey provided an indication of the respondents' progress with the survey. Throughout the survey, use was made of questions that addressed the main aspects of the study which, in this case, were the elements of authentic learning (Krosnick & Presser, 2010). The process of survey design included item discrimination. Use was made of Herrington's (1997) PhD instrument to incorporate the various elements of authentic learning in the survey questionnaire.

Bryman (2012) provides a useful evaluation of a self-completion questionnaire in relation to a structured interview. A survey is seen to be of value, as it should be easy to follow and the questions easy to answer, and there are fewer open-ended questions compared to a structured interview. Leedy and Ormond (2013) indicate that a critical aspect of a survey is the manner in which the questions are worded. In developing the questions for the survey, I considered the work of Herrington (1997) and adapted some of the questions she developed to understand the use of authentic elements. The other advantage of using an online survey is that the tool is quicker to administer and there is an absence of interviewer effects or interviewer variability. These aspects are important because of the power dynamics between the educator and the student. Another advantage of using an online survey is that there is a faster response time, fewer unanswered questions and better response to open-ended questions (McCabe, 2004). Typically, if the survey were online, respondents could complete it at a time and place suitable to them, but this could have resulted in a lower response rate. In the light of student challenges to accessing the internet (Nash, 2009), it was preferable to permit students to complete the survey at a pre-booked computer laboratory with access to the university after a class lecture.

The limitations of a survey are that there can be no prompts and probes, and the respondent cannot ask many questions that are salient to them. The other limitation is that the data

generated is self-reporting, so responses can be influenced by socially desirable motives and may not be carefully considered. To counteract this limitation, individual interviews and focus groups were conducted with students using a research facilitator to prevent students providing socially desirable answers to the educator.

### ***Pre-testing of the survey***

The survey instrument was pre-tested with three third-year students who had been registered for the course in 2014 and would therefore not be part of the sample for this study. Interviews were conducted with students after they had taken the survey and minor changes were made in response.

Reliability was enhanced by ensuring that the questions were relevant and understood. The weakness of a survey is that it is regarded as superficial for complex information and weak on validity, so that responses should be regarded as approximate indicators of what was considered when the questions were designed (Babbie, 2010). This weakness of the survey in providing superficial data was mitigated through the use of focus groups and individual interviews with students to obtain richer data. However, the strengths of survey research are that it is useful to obtain attitudes from large numbers of participants and it can collect a large amount of standardised data in a cost-effective manner.

### ***Survey - data analysis***

#### *Closed-ended Questions*

The closed-ended questions were used to collect some demographical data and student experiences of the meso practice course taught at the beginning of 2015. By using SurveyMonkey, respondents' replies are logged in directly by the respondent and the entire dataset can be retrieved once data collection is completed. Descriptive statistics were used for the closed-ended data questions, which "saves time and reduces the likelihood of error". Herrington's (1997) survey was adapted and used to collect some demographical data.

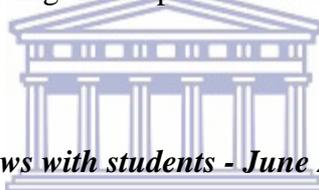
#### *Open-ended Questions*

There were nine open-ended text items included in the survey and participant responses were recorded verbatim:

1. Explain in your own words what meso practice is.

2. Write in the space provided some of the social work skills you learned from the meso practice course.
3. Write down your experiences of working in a group in the space provided.
4. Did you find the course of sufficient length for you to learn about how to conduct a group in the next semester? Yes or no. Please motivate your answer.
5. Describe the activities during the course.
6. Explain your experiences of learning with technology in the text below.
7. Indicate the type of assistance provided by the lecturer in the text box below.
8. Did the assessments in the course provide you with the opportunity to show your learning? Yes or no. Please motivate your answer.
9. You have been very helpful. Do you have any thoughts and feelings you would like to share about the meso practice course?

The responses were then coded using the steps discussed under section 4.5.2.3 and are not repeated under this subsection.



#### ***4.9.7 Individual interviews with students - June 2015***

##### ***Use of a research facilitator***

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In the light of power dynamics between the teacher and students, all interviews were conducted by an independent research facilitator who had been trained in the procedures and instruments and was not part of the teaching staff at the HEI. All participants in the interviews provided written consent. The reactions of the interviewer during the interviews and focus groups were hidden to prevent bias.

##### ***Sampling - June 2015***

The entire class was invited to be interviewed by a trained facilitator. Five students volunteered. The main inclusion criteria were that these students were enrolled in the course and were willing to share their experiences in a face-to face interview.

##### ***Semi-Structured interview schedule***

These were interviews that were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule that was administered by a trained research facilitator to five students who volunteered to participate in the research study after being part of the meso practice course in 2015

(Annexure L). The interview schedule was adapted from the PhD study conducted by Herrington (1997) on the use of interactive multimedia environments with pre-service teachers. When designing the questions, Herrington (1997) gave consideration to Patton's (1990) six types of questions. Aspects included were: experience or behaviour; opinions and values; feelings; knowledge; sensory and a few background and demographic questions.

Leedy and Ormrod (2013) noted that interviews with students are useful, as the researcher is able to find out things that are not directly observable, such as thoughts, feelings and intentions. Thus, conducting interviews with students who have been on a course to express their views was important.

#### ***Interviews-data analysis***

The data from this section was analysed in the same way as the data from the interviews in phase 2 and has been reported in subsection 4.5.2.3.

#### ***4.9.8 Focus groups with students after course in 2015***

A focus group is an effective way to obtain data from students at a relatively low cost (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005). The focus group was particularly suitable for this project, as the groups that were created in class were the same groups used for focus group sessions, and this allowed for reflection with the people the students had worked with on the group project. The disadvantage of a focus group is that there are participants who are inhibited by the group process. However, this was mitigated by the fact that the group comprised students who had known one other for some time, which allowed for familiarity and for greater rapport in the groups.

#### ***Sampling***

Eight focus groups were conducted with all the groups that were created for the meso practice course. All the students in the class were thus invited to the focus groups to consider their experiences of the course. There were in total of fifty-five members were part of the eight focus groups. The largest groups had nine participants and the smallest had three participants. I used an independent facilitator to conduct the group. All interviews and focus groups were audiotaped.

### ***Focus group interview schedule***

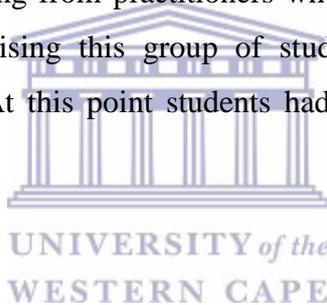
Focus group questions (see Annexure K) were semi-structured. A focus group schedule was used for eight groups of student volunteers. The focus groups were conducted by a trained research facilitator. The purpose of the focus group was to explore students' perceptions of the strengths and limitations of the meso practice course. The elements of AL were included as part of the interview schedule.

### ***Focus group data analysis***

The data from this section was analysed in the same way as the data from the interviews in Phase 2, reported under section 4.5.2.3.

#### ***4.9.9 Individual interviews with field instruction supervisors - Nov-Dec 2015***

As part of the process of inquiring from practitioners who supervised the students in 2015 and their perceptions of supervising this group of students, individual interviews were conducted at the end of 2015. At this point students had completed their field instruction requirements.



### ***Sampling***

All field instructors who were recruited in 2015 to conduct the supervision of students were invited to participate in the interviews and six of them volunteered. Four of the six field instruction supervisors had been interviewed in Phase 2 of the project and were continuing to supervise students in 2015.

### ***Semi structured interview schedule-Nov-Dec 2015***

A semi-structured interview schedule was administered to the field instructors, post-course implementation (Annexure O). The students had conducted meso practice at schools and the questions included the students' preparedness to conduct meso practice, the types of meso practice skills used by students and the students' ability to integrate theory with practice. These open-ended questions yielded rich data.

### ***Data analysis of interviews***

The data from these interviews, with the field instruction supervisors, were analysed in the same way as the data from the interviews in Phase 2, reported under subsection 4.5.2.3.

#### ***4.9.10 Focus Group with students after completion of field instruction Feb 2016***

A final focus group was conducted with a sample of seven students who were part of the meso practice course in 2015, to determine their views of the course after they had been in the field and had conducted a group of clients/ service providers.

#### ***Sampling - Feb 2016***

Twenty students were purposively selected, based on the following criteria: that they were students enrolled for the SOCW 2006 course on meso practice in 2015, had completed the meso practice field work and were invited via email to be part of the focus group. At the appointed date and time only seven attended and were part of the focus group in 2016.

#### ***Focus group interview schedule - Feb 2016***

A focus group interview schedule was administered to students in 2016, after the students had conducted meso practice with clients as part of their field instruction practicum (Annexure L). In this focus group, students were asked about their preparedness for practice and aspects of the programme they would like changed, amended or removed. Once again, the focus group was recorded and verbatim transcriptions developed.

#### ***Focus group data analysis***

The data from this section was analysed in the same way as the data from the interviews in Phase 2, as per subsection 4.5.2.3.

#### ***4.9.11 Artefacts produced from the course in Phase 3***

The meso practice course was developed so that students worked on a complex task and created various artefacts, both independently and collaboratively. These artefacts were used as part of the data for considering how the elements of authentic learning may or may not have been evident in the course. The artefacts considered included:

- discussion forum posts
- the group assignments
- the River of Life drawings
- the PhotoVoice picture.

Brief information is provided on the use of participatory learning and action techniques

(PLA), and the analysis of visual artefacts.

### ***Discussion forum posts***

A course requirement was that students make use of the discussion forum feature that was on the Sakai learning management system. Discussion forums offered students an asynchronous platform to share information, create new information, plan, reflect and collaborate. The posts made by the student and the educator created an indelible digital footprint that could be analysed by thematic content analysis. There were eight discussion forum groups created and posts were submitted by the educator and the students. There were 175 posts authored by the educator and 523 posts authored by students. Analysis of these posts was completed using ATLAS.ti and various codes related to the elements of authentic learning and others were developed. Another type of analysis that was done was discussion thread analysis of a set of posts in order to determine the communication flow between the educator and the students.

### ***Group assignments***

An analysis of the work of the students in the form of eight assignments was completed. The use of document analysis assists in linking documents to other sources of information, such as the student survey and the interviews. These assignments provide valuable clues on how the students developed a knowledge of meso practice. The assignments developed in the course were called an evaluation of the small group experience. The assignments included information about the social condition around which the group was formed, the group dynamic and collaboration between the members, the identification of participating and non-participating members, the manner in which conflict was managed, the use of reflective diary entries, the use of activities, the use of online discussion forum posts, the challenges and the successes experienced and the recommendations for the next iteration of the course.

Documentary analysis included content analysis of the documents, to ensure a systematic method was used to quantify the frequency of elements within the assignments and thematic content analysis, to understand the meanings of the words and visual artefacts based on themes and codes. The advantages of document analysis are that it is low cost and accessible. The disadvantages are that the information is voluminous, as each assignment was about 200 pages long, including the appendices.

### *The River of Life (RoL)*

The River of Life activity is a PLA technique where students were asked to provide a narrative with their drawings. Some of these presentations were audio recorded with the permission of the student. The students were informed that they could choose to reveal as much information about their pictures as they wished, based on their degree of comfort within the group, and even chose not to participate in the presentation. Narratives offered significant cues to understanding the pictures, but it is important to bear in mind that analysis is subject to speculation when it does not emanate “from the person who made the artefact”, as the purpose of this type of research “is to get as close as possible to other people’s views and meanings” (Gauntlett and Holzwarth, 2006, pp. 86-87). River of Life drawings were used as teaching tools to explain to students the different types of symbolic representation and how this activity could be used as a starting-point for further discussion on self and identity. A good example of how narratives help in self-understanding is the picture of a rock in one student’s drawing, which may represent obstacles that made the path difficult and represented challenges in the student's life. In another case, a student's drawing of a rock may represent their faith in God. The students were asked to photograph their River of Life drawing and timeline artefacts, and upload them on the learning management system using Google Groups. This allowed for further interaction between students. In Phase 3, a purposive sample of the River of Life drawing and narratives, posters and PhotoVoice pictures, were chosen.

The advantages of having students create these artefacts are that it is an unobtrusive method of collecting data, it provides an opportunity for participants to share their reality directly and it is creative and captures visual attention. Also, it is used to teach students about activities that can be used in meso practice.

The disadvantages are that artefacts such as the River of Life and PhotoVoice could be difficult to interpret without discussion or background and were not accessible publicly. The presence of the observer (e.g. photographer or class member) may be disruptive and affect response. Students were asked to share what they felt comfortable with to the group members, based on their drawing of the River of Life. Many social work students in South Africa have been exposed to trauma in their lives and this was symbolically illustrated in their drawings – similar to experiences of trauma by South African youth, as found by Seedat, Nyamai, Njenga, Vythilingum and Stein (2004). The degree of sharing was consistent

with the rapport that existed between students and feelings of trust in their tutor. Audio recordings were made of the information shared by the students.

### ***The PhotoVoice project***

The students were tasked with creating a PhotoVoice picture/s of their social condition. PhotoVoice was pioneered by Wang and Burris (1997) and has its roots in Paulo Freire's critical consciousness and empowerment (Bozalek, 2014). PhotoVoice is a process by which people can identify or represent a social condition through a specific photographic technique. PhotoVoice allows groups to creatively and collaboratively develop photographs that may promote critical dialogue and knowledge about a social condition. PhotoVoice is a form of action research that is practical and makes use of digital media and mobile technology, as students used their cellphone cameras to take the pictures. The use of PhotoVoice provides students with the freedom to create and explore. The method has special relevance to social work students, as it is a technique they could later use with their clients.

PhotoVoice images can influence our definition of a situation regarding the prevailing social, cultural and economic context. The analysis of the photographs occurs through a three-phased process of selection and production, contextualising and codifying, based on the content of the images (Wang, 1999). In this project, the social condition around which the group was set up was the theme around which the photographs were taken. All the groups used themselves as the subjects of the pictures and they therefore did not need to obtain informed consent before taking the photographs.

### ***Data analysis of visual artefacts***

Multiple artefacts were developed from this research project. Its visual artefacts, such as photographs and pictures, have been found to “illuminate complexities” (Hurdle, 2007, p. 355) and offer creative and thoughtful learning experiences (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006). When these visual artefacts are used in course design they require the students to engage with the project, using mind, body and emotion, and it is an empowering and self-reflective process. The use of these activities coheres with meso practice, as it provides an activity that students can use in the field to better understand their group members.

Participatory learning and action (PLA) techniques “involve the use of open-ended, flexible visual learning methods” (Bozalek, 2011a, p. 471). Moreover, PLA techniques have been

found to be helpful in building “self-confidence and leadership skills and to identify shared priorities” (Busza & Schunter, 2001, p. 74). The use of PLA techniques is suitable for sharing and in South Africa they have been found to contribute to “decolonising methodologies by alerting participants to privilege and marginalisation through encounters across difference” (Bozalek, 2011a, p. 469).

#### ***4.9.12 Phase 4: Development of course guidelines***

An aspect of DBR that distinguishes it from action research is the creation of design principles, and in this research it was the development of design guidelines (Herrington, et al., 2010). These guidelines offer practical suggestions that are shared with other educators for purposes of critique: they began as draft design principles and were later developed in Chapter Nine of this study.

#### **4.10 Ethical Considerations**



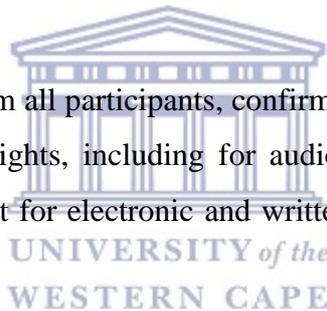
The collection of data did not begin until ethics approval was obtained for the study (Annexure A). In Phase 2 all the ten participants were contacted, both telephonically and via email, to set up the meeting at a location of their choice. Participants had the right to refuse to participate finally there six educators and four field instruction supervisors who were part of the study. At the beginning of each interview the interviewee was provided with a Participant Information Sheet (Annexure C) and was requested to sign two informed consent forms for the interview and to audiotape the session (Annexure E & F). Some of the interviews were conducted in a coffee shop and in offices of the interviewer and interviewee. A last request to each interviewee was addressed as follows: “I will be careful to write up this interview in a manner that does not identify you. However, is there anything you have just told me which I should be particularly careful about? Is there anything I should check with you before I use it?” These questions provided a further opportunity for the participant to assess what had transpired in the interview and suggest any changes. On most occasions there were no amendments suggested by the participant. Once the data was collected the information was kept in a password-protected file and hard copies were kept in a locked cupboard and archived, so that subsequent research articles might emanate from the study. However, all future reports will respect the nature of the original participants’ consent.

## **4.11 Procedural Ethics**

There are procedural and practice ethics that were followed to guide interaction with human participants. Procedural ethics included permission to conduct the study from the Head of Department in Social Work at Wits (Annexure B) and ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) Research Ethics committee (Annexure A). The study was therefore conducted according to ethical practices pertaining to the study of human subjects, as specified by the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences at UWC and the SACSSP Code of Ethics. Practice ethics that were complied with are: respect for autonomy, confidentiality, privacy and dignity, and upholding the principle of beneficence, which means that no harm was done to participants (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

### ***4.11.1 Informed consent***

Written consent was obtained from all participants, confirming that they were informed about the aim of the study and their rights, including for audio recordings. (Annexure E & F). Students provided written consent for electronic and written data to be used for the purpose of this study



### ***4.11.2 Right to withdraw for study and autonomy***

Participation in the study was voluntary and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage, with no consequence. A participant information sheet (Annexure C & D) outlining the key aspects of the study and the rights of participants in easily understood language was provided before data collection.

### ***4.11.3 Confidentiality***

Confidentiality was built into the study by ensuring that participants' identities were protected. Thus, pseudonyms were used in the external reports emanating from the study. A focus group binding-form was signed. Information such as notes, transcripts, digital recordings, journals, discussion posts, video recordings and images were kept in a locked cupboard or in password-protected computer files.

#### **4.11.4 Anonymity**

*Anonymity* was provided in the online survey, unlike the focus groups and the individual interviews, as the identity of the participants was known to the interviewer. If participants experienced any psychological distress during the study, counselling would have been provided by a professional from the Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand.

#### **4.11.5 Researcher bias**

Researcher bias was mitigated by the use of open and honest narrative. Credibility or truth-value is improved when both positive and negative or discrepant information is presented in the report in the findings section. For example, both positive and negative comments made about the course and the methods used were noted in the report.

### **4.12 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative studies ensures rigour similar to how reliability and validity is sought in quantitative research studies (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). Qualitative research, cannot obtain reliability and validity in the same way in “naturalistic “settings such as the classroom (Shenton, 2004, p. 63). Thus qualitative studies seek to achieve trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is enhanced when the following aspects are considered: representativeness, consistency, confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability, as developed from the 1985 model by Lincoln and Guba (Babbie & Mouton, 2011).

*Representativeness* refers to how the data actually represents the problem, the context and / or the participant’s views. All the data was transcribed verbatim and the supervisors of the project has access to the raw data. The supervisors of this study had access to the learning management system as well as the assignments and artefacts produced by the students. Another criterion of trustworthiness is *transferability* and this relates to the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. Here the researcher should strive to provide sufficient detail so that the research conditions are described. This study was produced design-based guidelines that could be considered in other contexts. I used verbatim quotes and gave examples of the artefacts so that readers are provided with tangible examples of the work that was produced in this course (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

*Consistency* refers to how the study can be replicated in a similar context or with similar informants which will produce the same results. The use of dependability can enhance consistency, which was achieved through supervisor-checking, ensuring that the research was conducted in a “logical and well-documented manner” (De Vos et al. 2012, p. 420). Other ways to ensure dependability are the use of triangulation of data sets. There was triangulation of that various interviews and focus group with the students and the field instruction supervisors.

*Confirmability* refers to neutrality (Krefting, 1991) and is used to determine if the study is free from bias. The researcher was also the educator in this study and therefore there was a need to view the data objectively both reflectively and reflexively so that I am able to bring in factors such as the power dynamics, race and gender when the data was analysed. In appendix 1 I share with the reader my own beliefs and assumptions. Moreover I acknowledge the shortcomings of the study methods. Triangulation is another way of reducing researcher bias

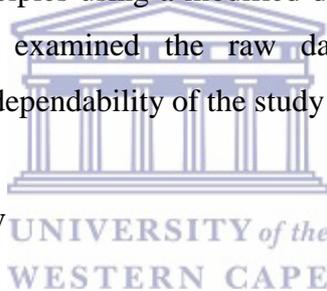
*Credibility* involves two aspects: executing the study to create believability of the findings, and ensuring that steps demonstrate the truthfulness of the research results. Credibility was achieved through extended engagement with study from 2013 to 2016. Multiple methods of data collection were used with participants such as a focus group, survey and during focus group sessions and the individual interviews. Digital recordings of the interviews and focus groups were made, which were transcribed verbatim. All the data were transcribed verbatim and the supervisors of the project has access to the raw data.

In addition, *triangulation*, which is the use of multiple data sources, was done to enhance the rigour of the study. Triangulation is the process which occurs when data collected from one instrument, such as the survey in this study, is cross-checked against the data collected from the focus groups and the individual interviews with the students. The term “triangulation” relates to the strongest geometric shape –the triangle – and is based on the premise that the use of multiple methods “solves the problem of rival causal factors, because each of the methods reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed” (Patton, 2002, p. 247). Triangulation was used to integrate the qualitative from the survey and the quantitative data (Collins & O’Cathain, 2009) from the focus groups and interviews.

*Transferability* refers to the “fittingness” (Krefting, 1991, p. 261) with which the findings can be applied to other settings or groups. Description of the participants, the research setting, focus group sessions and individual interviews were provided. Furthermore, descriptions of the research methodology and findings, as well as the bias I bring to the study and my reflections, in particular of “negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 192), were reported. The descriptive data may allow for comparison with future studies. The design-principles could be used in other studies and for course development.

*Dependability* examines the extent to which the study can be replicated in a similar context with similar participants, over repeated administrations over a period of time. To ensure the repeatability of the study I showed the various stages of the research and how the draft design principles evolved in design principles using a modified design-based research method. The two supervisors of the study examined the raw data, findings interpretations and recommendations to attest to the dependability of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2011).

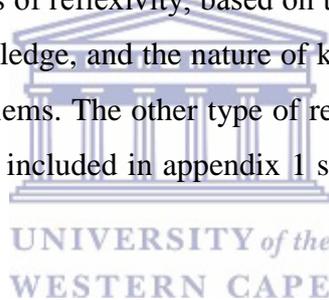
#### 4.13 Reflection and reflexivity



In DBR the researcher is a participant in the study and is required to engage in reflective and reflexive behaviours throughout the process. Reflexivity concerns the need for the researcher to be self-aware, especially because in a study like this, as an educator, I am researching my own students. Bryman (2012) asserts that reflexivity is the effect of engaging in research on the study, as researchers are always affected by the personal problems and trauma experienced by their subjects. The work of Schön (1983) is often cited when describing being reflexive and reflective. Schön describes reflection in action as the process of looking back to better understand what has occurred, and reflection in action is the thinking that is done while working, researching and teaching, described by him as: “thinking on your feet”. There are times when these processes overlap, especially in DBR (Bassot, 2013) when you, as the educator, are also teaching your students to become reflective practitioners and develop skills of reflexivity.

Being reflective requires the researcher to be “self-questioning and self-understanding”

(Patton, 2002, p.67). Beyond just being reflective I was required to be reflexive and had to look at how my own identity, as a middle-aged, Indian South African female teacher, influences the way I teach, collect some of the data and make sense of the data. I am aware that I am not a neutral observer and am “implicated in the construction of knowledge (Gray, 2009, p. 498). My race, gender and role as an educator play a role in the research process. Reflexivity, unlike reflection, requires “both an ‘other’ and some self-conscious awareness of the process of self- scrutiny” (Chiseri- Strater cited in Pillow, 2010, p. 177). Thus there is a need for me to be aware and conscious through personally accounting for how my self-location, position and interests influence the phases of the research. My being an older, black (of Indian descent) South African woman teacher does influence my position in relation to the students and the participants. Listening and writing with an awareness of positional, textual and ethnographic reflexivity helped me to develop an awareness of how my own assumptions and position might be brought to bear on the research process (Macbeth, 2001; Pillow, 2010). There are two types of reflexivity, based on the researcher’s assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge, and the nature of knowledge based on the paradigms they use to see the research problems. The other type of reflexivity is about personal values, attitudes beliefs and aims. I have included in appendix 1 some of my personal reflections of being an educator.



Educators researching their own students demand a greater degree of reflexivity, because they become involved in the lives of their students and are, on occasion, moved by their personal struggles and crises. There was a need for me to think about these factors and be aware of the power dynamics. I am central to the process of course design and transformation, based on my sphere of influence. However, at another level, I am but one educator within a complex HE system and I am aware that some aspects are beyond my control. Factors within my locus of control are my own information, knowledge, power and skills. In addition, I am part of a social work department and a member of the team of educators who teach second-year students, so my role on this team also shapes my own identity. I was required to consider my own role and performance as an educator, social work professional and learner. Sometimes these roles clash, and are both personal and related to self-development (McKenney & Reeves, 2012)

I was involved with the research over a sustained period of time from 2013 to 2016, and developed an intensive experience with the participants. My engagement over the period does

raise a range of strategic, ethical and personal issues about the qualitative process, and I needed to consider factors such as biases, values, and personal background, as well as gender, history, culture and socio-economic status that might shape the interpretations formed during the study. Methods used to enhance reflexivity were to keep a journal and encourage the participants to reflect throughout the data-gathering stages of the project. In the results chapter I have attempted to include statements about experiences that provide background data through which the audience can better understand the study.

#### ***4.13.1 Structured reflection***

In educational design research

*... reflection is active and thoughtful consideration of what has come together in both research and development (including theoretical inputs, empirical findings and subjective reactions) with the aim of producing new (theoretical) understandings (McKenney & Reeves, 2012, p. 151).*

Course design reflection focuses on two aspects: design challenge, which is the difference between the existing and the desired situation and context and, secondly, aspects of the integrated research and development process (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). There were two distinct reflection periods to this study. The first was a reflection on how other educators teach meso practice, and the second was at the end of the implementation of the course and after the data had been analysed, where there were further reflections to develop a set of guidelines. In the reflection phase of the project the main question answered was the degree to which meaning was obtained from the data, and the lessons learned. Triangulation was used in this phase. These lessons included my personal interpretation, couched in the understanding the inquiry brought from my own culture, history and experience. Consideration was given to a comparison of the findings which the information gleaned from the literature or theories (i.e. how it relates to authentic learning). The development of course guidelines was an important outcome of the study. Finally, the project offers areas for further research, based on the questions still left unanswered.

#### **4.14 Limitations of the Study**

I bring an emic perspective in my role as teacher of social work and as an employee at a HEI, so that procedural and practice ethics were upheld. The limitation of informed consent in modified DBR is that all the possible outcomes cannot be predicted as the processes evolve, though the necessary ethical conditions were applied. During all stages of the research, ethical guidelines were followed: from the design of the study; the development of the data collection instruments, especially when collecting data, during transcription and analysis, and finally, when reporting and publishing the findings so that confidentiality was upheld. Thus any identifying information was reported and any publications that emanated from the study would not be identifiable.

Limitations of this study were that the results were specific to these undergraduate social work students and the meso practice course curriculum of this particular department, and it might be difficult to generalise about the applicability of this approach. However, this study has highlighted guidelines that could be used in other courses and disciplines using group work. The limitations of using modified DBR were that it is time-consuming and complex, with multiple dependent variables, including climate, outcome and system variables, creating a rich but at times confusing environment (Barab & Squire, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007). The copious amount of data generated from the study required triangulation, prolonged engagement with continued refinement, reflexive journaling, thick descriptions and purposive sampling to add to the trustworthiness of the study.

#### **4.15 Conclusion**

In Chapter Four, consideration has been given to how mixed methods research was used in the modified design-research study. I have shown how a phased mixed methods design was used, starting with a literature review into meso practice education and authentic learning, followed by an understanding of the context by interviewing practitioners in the field. The meso practice course was designed and implemented in 2015, and various types of data was collected, from the students and from the external off-site field instruction supervisors. The data was mainly qualitative in nature and were analysed using content analysis. A limited

amount of quantitative data from the survey and descriptive statistics were used for analysis. The final phase of the study was the development of guidelines to support the teaching and course design for meso practice education. In this chapter some of the ethics that were important to this study were described, after which there was a description of how aspects of trustworthiness were ensured.

In Chapter Five there is an exploration of what practitioners see as important for the teaching and supervision of students in meso practice. The practitioners interviewed were five educators based at various South African HEIs and four field instruction supervisors. These interviews were insightful and offered a glimpse of how some practitioners work to develop students to become skilled in meso practice education.



# CHAPTER 5 - PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATORS AND SUPERVISORS OF MESO PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA (PHASE 2)

*If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants*  
Newton, 1676

## 5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters Two, Three and Four on methods have provided a background to the study by considering the literature on meso practice and authentic learning. Chapter Five extends beyond the literature to consider the perceptions and practices of ten practitioners (six educators and four field instruction (FI) supervisors) in social work meso practice education in South Africa. This chapter is divided into two sections: Section A, in which the views of six educators from four South African HEIs on meso practice education are reported, and Section B, in which the perceptions of four FI supervisors at the HEI where the study was conducted are reported.

During the initial phase of analysis and exploration in Design Based Research (DBR), there is a “need to respectfully and critically engage with practitioners in search of problems” that are mutually beneficial to the researcher and the practitioners (McKenney & Reeves, 2012, p. 89). The views of these educators and supervisors contribute to understanding the way they teach, design courses, and assess and develop students within the South African HEI environment. The use of educational DBR requires that problems and solutions should be identified in the literature and in the field so that design pathways are created (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). In Chapter Five, there is an exploration of the practical features of teaching meso practice seen from the practitioner’s perspective. The research question that this chapter seeks to answer is as follows. *How is meso practice education currently being conducted by educators and FI supervisors in some South African higher education contexts?*

The objectives were divided between those relevant to the educators and those applicable to the FI supervisors; they are listed below.

#### **Section A - Objectives regarding the educators:**

- To explore the perceptions and practices of educators regarding course design of meso practice education.
- To understand the methods used to coordinate field instruction in meso practice.
- To consider whether use is made of TEL in the teaching of meso practice.
- To understand the attributes of a meso practice educator

#### **Section B - Objectives regarding the FI supervisors:**

- To explore the perceptions and practices of FI supervisors regarding the training of undergraduate social work students in the area of teaching meso practice.
- To determine if there is use of TEL in the teaching of meso practice by FI supervisors.
- To understand the attributes of a FI supervisor in the area of meso practice.

In thematically understanding the data, focus is placed on the challenges and successes experienced by practitioners when conducting meso practice education. The section concludes with a general overview of the ten practitioner face-to-face interviews, that were conducted using a qualitative research data collection instrument in this phase; although the overall study made use of a modified educational DBR method, this initial stage of the project utilised a qualitative research approach. In Chapter Five, brief information is provided on the research methods used and the findings from data are reported.

## **5.2 Findings**

The findings section is made up of the views of the educators [Section A] and the field instruction (FI) supervisors [Section B].

### **5.3 Section A - Educators**

Table 2 Shows the demographic profiles of the six educators and the meso practice courses they taught.

**Table 2: Demographics of the educators of meso practice, n = 6**

Names <sup>5</sup>	Rene	Emily	Carol	Veena	Thandi	Nick
	HAI	HAI	HAI	HAI (Comprehensive -merged)	HAI	HDI
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
<b>Race<sup>6</sup></b>	White	White	White	Indian	African	White
<b>Age</b>	55	55	44	48	34	59
<b>Year of teaching experience</b>	20 years	10 years	3 years and 6 months	1 year 6 months	2 years and 6 months	10 years
<b>Course name</b>	Advanced skills in meso practice	Field instruction in meso practice	1 <sup>st</sup> year theory on group work	Advanced skills in meso practice	Advanced meso practice	Meso practice 21 hours
<b>Level at which meso practice was taught</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	1 <sup>st</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> year
<b>Class size</b>	65	75	311 (includes BA students)	120	33	92
<b>Do students run a group?</b>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes (11-12 sessions)	Yes (co-facilitation)

**KEY:** HAI - historically advantaged institutions; HDI - historically disadvantaged institution

Five of the six educators were women from HEIs in South Africa, this is a common trend within the social work profession where the majority of the social workers are women (Khunou, Pillay, & Nethononda, 2012). There were four HEIs included in this phase of the study, three were historically advantaged institutions (HAIs) and one was a historically disadvantaged institution (HDI), which is important within the South African context where the legacy of apartheid prompts transformation (CHE, 2013; Cooper, 2015). A report by the Council for Higher Education (2013) found that only one in four students graduate from a contact HEI within the minimum prescribed time; that many South African schools still adopt

<sup>5</sup> Pseudonyms have been used.

<sup>6</sup> The use of race as a form of classification and nomenclature in South Africa still exists in the academic literature and legislature, as well as in HEIs for monitoring purposes for transformation, with the four largest identified race groups being black African, Indian, coloured (mixed-race) and white. These socially and politically constructed apartheid terms, despite being highly contested, are still commonly used throughout the country in part to track transformation impact.

a rote learning approach that is constraining for students to adapt to the deep learning required at university is but one factor affecting this situation (McGuire, 2006; Strydom et al., 2012).

Four of the educators identified as white in terms of racial demographics, while one identified as Indian and one identified as African in terms of apartheid classifications, which are still used in South Africa. The profession of social work began in 1946 for people from the white race group and has been infused with colonial values, oppression, and class and race stratification (Smith, 2008). For example, separate training colleges were established such as the Jan Hofmeyr College of Social Work for blacks, established only in 1941. These racial inequalities persist, and the census in 2001 found that the social work profession was represented according to the following racial lines: African 50.1%, coloured 9.4%, Indian 4% and white 35.6 % (Earle, 2008, p. 26), while the population demographics in 2004 were as follows: African 79.3%, coloured 8.8%, Indian 2.4% and white 9.5% (Kane-Berman, & Tempest, 2004). These statistics provide some possible reasons as to why white people dominate academic social work and the social work profession.

The social work educators in the study ranged in age from 34 to 55 years. They taught meso practice to students at the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year level and their class sizes ranged from between 33 and 311 students. The duration of the interviews lasted from 34 minutes to 45 minutes and were held either in the office of the interviewee or interviewer. In the interviews conducted with the educators, information was collected regarding the attributes of a meso practice teacher, their courses and their assessment practices, and the types of books and resources the educators used in meso practice. Their reflections are introduced in relation to the literature on the topic.

#### **5.4 The attributes of an educator of meso practice**

The following are seen as attributes of a meso practice educator.

##### ***5.4.1 Practicing professional***

Much is written about the attributes of a group leader in social work text books by Toseland and Rivas (2009), Zastrow (2012) and Corey et al. (2010), while there is also a literature

addressing the attributes of being a good educator (Jonassen, 2008; Makoni, 2000); however, I was particularly interested in understanding the attributes of a person who is both a good educator and group facilitator or group leader. Although the educators drew a distinction between meso practitioners who conduct group work as part of their jobs, and educators of meso practice, they saw that the actual tacit knowledge of working with groups, coupled with the requisite theory, was very helpful in teaching group work.

*... the person [the teacher] must be able to work in a group, so you have to have a good understanding of group work knowledge yourself. (Veena, 2013)*

This position of having personal experience in group work is supported by educator, Emily.

*I think it's always valuable if you yourself have done some group work experience so that you can speak from a point of view that you have had experience. (Emily, 2013)*

The educator interviewees and the FI supervisors concurred that in order to teach meso practice, first-hand experience of conducting groups contributes to providing a richer type of teaching style that includes personal anecdotes (Knight, 2014). Although there is no clearly established link between the field work experience in meso practice and teaching meso practice, it is believed that the work experience of university educators and tutors does influence classroom learning in relation to professional identity and the use of real world practice examples, that make their teaching more effective (MacDermott & Campbell, 2015). This view resonates with educator, Rene, who advocates that to be a good meso practice educator requires exposure to being a group member and a group leader. Rene adds that a belief in and a passion for the meso practice method is another advantage.

*I don't think you can teach group work if you haven't been a member and you haven't had experienced it at all or you haven't conducted groups.... You have to believe in groups and you have to have the experience of being a group leader and you have to have seen the benefits to be able to really convey that to students and let them believe in the value of group work. (Rene, 2014)*

#### **5.4.2 Being creative**

Another attribute of teaching meso practice is creativity, as activities are carefully incorporated within the teaching and learning of the meso practice skill. Activities are viewed

as integral to meso practice, and the roots of the group work stemmed from the recreation movement in which members engaged in collective activities to create a sense of belonging and community (Rosenwald et al., 2014).

*... group work (meso practice) should not be boring ... group work is about activities, it is not talk, talk, talk .... boring groups have boring group leaders. No lecturer should be boring but a group work lecturer should definitely not be a boring lecturer. (Rene, 2014)*

The previous comment by Rene clearly illustrates that the teaching of meso practice needs to be designed to include fun, creative and physical activities by a person with passion for the subject matter. Rene proceeds to cite an example of an activity filled class that she taught and says:

*... I took them [the students] to the sports grounds ... they [the students] had to conduct exercises with balls, hoola hoops, strings and wooden spoons and then do the Macarena [a dance to music] and they [the students] had fun, 'cause group work should be fun. And also in a way feel how it feels like to be a group member. (Rene, 2014)*

These activities are just some examples of how groups can cohere so that members may develop a sense of competence, belonging, achieve self-discovery, invention and creativity (Malekoff cited in Rosenwald, et al., 2013). Developing students as meso practitioners requires that they experience activities and plan activities suitable for the groups they will later conduct independently, outside the safety of the classroom.

### **5.4.3 Content expert**

A good group worker and educator should understand the concepts and have a knowledge of the skills and techniques required in meso practice (Steinberg, 2007). The educator needs to be a knowledge expert who constantly keeps abreast with trends in the field of practice. Rene's comment confirms this point of view, when she says:

*So group work is one of my passions and umm I try to annually attend the symposia in the United States .... [S]o attending those symposia and hearing about group work practices gives you many ideas. (Rene, 2014)*

Rene's commitment to keep abreast of the latest information on meso practice allows her access to a variety of resources and enables her to establish relationships with colleagues

across the world. Thus she can observe and discover different types of interventions and see multiple perspectives and views from diverse frames of reference (Herrington et al., 2010). These connections allow the educator to make use of rich real world examples in teaching practice, which is regarded as important, so that the educator is seen as a role model to their students. Coupled with the importance of being knowledge expert is being a researcher and a self-reflective instructor, intent on improving one's own teaching practice (Sidell, 2003). The next attribute that will be discussed from the perspective of the interviewees and the literature is that of an educator of meso practice using fair and objective assessment methods.

#### **5.4.4 Skilled at student assessment**

The assessment of outcomes as well as the ability to be fair and careful in monitoring and evaluating progress and the functioning of the students within the class is essential (Boud & Molloy, 2013). Social work educators need to assess the following aspects of student performance such as skills acquisition, critical learning and theoretical knowledge (Crisp & Lister, 2002). Assessment results in vital actions such as student learning, student grading, curriculum evaluation, comparison of performance and evaluation of educator performance (Crisp & Lister, 2002; Harden & Crosby, 2000). In addition, the use of meaningful assessment and formative feedback is a core capacity of social work educators as it impacts on the success or failure of the student in the course. This is evidenced in the statement made by Rene who says "*proper assessments .... I pay a lot of attention in third year to assessment*". Another educator, Emily, when describing the attributes of a good educator, makes reference to the provision of feedback and engaging students in research but also the transmission of guidance from the educator to the student:

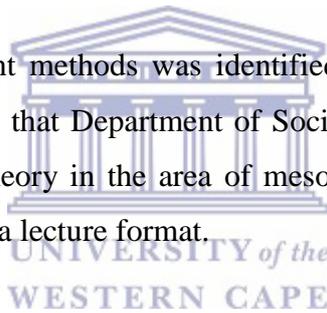
*... somebody [the educator] who encourages students to go research, somebody who actually does not spoon-feed them, uh somebody who gives uh constant feedback to the students let's say like after the submission of a report and the you sit them down and say this is what I think you should improve on. (Emily, 2013)*

Assessment is seen as a challenging aspect of meso practice both for students undertaking assessments and for educators assessing them. The findings show that the methods of assessment varied from one HEI to the next and also varied at each year level: for example, in a third year course at one HEI, the assessment methods alternated between a test and an assignment for the formative assessment, while at another HEI it was one long assignment at fourth year level. An assignment is often chosen by educators, as Nick indicated in his

interview, where he used two individual assignments of between six to eight pages in length as formative assessment, but noted that if he teaches the course again, he would like to add a test, as the marking of the two assignments was time consuming. He did, however, acknowledge that assignments are helpful in preparing students for the final examination. His response alerts one to the difficulties of educators spending excessive amounts of time marking individual work, which is a consideration for educators especially in light of large class numbers.

All the courses included a summative assessment by written examination. The use of technology for assessment was evident at one HEI where it was reported that assessment for some of tests was conducted electronically. These electronic tests were multiple choice questionnaires, of which there were three, weighted at 10% each; the assignment or test was weighted at 30%.

The use of innovative assessment methods was identified by one interviewee in a course called *Advanced Group Work*, as that Department of Social Work saw the need to increase the students' understanding of theory in the area of meso practice. However, the approach was not simply to teach theory in a lecture format.



This educator describes her teaching style as using a building block approach, and adds that she “*loves practice more, I believe it [competence in practice] has to come from experience not classroom work*”. Therefore, in order to encourage students out of the classroom, Veena creates assessments whereby the students have to engage in the following task:

*so I've asked them [the students] to go out into the community and locate a support group and to observe different groups or self-help groups in the community and to sit there and observe what is happening and then your assignment would be to observe within [the support groups] the principles of social work which are being implemented. (Veena, 2013)*

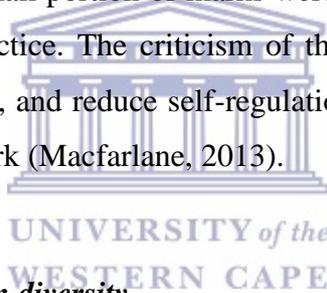
In the assignment developed by Veena, there is a definite attempt made to locate information in the real world and observe some of the complexities found in groups. The purpose of the assignment was to create an opportunity for the students to have direct exposure to a group as well as to critically reflect on how the group conforms or does not conform to the values and principles of social work meso practice. Furthermore, students were expected to design a

meso practice programme that aligns with the vision and mission of the organisation. Veena noted that this assignment was significant in that it allowed students to develop skills in research, advanced empathy, attentive listening and designing a meso practice programme. Also, students demonstrated the use of values such as respect, confidentiality and recognition of group norms. Veena adds that the assignment assisted in allowing students to:

*See [how] theory flows into practice, knowledge of different types of groups, types of facilities/communities and how groups can be aligned to the needs/requirements of the community. (Veena, 2013)*

Veena's assignment referred to above has many elements of an authentic task. All the courses taught by those interviewed in the study were reported to be linked to ELOs, and marks were allocated equally for summative and formative assessments.

Controversially, in one HEI, a small portion of marks were allocated for class attendance, to encourage good professional practice. The criticism of this practice, however, is that such practices can promote presentism, and reduce self-regulation on the part of students to make choices as required in the real work (Macfarlane, 2013).



#### **5.4.5 Sensitive to human diversity**

Another trait of a meso practice educator and practitioner is a genuine appreciation of diversity, as is evident in ELO Nine, which requires social workers to demonstrate alignment between social work values and human diversity (Abrams & Gibson, 2007; South African Qualifications Authority, 2003). An example of how a course is designed to strengthen sensitivity to diversity was evident at one HEI, which requires that second year meso practice students conduct groups within a laboratory setting with a group of first year students varied in race, class, religion and gender, on adjusting to university life. This method of conducting groups within the university environment was seen as very helpful in providing opportunities for student learning while contributing to real life needs of first year students adjusting to university.

In these groups, aspects of diversity include race, socioeconomic factors, stereotypes, educational settings such as schools and social work agencies, culture, religion and age were discussed as themes in different group sessions. These topics are significant and topical

within the current South African HEI environment, with transformation high on the agenda. Moreover, the appreciation of diversity in groups was seen as important when teaching group work and this aspect was mentioned in the next quote when an educator explains what he looks for when choosing a video on meso practice for students. This quote further suggests that there very little South African resources available on meso practice.

*... look at diversity in groups. Which I though was a good way of teaching because even though it [video] was American, they had African Americans, they had Filipinos, they had various people within the group, gay and lesbians. they had different kinds of diversity [Nick, 2013]*

While, it was not evident from the interviews that diversity was always positively engaged by educators, with the richness it brings to the teaching and learning spaces, an activity suggested by educator, Carol to promote an appreciation of diversity was the *tree of life*, which would fulfil this opportunity. The use of participatory learning and action techniques like this activity was also seen as useful in another study conducted by Bozalek and Biersteker (2010).

#### **5.4.6 Being flexible**

Flexibility and spontaneity was seen as another attribute essential to meso practice (Bitel, 2000), as groups can be unpredictable, and while extensive preparation is required, the ability to think on the spot, be emotionally present and be open to the reactions of the group members and congruent to the needs of the group, is what is needed in group work (Corey, 2012). In terms of the educational process, it would not be possible to anticipate how students would react to the material presented and the need for flexibility is highlighted (Furr, 2000). Educator Thandi says this, regarding her style of teaching:

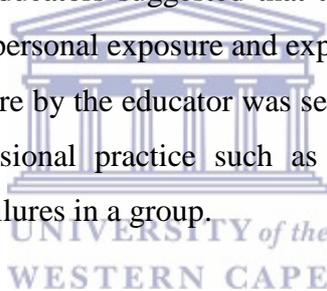
*... my teaching style is rather flexible whereby I introduce a topic, first I tell the students what the purpose of the lecture is and based on this we have a discussion. (Thandi, 2013)*

Thandi does not make use of a specific textbook and students are invited to share information. The lessons include presenting content, role plays and class discussions. In the course designed by Thandi at fourth year level, the main theory informing the course design was an ecosystems approach as well as the use of narrative theory, so that students learn how group members are provided with the space to tell their story, and to re-author and reframe

their story. There is a greater clinical focus on conducting psychotherapeutic groups in this course. This type of content differs from the stance adopted by Rene who is of the view that:

*... social work students ...do [conduct] treatment groups with diversional therapy, socialisation, growth, self-help and elements of therapy but social work students cannot, we are not clinical social workers. So I don't think social work students are fully equipped to do therapy groups. I also firmly believe that South Africa should focus more on growth groups for skills development, and if we really say we work from a developmental approach then we should work from a strengths perspective ... growth is the focus and we leave deep deep therapy to the psychologists and those people. (Rene, 2014)*

The educators interviewed held a variety of views on what they considered were the ideal attributes of a meso practice educator. When considering the attributes of a good meso practice educator, many of the educators suggested that the person should have both good content knowledge coupled with personal exposure and experience of conducting groups. The need for personal practice exposure by the educator was seen as resulting in richer sharing of information, drawn from professional practice such as case studies, best practices and examples of real successes and failures in a group.



These educators suggest that teaching of meso practice should provide students with a safe space in which they have the opportunity to experience elements of being in a group through sharing tasks, management of conflict and the expression of emotions. The use of an experiential type of learning has similarities with the apprentice type of learning through observation of more and less knowledgeable others within a community of practice; this in AL, is seen as obtaining multiple perspectives and using collaboration (Lave & Wenger, 2003, Herrington, et al., 2010).

Table 3 presented below lists what each of the educators reported as suitable attributes of a meso practice educator (verbatim descriptors are provided).

**Table 3: Attributes of a meso practice educator**

Participant	Attributes
<b>Veena</b>	<p><i>Have self-knowledge</i></p> <p><i>Be flexible</i></p> <p><i>Have the ability to think on the spot</i></p> <p><i>Be objective and “don’t take things personally”</i></p> <p><i>Have good time management skills</i></p>
<b>Rene</b>	<p><i>Don’t be boring</i></p> <p><i>Be passionate</i></p> <p><i>Have a belief in the value of group work</i></p> <p><i>Show sensitivity and embrace diversity beyond race</i></p> <p><i>Have a good understanding of systems theory</i></p> <p><i>Contribute to research and training beyond the university</i></p>
<b>Nick</b>	<p><i>Have a belief in social inclusion and diversity</i></p> <p><i>Engage in interactions with students</i></p> <p><i>Understand pedagogy</i></p> <p><i>Be able to manage time</i></p> <p><i>Being self-reflective and able to teach students skills of reflection</i></p> <p><i>Have an understanding of students who have been marginalised</i></p>
<b>Tandi</b>	<p><i>Adopt a flexible teaching style</i></p> <p><i>Be enthusiastic</i></p> <p><i>Allow students to engage in reflection</i></p> <p><i>Be a role model</i></p> <p><i>Be creative</i></p> <p><i>Respect diversity</i></p> <p><i>Provide direction to students</i></p> <p><i>Motivate students</i></p> <p><i>Be knowledgeable</i></p> <p><i>Involve students</i></p> <p><i>Have a sense of humour</i></p>

Participant	Attributes
Emily	<i>Adopt a participatory style of teaching</i> <i>Encourage reflection in your teaching practice</i> <i>Understand systems theory and person-in-the-environment</i> <i>Create linkages with other social work interventions</i> <i>Be knowledgeable on the theory of group work</i> <i>Passion</i> <i>Understand diversity</i> <i>Understand culture</i>
Carol	Be creative - use art such as collages Be able to conduct research on practice Encourage students to “get excited about group work”

As evidenced from the quotations documented in Table 3 certain attributes listed by the educators were shared views for example, having a passion for meso practice and the use of activities to engage students in the teaching and learning process. The educators cited a variety of skills and sound knowledge required to teach meso practice, including role modelling these skills while teaching.

## 5.5 The Use of Technology

Amongst the HEI educators, there seemed to be pockets of technology use in the teaching of meso practice. All three HEIs made use of a learning management system, and of the three participating HEIs, there were two that used proprietary software and one which used open source software. All institutions had areas where Wi-Fi was available with varying degrees at specific locations. Technology was used in one HEI for assessment, which included assignment submission and test-taking. The procedure followed for test taking was test development, and then the test was open for a specific duration, in which students could take the test either at an on-campus computer laboratory or at site chosen by the student. The disadvantage of this practice was that the test did not need to be taken under exam conditions, and students could sit together to take the test.

Authentic Learning supports integrated learning and recommends that assessments should “require students to be effective performers with acquired knowledge”, while traditional assessment is seen as a “pencil and paper one answer question” (Herrington et al., 2010, p. 40). Certain HEIs, including the research site, required both formative and summative assessment and regarded formal examinations as the most reliable methods of assessment (University of the Witwatersrand, 2009). While the use of technology for assessments was developing at the research site, a participant from another HEI noted that,

*At the present time the infrastructure required for assessments whereby the entire assessment is carried out on computer is not ideal”* (University of the Witwatersrand, 2016a, p.10).

Commonly used applications of technology included the use of PowerPoint, email communication to students, use of digital video discs (DVDs) and YouTube clips. A challenge expressed by two of the educators was that relevant online audio-visual material that they had located on the internet on meso practice education were not relevant in Africa. There was one HEI course represented amongst the interviewees, that made use of discussion forums, and students were able to collaborate online to share problems as well as help each other with pre-assignment preparation. Interestingly, the amount of support provided by the HEI to assist the educator in the use of technology had some impact. At the HEI where technology was most used, the educator noted that the HEI had good technology infrastructure, and she received on-site support to develop the online courses and ongoing support and training on the use of TEL. However, Veena acknowledged the significant time investment required for an educator using technology in a course, saying “I live on Edu-link even when I am at home and during my research day”. Another university has a compulsory course for first year students called Computer Information Literacy (CIL) that is credit bearing, which should be useful for students who had limited prior use of computer technology. Thus it is apparent that there has been limited use of technology by the educators who were interviewed. None of the educators made use of any social media platforms, such as Twitter or Facebook.

## 5.6 Pedagogical Approaches

Learning occurs when students are actively engaged, motivated, receive feedback on their performance, have the desire learn and can make sense of the learning (Teater, 2010). Biggs (2012) regards constructive alignment in course design to be key, whereby learning outcomes inform teaching for student understanding and the use of higher order cognitive skills. Learning is seen not to be “imposed or transmitted by direct instruction, but created by student learning activities” (Biggs, 2012, p. 42).

Aspects that were mentioned in relation to student activities included collaborative activities for students, the use of activities to appreciate how it feels to be a group member. The use of student’s own experiences of belonging to a group were seen as shaping how they understood positive and negative aspects of group dynamics. The activities that were used by the educators suggested some use of experiential learning for teaching meso practice.

The starting point of teaching is starting where the student is and building from their own experiences (Askeland, 2003; Biggs, 1996). Although the educators interviewed expressed ideas about interactive teaching, their actual practice contradicted these aspirations. For example, the main method used was a didactic lecture style teaching, where PowerPoint presentations were used to convey information to large classes ranging from 33 to 315 students in a class. Words used by the teachers to describe the pedagogical style included: using a building block approach that has relevance to social constructivism, encouraging reflective practice; engaging in experiential learning and the use of role-play, using an interactive style and using collaboration: thus there was an attempt to link some aspects of pedagogy to teaching practices, but this was to a limited degree; none of the educators were able to state the actual pedagogical theory or approach that underpinned their practice. This is a finding similar to that of Strozier (1997), who found a mixture of didactic and experiential approaches used to teach meso practice.

## 5.7 Student Preparedness or Under-preparedness

The student numbers and their preparedness for university changed after 1994, in an attempt to transform the demographics of HE, with greater numbers of diverse students from lower

socioeconomic groups entering HEIs, which was made possible through bursaries (Dykes, 2012; Habib, 2016). These factors may explain a comment made by educator, Nick, who saw some of the students as “rougher”:

*What is worrying is the kind of students we are getting are a bit more, I would say rougher, I am not sure about the word - I think it is because we want marginalised students, we have the foundation phase course now and this means they have not quite qualified for university, you know. And some students when they speak are basic in the type of language they use. I am not suggesting they should be highfaluting or that just that they don't speak as a professional and the trouble with that and we have to say to students you can't really speak like that and you have to develop your professional skills. (Nick, 2013)*

The comments above suggest a pathologisation of students and could be the result of frustration, as he adds that he had his flash disk stolen by a student in class and was also worried that the university was allowing students who do not qualify for university entrance to be admitted; he noted that some of these students are then allowed to take about “12 years” (Nick, 2013) to complete the four-year degree. In addition, Thandi said that there is poor class attendance, and a lack of critical integration of theory with practice by students.

*... very specific to this year most of the students did not attend the meso practice course due to other academic pressure. Umm therefore it was difficult for them to do the assignment because they were basically doing the assignment based on the theory that they got at second year level, which is very limiting. (Thandi, 2013)*

The educator participants did not discuss the intrinsic motivation of students towards learning at length, however they cited examples of a lack of interest on the part of students in reading the prescribed material or poor participation in class. A similar view was found in research conducted on South African social work students by Collins (2012), indicating that students simply study social work as there is a bursary from the Department of Social Development; it is also suggested that they have no role models for learning and professional practice as they are first generation tertiary students.

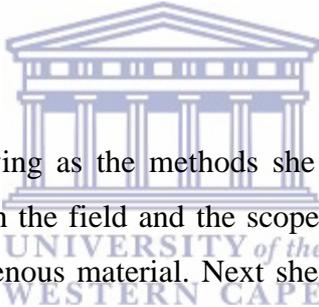
On a positive note, referring to good teaching practice, educator Thandi mentioned the use of feedback provided to students when they failed their assignment and were given another chance to improve their performance (Teater, 2010). Herrington et al. (2010) recommend that

feedback should be integrated into the course and not confined to the end of the course when students fail.

*... the critical engagement with literature or either what was happening in those groups was very limited. Umm a majority of students at first attempt did not pass the assignment. They were given an opportunity to rework with in-depth explanations and a little more engagement with kinda like more theory at fourth year level and they were able to perform better. (Thandi, 2013)*

This quote suggests a useful pedagogical style, of using iteration whereby students are given the opportunity to rework and improve their work after feedback. There was some information provided on the methods that could be used for course design, which is next considered.

## **5.8 Course Design**



Educator, Carol noted the following as the methods she would employ when designing a course. Firstly she would research the field and the scope of practice for social workers for that area and then look for indigenous material. Next she would talk to experts in the field and create teaching material which would include links with course objectives and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) standards, and ELOs of the BSW degree. The course material would include the course outline, reading pack and the assessment tasks and once this was done, the course would be implemented and evaluated. These steps seem suitable and include many aspects of DBR.

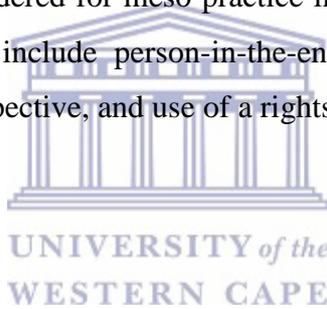
## **5.9 Aspects Covered in the Various Courses in Meso Practice**

In the four-year social work degree in South Africa, meso practice is given recognition throughout the four years of study.

**Table 4: Suggested course content for meso practice during the BSW degree**

Year of study	Content	Suggested by Educator
1st	Growth group on diversity and basic skills in group work.	Carol
2nd	Definitions, the basis of meso practice, types of groups, group leadership, group dynamics, phases and tasks, programme activities and assessment.	Emily
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Choice therapy, behaviour therapy, rational therapy; rational behavioural therapy, peer therapy, and the person centred approach.	Veena
4th	Advanced theory on meso practice.	Thandi

Table 4 depicts the aspects considered for meso practice in the different years of study. The theories used in meso practice include person-in-the-environment, systems theory, task-centred theory, the strengths perspective, and use of a rights based approach



### **5.10 Fieldwork**

In the HEIs where the educators interviewed were based, social work students are exposed to a scaffolding approach, where they begin with growth groups, task groups, socialisation groups, and later with therapeutic groups in meso practice. Through field instruction which is an integral aspect of social work education, students learn to practice and integrate theory. The programme is organised by a FI coordinator who is a member of the university staff, and the students also receive supervision by an external registered social worker. In the process of field instruction students learn how to “... test out in action the knowledge, values and principles studied in academic courses” (Bogo, 2005, p. 164).

### **5.11 Indigenous Material on Meso Practice**

The foundation of social work is rooted in the western world, and there are tensions around westernisation, localisation and indigenisation (Gray & Fook, 2004), which arose clearly

when international bodies tried to find agreement on the definition of social work and the global qualifying standards in social work (Sewpaul & Jones, 2005). These tensions have created a challenge to educators to retain selected valuable aspects from the international community, and to develop new models like the social development one created in South Africa (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002). The educators acknowledged the lack of material from and about South Africa, which prompted the educators to develop their own material; one of the educators interviewed has a dream to write her own book on the subject of meso practice within the context of South Africa. Social problems that will be included in the book she plans to write are: child-headed households; grandparents caring for grandchildren; HIV and AIDS; life-skills groups; youth in conflict with the law; teenage gangs and fatherhood; these form the basis of meso practice groups that can be run. This position is supported by Nick who noted that only one textbook that has been produced in South Africa on social work with groups, and added that the South African context is different by virtue of the specific types of social problems:

*It is interesting that nobody else has come up with any text, which I think suggests that group work is maybe undervalued a little bit because, why are we not producing more texts when we have such interesting kinds of groups and potential groups, [such as] domestic violence, HIV and AIDS. It is something to think about. (Nick, 2013)*

The lack of indigenous material is an area of concern as is borne out by the number of South African authored books used by social work educators. The only book mentioned by the educators is the book called *Working with Groups* by Lily Becker (2005).

*... the other limitation could be in terms of using the video material umm most of the recorded material is not South African based so the students feel that sometimes it is not relevant to their context. Or the issues addressed in the videos might not be, they [the students] think it is not relevant to Africa and it becomes very problematic when trying to contextualise that information. (Thandi, 2013)*

The main international textbooks that were used by the educators interviewed include: *An Introduction to Groupwork Practice* by Toseland and Rivas (2009) and *Groups: Process and Practice* by Corey, Corey and Corey (2010). Some of the other meso practice textbooks that were noted included *Groupwork with Populations at Risk* by Ephross, Greif and Ephross (2005), *Social Group Work* by Konopka, (1983) and *The Practice of Social Work with*

*Groups: A Systematic Approach* by Heap (1985). The educators also noted that the two social work journals, *Groupwork* and *Social Work with Groups* were other sources of information used by them.

In summary, the preceding sections provide context to this study showing how educators engage students in the teaching and learning of meso practice. They shared the attributes that they considered as important for teaching meso practice and why they use this method. The next section considers the views of field instruction supervisors.

## **5.12 Section B - Field Instruction (FI) Supervisors**

In this section, focus is placed on understanding the experiences of the FI supervisors regarding the supervision of undergraduate social work students at the University of the Witwatersrand in the area of meso practice education.

### **5.12.1 Introduction**

Section B focuses on Field Instruction (FI) Supervisors who offer their services at the HEI where the study was conducted (the University of the Witwatersrand). Exploring the views of practitioners at the site of the research project provided information directly related to the meso practice course and the students for which the course has been redesigned. In this section, there is information provided on field instruction, the attributes of a good FI supervisor and what advice each FI supervisor would provide to a new person who becomes a FI supervisor; this information adds to the list of features that contribute to making field instruction mutually beneficial to students and supervisors. Other aspects covered in Part B include the types of opportunities and challenges that instructors encounter, their teaching practices and their views on the types of placements used.

### **5.12.2 What is Field Instruction?**

Many names are given to FI, which include: practice education; work-integrated learning; fieldwork training and field practicum (Bogo, 2005). FI practice learning is seen as a signature pedagogy of social work and is linked to an apprenticeship model, as students learn by observation and by practice, to become competent, efficient and ethical social workers (Bogo, 2015; Mcdermott & Campbell, 2015; Shulman, 2005; Teater, 2011). Field instruction is defined by the Council for Social Work Education (CSWE) as follows:

*The intent of field education is to connect the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting. It is a basic precept of social work education that the two interrelated components of curriculum -classroom and field - are of equal importance within the curriculum, and each contributes to the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice. Field education is systematically designed, supervised, coordinated, and evaluated based on criteria by which students demonstrate the achievement of program competencies (Council for Social Work Education, 2008, p. 8).*

The experience gained during FI allows for students to hone their craft and integrate theory with practice (Bogo, 2008). FI is seen as a crucial part of the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree that scaffolds generic knowledge and skills around service learning principles throughout the four years of the degree at the University of the Witwatersrand (Smith & Dube, 2013). In FI, students are taught by experienced social workers to facilitate the development of professional expertise in accordance with the aims and objectives of the training institution (Botha, 2002). Through this important sharing and teaching relationship between supervisor and supervisee, knowledge, skills and attitudes are developed and honed in a way that cannot be achieved by independent self-study, reading or being told about concepts and content. In this relationship, there are elements of teaching, administration, guidance and control.

The key people in the FI process are the student/s, the FI supervisor and the FI coordinator. The FI supervisor is crucial in this process and assumes the responsibility for the supervision of a student or groups of students during FI placement and for the tasks that the students need to complete (Pretorius, 2015). The administration of the FI programme is entrusted to the FI Coordinator who is often based within the HEI. Each of these role players contributes in the academic service-learning system that provides supervised learning opportunities for students to demonstrate understandings of the commitment, administrative responsibility and planning required in professional practice. These roles are explained in greater depth in the following paragraphs.

### **5.12.3 The course coordinator**

At the University of the Witwatersrand, the course co-ordinators holds overall administrative

responsibility for the courses Field Instruction in Social Work Practice and Social Work Theory and Practice. The role of the FI coordinator is the negotiation of FI placements and s/he undertakes overall monitoring of students' FI experience and learnings with the external supervisors. In addition, the course co-ordinator is the internal examiner for the field practice course. It is the responsibility of the course coordinators to arrange examination of the course at mid-year and at year-end (Smith & Dube, 2013). The course coordinator teaches aspects of FI skills to students at second year level.

#### ***5.12.4 The student***

The student is required to observe the working hours of the organisation and to notify their supervisor if they are unable to attend the FI placement agency. The students are responsible for arranging their own finances for transport to the agency (Smith & Dube, 2013) and this can pose a challenge to some students. During FI placement, the student is accountable to the FI supervisor and the course co-ordinator for the performance of their work.

#### ***5.12.5 The external supervisor***

The main role of external supervisors is to teach students intervention and assessment skills, reflection, ethics, and theory. Teaching students to develop skills of reflection is important and requires expertise, insight, and practice. This view is supported by the statement that "field instructors are first and foremost, educators with a unique and essential role to play in training social work students" (Knight, 2000, p. 199).

The supervisor plays a role in accommodating the special needs of students and on some occasions offers support to students. Other administrative tasks are to check the students' reports, observe skills, offer support and guidance, and conduct assessment and share expert knowledge regarding development of professional identity as a social worker. Greater understanding of the roles played by FI coordinators in helping students integrate theory with practice, especially in the area of meso practice, was regarded as helpful in informing the ongoing development of the course. Furthermore, the style, personality, rules, norms, and expectations set by the individual FI supervisor govern the relationship with the student and set the stage for the on-going interactions (Knight, 2000). Therefore, better insight into perceptions of supervisors is crucial.

Training and a manual is provided to FI supervisors before they meet their students. In the

manual, field placement is described as the creation of opportunities for students to observe people in their daily interactions, to reach out and contract appropriately with some of those who have been observed, and to develop relationships with those who have entered into a contract with the student (Pretorius, 2015). In this way students are able to experience and develop helping relationships of care and empathy with individuals and groups and thereby develop self-understanding and self-awareness. In addition students are encouraged to develop skills of reflection, integration of theory with practice and importantly in report writing. Additionally, FI develops the students' critical consciousness as they confront the issues of power, privilege, oppression, and disadvantage through their encounters in the South African community and their interactions with service users and providers (Smith & Dube, 2013).

While FI is an important and necessary component in the BSW degree, Strydom (2011) conducted a search of South African publications using the NEXUS database and found that there is a dearth of published research within the South African context on field education. Therefore this lack of research on FI in South Africa makes studying this area additionally valuable for South African social work education.

#### *5.12.6 Internal or external field instruction supervisors at the University of the*

#### *Witwatersrand*

The process of FI at the University of the Witwatersrand commences with the selection and screening of community based social service agencies, hospitals, and schools by the university course coordinator. The screenings consider placements that provide students with real world engagements and learning opportunities that allow students to integrate theory with practice.

When community-based organisations do not employ social workers or are unable to provide staff to supervise students on account of job-demands, then the university course coordinators make use of external supervisors who are recruited to mentor, train and guide students. Factors within the SA context that have resulted in fewer agency staff to train social work students are “policy changes, legislation and funding since 1994 that have placed greater pressure on social workers and welfare organisations to ensure productivity and

implementation of developmental services” (Strydom, 2011, p. 417). This suggests that the education and training of social work students is not seen as a priority area by social work agencies. In addition, while FI does play a valuable role in the educational development of students, this role is “seldom acknowledged ... and often (the few supervisors who do train) act voluntarily without the workload being adjusted” (Globerman & Bogo cited in Sewpaul, Osrhus, & Mhone, 2011, p. 416).

The challenge of a lack of internal agency supervisors has been overcome by the appointment of external supervisors who conduct group supervision with students at second year level especially. These external supervisors are chosen for their willingness and desire to educate students. In addition, the competition for placement opportunities in social work agencies in the Johannesburg area (as there are two large social work training institutions) has resulted in the use of public schools for placement, especially at second year level. The government schools do not employ social workers, and external supervisors are used for student supervision. The FI supervisors who were interviewed in this phase of the research study were all external supervisors recruited to provide supervision to second year students and received a small stipend from the University for these services, which in 2017 was R1170.00 per annum in South African Rand [ZAR]. These FI supervisors’ activities and costs differ compared to the study done by Zeira and Schiff (2009), at a university in Jerusalem who note that the costliest component of student training is supervision and that all students receive 90 minutes of supervision from a FI supervisor based on verbatim process recordings; this does not occur at the research site on account of a lack of finance.

Inherent challenges in the use of external supervisors are that they are not intimately acquainted with the organisations, and are not available to students while they engage in their practical tasks. Thus situated learning (Brown et al., 1989) through the process of legitimate peripheral participation is compromised as the students are unable to observe the performance skills of qualified social workers or sit in to observe these experienced professionals practice their art (Lave & Wenger, 2003). Methods used by external supervisors to overcome the lack of direct observation of FI include conducting impromptu site visits to the placement organisation to observe the student engaged in their meso practice tasks. However, there is another view that the student and educator do not need to be in the same physical space for observational learning to occur, but rather that technology can mediate so that there is supervision and guidance provided to ensure student learning. The use of skype, video

conferencing and forms of virtual reality are some ways of creatively using technology for learning. Because of the unequal landscape in South African HEIs, many have yet to use TEL to transform learning as a result of numerous factors such as poor access to the limited bandwidth speeds, and lack skills by students (Bozalek & Ng'ambi, 2015).

#### ***5.12.7 The use of Exit Level Outcomes (ELOs) in Field Instruction***

The assessment criteria used for evaluation of FI for the BSW degree were devised by the South African Council for Social Service Professions, the Council for Higher Education and the South African Qualifications Authority, and apply to all accredited training institutions. There are 19 of the 27 ELOs that apply to FI, which students are expected to be proficient in on completion of the degree (Pretorius, 2013; Smith & Dube, 2013). Criticism of the teaching of FI in terms of the ELOs is that these outcomes emphasise the need for compliance and conformity (Simpson, 2010) which results in a lack of critical action, as it “does not fit nicely into a box, or on a standardised list of tasks and skills that can be assessed and ticked off within rigid and constrained time frames” (Sewpaul et al., 2011, p. 400). These authors correctly point out that, while the ELOs have standardised the degree, these outcomes contribute to an:

*undermining of the transformative process and making emancipatory education in the classroom futile, in addition other factors like bureaucratic controls, imposition of managerialist and evidence-based-based practice which are inconsistent with participatory, student-centered, inclusive approaches to teaching and learning* (Sewpaul et al., 2011, p. 400).

Another challenge encountered in FI is that educators tend to be removed from the field experience at ground level and FI supervisors take greater accountability for field supervision. Sewpaul et al. (2011) advocate for a pedagogical strategy aimed at linking micro-community-educational methodologies to theories of social change based on the integrative processes of action, critical reflection, theoretical knowledge and participatory community-based practice and research. The experiences from University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in the Social Work Department, indicate that such emancipatory practices that cascade from the classroom to the field settings are often “messy, complex and chaotic” (Sewpaul et al, 2011, p. 402) and require student social workers to give up the identity of the expert and become willing to trust the capacities of the people at grassroots level.

Furthermore, the use of ELOs was introduced recently, and some agency supervisors may have been trained a long time ago, and therefore not been exposed to emancipatory education theory or practices; this may therefore push students into traditional moulds of professionalism (Sewpaul et al., 2011, p. 401). The use of external supervisors appointed by the university can be seen to overcome this challenge, as these supervisors are knowledgeable about the ELOs and are aware of the students' training requirements.

#### ***5.12.8 The participant Field Instruction supervisors in this study***

Table 5 introduces some of the demographic characteristics of the FI supervisors.

**Table 5: Demographics of Field Instruction Supervisors**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Lee</b>	<b>Ann</b>	<b>Richard</b>	<b>Nkosi</b>
<b>Institution at which employed</b>	Sophiatown Counselling	St Peters Child Care	Johannesburg Child Welfare	Johannesburg Child Welfare
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female	Male	Male
<b>Race</b>	White	Black	Black	Black
<b>Age</b>	58	34	29	29
<b>Years of practice</b>	20	9	5	5
<b>Years supervising students</b>	7	9	2	2
<b>No. of students supervised</b>	47	25	8	13
<b>No. of students - 2013</b>	10	9	5	8
<b>Group supervision</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Place</b>	Interviewer's office	Interviewer's office	Coffee shop	Coffee shop
<b>Date of interview</b>	24 July	13 July	31 July	31 July
<b>Duration</b>	53 minutes	29 minutes	39 minutes	30 minutes

The four FI supervisors were purposely selected as they had more than one year of experience in supervising second year students conducting meso practice, and indicated a willingness to share their experiences in the form of a one-on-one interview. The FIs in the study included two males and two females who ranged in ages from 29-58 years. They were external supervisors with between two and seven years of experience. In 2013, the FIs individually supervised between five and ten students respectively, through a process of

group supervision. The ideal number for a group is between five and seven (Corey, Corey & Corey, 2013) but as a result of large class sizes and limited external supervisors, only one of the supervisors interviewed had a group of eight students. The supervisors had between five and twenty years of practice experience as registered social workers. The interviews were conducted in venues that were suitable for the participants and lasted between thirty minutes and fifty-three minutes.

### ***5.12.9 Teaching and learning in Field Instruction***

Social work students' learning is enhanced when they actively participate in learning through questioning, debating and sharing of their fears and uncertainties (Botha, 2002; Mcdermott & Campbell, 2015). Students who become active participants in developing their skills, values and knowledge are better able to achieve their learning outcomes and develop professional practice skills (Fortune, Lee, & Cavazos, 2007). As teaching of social work students is the common thread, there are some areas of overlap regarding the traits possessed by an effective educator/lecturer and a field instructor. These traits include being supportive and providing prompt and instructive feedback that allows students to develop an "autonomous and self-critical" professional identity (Knight, 2000, p. 174) so that they can seamlessly integrate theory with practice. The teaching style adopted by the FI supervisors seems to favour a participatory, student-centred approach.

*Ok, mainly I try to make it as participatory as possible 'cause I have realised I can actually know more about their challenges and get to know more about their strengths, areas of improvement if I allow them to participate. I allow them [the students] to share how they feel towards the experience that they are getting through this practice. In this way I can prompt them and I can find out more information about what they are really going through. (Richard, 2013)*

Another supervisor, Nkosi, indicated that he too used a similar style to Richard's and said:

*I am a fan of the Paulo Freire's teaching methods, so basically during our supervision sessions I try to make it look like a dialogue to be to be an interactive session per say, so ya basically they will ask me questions about whatever that they are not clear with uh in the field and then I respond to those questions and then we also get the views of the fellow students (okay) ja so basically I do a lot of group supervision. (Nkosi. 2013)*

Lee, (2013) noted that her teaching style requires “*Participation, umm-probably from the students*”. She equated her teaching style to that of a mentor describing her supervisory role as such: “*part of it is mentoring and obtaining information from them about what they are having difficulty with and asking questions that are geared toward giving direction to where they are at*” (Lee, 2013).

Another FI supervisor described the way she interacts with students to create a learning space

*Ah yoh each student is different, but then there are some of them that in the beginning - as a supervisor it becomes too much - you look at the children and you feel drained. The level of dependency and the lack of confidence whereby they don't think they can do this, ... they have never had to run a group before and now here is a situation. So now what I do before I give them a contract or whatever, I prepare them. Then I say guys come with questions, come with your worries, don't worry about it. Even if I don't have answers we can go think about it ....* (Ann, 2013)

These comments are an indication of how the supervisors make use of social constructivist pedagogy (teaching by doing and questioning) in the group supervision sessions. Some of their comments also show how their teaching complements some of the authentic learning principles of student-centeredness and group work. The affordances of group supervision are that students can “acquire new skills and develop their professional identity by watching and learning from peers” (Zeira & Schiff, 2009. p. 2). The supervisors were able to verbalise, creating open, safe and collaborative communication spaces when working with students.

#### **5.12.10      *The role played by the external supervisor***

In the interviews conducted, the various roles of supervisors were noted including: mentor, guide, supporter and administrator. The role of administrator seems to be important as the supervisors need to set boundaries and ensure that students are aware of what is expected of them. In this regard, supervisors are accountable and need to ensure fair assessment practices, which include the keeping of a register, and providing feedback on reports submitted.

The overarching role of a supervisor was seen as a person who can support and enhance student practice learning and introduce students to the process of supervision within social work. In second year students undergo supervision for the first time.

*[T]his is the first experience of supervision [for students] and is an opportunity to educate them about what supervision is about so that they understand that it has several roles, is obviously an administrative role in terms of accountability. But also has an educative role and a support role. (Lee, 2013)*

Similarly Richard notes that a supervisor plays the role of both an educator and supporter and says:

*The supervisor should be able to identify the challenges that the student is experiencing and should be able to assist the student to address those challenges. At times you should be able to identify the strongholds or the strengths of that particular student and be able to buttress those strengths, erm erm so you should also be able to offer emotional support because it can be very, very emotional because they are still learning how to integrate theory, specifically the ethics of social work and the principles of social work. (Richard, 2013)*

Moreover, as aptly captured by Lee, a supervisor must believe in the students and should have a “good theoretical understanding as well, and set high expectations of the students, and provides feedback and knows when to give a student a nudge” (Lee, 2013). This comment highlights the student-centred nature of good supervision.

Thus, it is noted that the process of supervision does have significant value to the student as it acts as a sounding board to clear up misconceptions, and is a platform to seek advice and guidance within the small-group-learning setting. A supervisor commented on the situated nature of the learning (Brown et al., 1989) by stating that during group supervision, students are able to learn by seeing supervisors and peers use effective communication skills within the supervision process. In addition, the use of selective self-disclosure and examples from the supervisor’s bank of experience, contributes to student learning. As Nkosi notes: “*I think they [the students] benefit a lot from the experience that I have acquired over the years of er practice*”. A point that is reinforced by Richard who says “*my conduct towards them [the students] it really teaches a lot on what is expected of them that we must be professional*”.

It is clear that the educational foundation of supervision is at the core of the process whereby supervisors are able “to educate by applying various methods, ... share[ing] relevant perceptions and experiences [that offer] support in a correct and professional manner” (Botha, 2002, p. 103). This was evident in the descriptions provided in the interviews with

these supervisors.

### **5.12.11      *Attributes of a good Field Instruction supervisor***

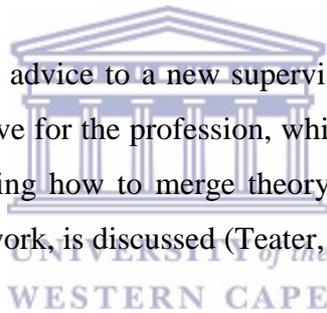
Supervisors interviewed were very student-focused and noted that the attributes of a good FI supervisor are multi-layered. This is a selection of the attributes that were noted.

#### ***Enjoyment of Teaching***

External supervisors are carefully selected by the course coordinator and should be a person who is a good educator with a passion for teaching as is articulated by Ann who says:

*... it [supervision] can get frustrating at some points (laughs) so I think you need to have a passion for teaching and also for the profession in general; it's not the easiest I have to deal with issues at my agency now I have to supervise. It needs to be something I do love .... (Ann, 2013)*

Nkosi says that he will begin his advice to a new supervisor by saying, *“It is good to be a social worker”* thus noting the love for the profession, which is an important attribute. In the next section, the aspect of teaching how to merge theory with practice, which is key in a practicing profession like social work, is discussed (Teater, 2011).



#### ***Teaching students' integration of theory and practice***

As was noted earlier, the main focus of field instruction is “to connect the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting” (Council for Social Work Education, 2008, p. 8). This is an area with which many students struggle, especially during second year, as this is the first time students’ work directly with clients/ service users.

*... learn what is expected of them, you know how to put theory into practice which is actually the most important; [he goes on to add students struggle to integrate theory into practice] and it's also one of the most difficult thing is they come with raw information as is written in the text but they don't really know how to put it into practice. (Richard, 2013)*

Nkosi (2013) concurred with the view that was expressed by Richard and said, *“they fail to bridge the gap between theory and practice”*. Thus, being able to help students learn to make

connections between what they do and the content provided on how to conduct meso practice is an important consideration when designing the course, and conducting field work.

### ***Being flexible***

The FI supervisors stressed the need to be both flexible and adaptable to meet the unique requirements and strengths of the entire group, while still being able to offer individual emotional support. Adjustment to university requires skill, balance and self-management of time, roles and responsibilities on the part of students; therefore supervisors need to be aware of the student's context. Richard says:

*But you see flexibility is key, umm a field instruction supervisor should be able to identify the challenges that the er student is experiencing and should be able to assist the student to address those challenges. (Richard, 2013)*

In addition, when Richard was asked what advice he would give to a new supervisor, he returned to the aspect of flexibility and had this to say:

*understand the dynamics of being a student and the pressure that is involved if you have to go to the agency, you have to submit these reports; you have to prepare for the exams. The kind of pressure that they go through and probably more so because they have a social life hey [laughs] it really impacts on the quality of work they produce at the end of the day so I would ask them to be as flexible as they can. I mean you have to learn to bend if you are not to break err you really have to be very flexible and you really have to be able to understand the level of development, the stage of development where they are in order for you to impact on them effectively and even to impart knowledge on them effectively. (Richard, 2013)*

This quote once more suggests the need to view students holistically from a personal, social and cultural perspective. In relation to describing the attributes of a good FI supervisor, a key feature of supervision - administration is discussed.

### ***Being a good administrator***

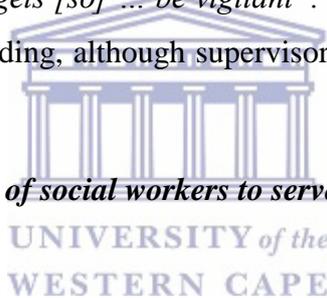
Management skills are necessary to keep track of the face-to-face supervision and the review and marking of the various pieces of work students submit. During field instruction, students

develop a proposal for meso practice, which includes a complete set of written recordings which can either be verbatim or condensed, so that these recordings reflect the group intervention. These reports are submitted for assessment, with all other written reports and relevant documents pertaining to the group and its members. In addition, the students complete a progress report at midyear and a summary report on completion of the group. These documents form part of the assessment process that includes a discussion between the student, course coordinator and supervisor (Pretorius, 2013; Smith & Dube, 2013). Thus the supervisor needs to monitor students' progress and provide timeous feedback and follow-up on students that default.

*Supervision has an administrative side but there is also a learning side ... therefore it is important to give feedback and sometimes to give difficult feedback.*  
(Lee, 2013)

She adds “... students are not angels [so] ... be vigilant”. These comments are an indication that student supervision is demanding, although supervisors added the value that supervision provided them.

**5.12.12 Motivation of social workers to serve as field instruction (FI) supervisors**



While supervision is designed to benefit the student, FI supervisors saw the process as being mutually beneficial:

*I also gain a lot, because there are a lot of modern theories that I was not exposed to when I went to school and then now the students will come up with new recent social work material right, so basically I take it as a learning process as well just so that I learn something new from them, right, then I go. (Nkosi, 2013)*

Bogo, Globerman, and Sussman (2004, p. 3) found that supervisors who choose to supervise, do so because of “intrinsic factors such as enjoying teaching, contributing to the profession and professional development”. Supervision provides a method of ensuring that the activities and interventions of the students are monitored and evaluated against the social work standards.

*I will actually, group the University and the profession as a whole, actually-*

*supervision actually ensures that there is an element of quality control that the university actually breeds fully fledged social work graduates who would then not struggle when they go into the field, because they [the students] have been exposed to the field. (Nkosi, 2013)*

The next section considers some of the challenges experienced by the FI supervisors.

### **5.12.13 Challenges encountered by supervisors**

The following are some of the challenges that were experienced by supervisors regarding FI. Firstly, meeting times and actual contact between students and FI supervisors were seen as problematic in light of the pressure of work and studies:

*We [students and supervisors] are not able to meet on a regular basis, there is a lot of pressure because they do internships, they [the students] are attending classes and tutorials so it becomes a major challenge for some of them to meet the deadlines and for us to meet for supervision. (Nkosi, 2013)*

Furthermore, the use of group supervision was seen as a challenge, as supervisors are unable to directly observe the students in practice, and are not able to obtain a complete *snapshot* of the actual session. Group supervision is the mode of choice at the University of the Witwatersrand, and supervisors see between seven to twelve second year students at a time.

*Umm I think that would also pose as a challenge because it's not, they do not actually report all the information even though they try to come up with verbatim records of what they discussed in the reports. I somehow get the feeling that some of the things are summarised and a might not necessarily be the actual goings on that happen during that interview with that particular client in a group or in an individual session, I think the fact that I am not always able to go there and see them actually conduct the group session. (Richard, 2013)*

In this instance, the creative use of technology especially the use of video and audio recordings of the actual sessions could provide the FI supervisors with a more trustworthy account of what occurred in the session with the client, and will result in better guidance on the process; however these methods are not used.

#### **5.12.14 Problems at placement agencies**

Schools were used as the primary setting for second year students to conduct meso practice. Schools were regarded as a rigid placement setting for students on account of the system of timetabling which leaves little time for students to conduct meso practice; furthermore, teachers misunderstand the role of the student.

*... I find most teachers are not accommodating of second-year students because they [the students] are not doing counselling. The teachers don't understand preventing and promoting stuff - they want to send a child with problems, that child needs counselling. So in a school environment because teachers are also busy and they have to follow a timetable and if there is no aftercare that all can destroy the student's self- confidence and that yah - what do you call it - the enthusiasm when they start. I see it deteriorating especially the ones that are placed at schools. (Ann, 2013)*

Nevertheless, with increasing class sizes of social work students and the limited number of school social workers in government school, and placement opportunities for training, there is a need to constantly refine the placements at school by improving links with the Department of Education. Another area that supervisors were asked about was their use of technology in field instruction.

#### **5.12.15 Use of technology enhanced learning (TEL)**

Supervisors were asked how they use technology. All the supervisors interviewed used technology mainly in the form of emails to disseminate information to students and to send students feedback on their reports. As Richard reported in the interview, *"I send them [the students] journal articles through emails"*. One supervisor made use of social media by creating a WhatsApp group to communicate with students. Supervisor, Ann saw the use of technology as a medium to communicate and to support the students she supervised. The other FI supervisors relied on more traditional methods of communication such as face-to-face sessions. However, email communication was used extensively and feedback on social work reports were written using MS Word and its Track Changes application. There was no use made of the learning management system by the FI supervisors. Supervisors can be added on the learning management system with their external email addresses. Some of the supervisors saw the value that technology could have if students could send them sound bites

of their group sessions, but none had considered implementing this method.

### **5.13 Limitations of the Study in Phase 2**

The study does not consider the views of internal FI supervisors, and their perceptions may have provided a different perspective on how an agency that trains students functions. Also the views of the students associated with engagement in field instruction were not considered, as it is an area is to be looked at in Phase 3 of this study. Furthermore, asking students about the attributes of a good FI supervisor would be helpful, and is an area of future research. A limitation of the study is that the practitioners may have chosen to provide socially desirable responses, as they were aware that I am a member of staff at the Department of Social Work.

### **5.14 Summary of the Findings**

#### ***5.14.1 Similarities and differences between the practitioners***

Similarities between educators and FI supervisors were their passion and desire to teach and facilitate the integration between theory and practice, so that students can develop their professional practice skills. Another aspect shared between the two groups was the moderate use of technology, with some participants in both groups feeling more comfortable to use technology than others. The educators and the supervisors were able to acknowledge student differences, while the supervisors were in a better a position to form more meaningful relationships with the students, through the use of group supervision; FI supervisors also offered support to students at a personal and professional level.

Both educators and supervisors saw the value of using real world examples for teaching. These practitioners were also able to provide role model behaviours appropriate to the profession. Implications for course design are to facilitate opportunities for students to work in small groups, as well as to use real world examples, so that students are able to see the link between theory and practice.

#### ***5.14.2 Lessons Learnt***

Nevertheless some of the lessons learnt from phase two, and the implications for course design are as follows:

- All the field instruction supervisors at second year level are external supervisors who conduct group supervision, as it is too costly to conduct individual supervision with

students. While this is not ideal, group supervision creates opportunities for students to learn from each other.

- Practitioners acknowledged the need to consider issues of diversity within the HEI environment and the meso practice method was used at one HEI to facilitate first year students' adjustment to the HEI space.
- An educator, Nick described students were recognised to take more than regulation time to complete their studies. These comments suggest that course design would need to scaffold content for students, and incorporate activities that encourage learning and reflection. At the same time, consideration will be given to the similarities that students share.
- The class sizes are large, with educators teaching between 33 and 311 students in a meso practice class. The size of classes requires use of creative solutions to support students' learning, through the considered use of TEL and tutorials to create multiple platforms for communication amongst the educator and the students. Hornsby and Osman, (2014, p. 717) suggest that methods to support teaching and learning within large classes flourish when educators "privilege student learning in their pedagogical designs", which is a central aspect of authentic learning.
- The FI supervisors indicated that the use of schools as sites for students to conduct meso practice can be challenging, as students need to conduct promotive groups at schools without onsite supervision. Students need to have a level of competency in meso practice skills before they commence conducting groups at these placements.
- The practitioners noted that student demonstrated difficulty "to bridge the gap between theory and practice" (Nkosi, 2013). It was suggested that students need to understand better how aspects of theory are related to practice. The redesigned course should therefore include activities that assist students to make better links between theory and practice such as the use of experiential learning methods.
- The practitioners suggest that teaching of meso practice and FI placements should emulate what students will encounter in professional practice; this requires that students are confronted with real world, complex and messy problems to develop the required social work skills.

## 5.15 Conclusion

Phase two of this study provided greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of current meso practice teaching and field work as well the opportunities in the meso practice setting, and guidelines that can be used when redesigning the course. It made me aware of the characteristics and the attributes that are valuable for practitioners in conducting meso practice. It was clear that different practitioners brought their own lived experiences and passion to their teaching.

This chapter shows how the objectives that were set for this phase, noted in section 5.1 of Chapter Five were achieved. The data suggests that student collaboration, reflection, well-chosen activities and the use of technology enhanced learning are assets that could be further engaged in course design. Challenges noted included the lack of indigenous content material on group work, and the poor use of technology which could be used to a greater extent to support skills development and strengthening of meso practice education.

Evidence from the interviews with the practitioners suggested the potential value of authentic learning: for example, this could take the form of designing activities that give students the experience of being a group, (as described by educator Rene), and it suggests ways to strengthen these aspects in the redesigned meso practice course. Thus opportunities for course design that incorporate the elements of authentic learning and the use of diverse real world activities will be considered.

Chapter Six provides an understanding of the contents of the course and how the learning management system was designed to support the incorporation of the elements of authentic learning.

## CHAPTER 6 - THE DESIGN OF THE MESO PRACTICE COURSE

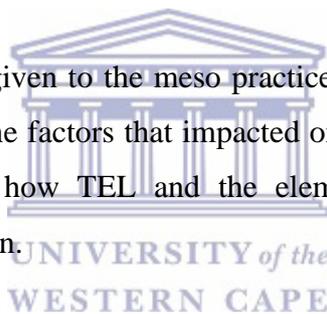
*... education participates in crucial social and cultural movements that are of considerable significance around multiple relations of differential power.*

*There is hope.*

Apple, 2014, p, xvi

### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, consideration is given to the meso practice course and how it was designed. Aspects that are considered are the factors that impacted on the design of the course, the use of the LMS called Sakai, and how TEL and the elements of authentic learning were incorporated into the course design.



Since 2009, I have taught the meso practice course undertaken by second year undergraduate social work students, and in this time, there have been multiple iterations of the course. The first offering in 2009 was taught without use of TEL, and without explicit understanding of the elements of authentic learning. The course approach largely followed a didactic style of lecturing, supported by the use of PowerPoint slides. However, as the course evolved through the years, TEL was introduced, with an experiential style of teaching, making use of small class-groups for teaching. Further iterations included the design of the course incorporating some of the elements of authentic learning.

During the implementation period in 2015, the LMS was upgraded and this new version had various *bugs* in the system that were never resolved. These limitations of the LMS posed some challenges for students, and also limited the ability to collect important learning analytics data (University of the Witwatersrand, 2016b). In February 2017, I was still unable to retrieve all the learning analytics and statistical data, which was to have formed an

important source of information for the final analysis. As a result, I have had to complete the data analysis without this valuable information.

## 6.2 Factors that Have Influenced the Design of the Meso Practice Course in 2015

The 2015 iteration of the meso practice course has been influenced by my prior experiences of teaching the course, the literature review that was conducted as part of Phase 1 of the study focusing on meso practice education and authentic learning, and the views of the practitioners from Phase 2 of the study. This cumulative knowledge guided me to develop the 2015 iteration of the course according to the following design principles:

- *Authentic activities provide the opportunity to collaborate*

Students should be divided into groups to develop meso practice skills. Courses should be designed so that opportunities are created for students to collaborate and share ideas and information (Lave & Wenger, 2003; Herrington et al., 2010). Activities should be designed to facilitate the development of rapport and group cohesion, both in face-to-face and online spaces (Corey, et al., 2010, Rourke, et al., 2001).

- *Real world relevance*

The groups of students should choose a social condition about which they are interested and motivated to learn more, from within the South African context. In this way the social condition is part of the South African context, enabling students feel an emotional attachment or connection to their complex task (Rule, 2006).

- *Authentic activities provide the opportunity to develop skills in social work*

Students need to develop social work skills, ethics and values that prepare them for practice. Courses should be designed to foster discipline-specific professional values and make use of real world examples. Experiential learning and role play should be used to allow students to engage and perform in class. Students learn about meso practice while working in a group and are inducted into the profession of social work (Wenger, 2006).

- *Authentic activities provide the opportunity to reflect*  
Diversity in the learning environment should be appreciated, and opportunities for developing reflection in students should be included. Students should be engaged in activities that facilitate critical reflection and link this type of reflection to the discipline specific values of being a reflective practitioner in social work. Students should be encouraged to pay attention to both reflection in and on the process (Schön, 2011). When using deep reflection, the role played by emotion should be acknowledged. Safe spaces in the learning environment should be created.
- *Authentic activities provide opportunities for creative problem-solving*  
Course design should consider the needs of individual students despite class sizes being large. The course should allow for problem-solving creativity and flexibility and allow students to make their own paths to finding solutions (Herrington et al., 2010).
- *Authentic activities are conducive to communication and learning*  
The educator should encourage debate, articulation and role modelling by the educator and the students (Herrington et al., 2010; Wenger, 1998; Zeman & Swanke, 2008). The educator should allow for conflict and encourage students not take criticism personally.
- *Authentic activities should be examined from different perspectives*  
Students should have access to multiple platforms and resources that include TEL. These multiple perspectives allow for competing solutions and diversity of outcomes, thus encourage flexibility and acknowledgement of the views of group members (Brown et al., 1989; Herrington et al., 2010).
- *An authentic task is ill-defined and complex*  
A meso practice course should include multiple activities, role-play and experiential learning and students should have the opportunity to choose their learning path and their own topic and take ownership of their own learning and the learning of their members (Herrington et al., 2010; Vygotsky, 1978).
- Course design should be informed by sound pedagogical theory (Herrington, et al,

2010). The educator should have passion and knowledge of the subject and infuse this knowledge of the subject in teaching, while making explicit to students the reasons for course design strategies.

These factors were infused into the 2015 course design on meso practice.

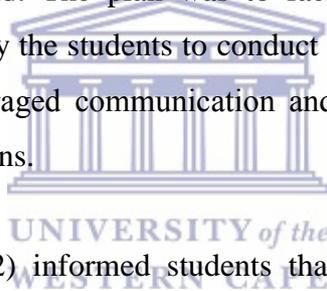
### **6.3 Method of Course Delivery**

The course was designed to provide a collaborative and interactive learning environment for students using PLA techniques, the Sakai LMS and face-to-face interaction. There were synergies created between the field instruction course and this course, through close collaboration and communication with the educator responsible for the field instruction (FI) course. Students' experience and existing knowledge was acknowledged and utilised where possible. Teaching and learning took place through lectures, class discussions, synchronous and asynchronous discussions and presentations. The course incorporated TEL using the Sakai platform for discussion forums, YouTube videos and links to relevant sites. Students were requested to make use of the discussion forum and links to the internet. Discussion forum posts were expected to include insightful comments, personal views and references around issues that are relevant. It was recommended to the students that when posting and replying to comments on the discussion forum, they should reflect on and make reference to at least two other posts made by other class members.

The educator made explicit the expectations she had of the students in this course, such as compulsory attendance, since social work is a professional degree and requires students to participate in all learning activities. In addition, students were advised to take responsibility for their own learning, to read beyond the information presented in the course pack and to engage in the discussion forum and online activities. In addition to this, posts on social media platforms were required to conform to the principles and ethics of social work. Therefore content and language used by student social workers on social media platforms should be “professional and socially appropriate” (Kirst-Ashman, 2010, p. 36). As much of the course required students to work in groups, it was suggested that students develop their own contract amongst group members, as well as to allocate tasks and work in a cooperative and collaborative manner.

In designing the course, I stressed to the students the importance of the application and integration of knowledge and skills acquired in meso practice. I also encouraged students to engage in reflection on the content and process of this course, and designed activities such as the completion of weekly reflection forms and journals. Methods used to encourage these outcomes included encouragement of active engagement in face-to-face and online discussion, short written exercises, extensive reading and role-play in classroom simulations. Assessment of student understanding was ongoing, and conducted at various points in the course. I had an open door policy, and encouraged students to consult with me either in person or electronically.

I also shared my teaching philosophy with the students. For me, learning is an ongoing process and the elements of authentic learning make it possible to consider how meso practice occurs in the real world. The plan was to facilitate the development of skills, knowledge and values required by the students to conduct their own group in the next block, at local public schools. I encouraged communication and foregrounded students' input as critical to class group work sessions.



The course outline (Appendix 2) informed students that the intention was to make the learning environment open and transparent, horizontal rather than hierarchical. There was also an expressed sensitivity to diversity and dynamics in the classroom situation. The meso practice course had both theoretical and applied (field instruction/internship) components that students needed to explore beyond the classroom. The course was designed to assist students to develop skills required in the world of work, more particularly, three fundamental skills: critical thinking; lifelong learning abilities and problem-solving strategies. The course was designed to build on the platform of shared-knowledge, experience, skills and attitudes, which were encouraged through cooperation, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. To this end, I used the Sakai LMS as a tool for learning.

The group task involved students being informed that they needed to imagine they were in the world of work, and that they had been assigned the task of researching a topic which was related to group work, that they regarded as relevant within the South African context. They were then required to develop a small group experience around this social condition and relate it to meso practice.

The following were the instructions given to the students regarding the group assignment:

*Imagine that you and the members of your group are based in a community-based organisation (CBO) and you have uncovered a specific social problem that you would like to investigate and plan a meso practice intervention. In conducting this intervention, show why you chose this social condition and how it relates to the community. Discuss aspects of relevance on the discussion forum (DF) and explain to the management of the CBO, why people with this social condition can benefit from a meso practice intervention. Develop a PowerPoint showing the relevance of this project. Conduct the meso practice sessions around this social condition in the classroom ensuring that, different class members assume the role of the group leader during the different weeks. Based on these sessions show your own reflection and the plans for the next sessions, explain the roles played by each of the members and the challenges that were encountered.*

*Allocate tasks to members; share resources on the LMS; conduct ice-breakers; look at developing a contract and rules of engagement.*



Students were advised that they were required to jointly allocate tasks to group members and that individual members should have agreed with the tasks given. The task schedule of each of the members was to be included in the final submission, as well as weekly progress reports. Group member had to develop and sign a group contract. Furthermore, all group members should have been allocated at least one task that would contribute 50% towards the summative assessment of this course. When completing the assignment, a relevant social work theory should have been used as well as reflections on the “small group experience that occurred in face-to-face and online spaces”. Suggested sub-headings of the assignment could have been the following:

- 1. The social condition the group had been set up around.*
- 2. The group dynamics and collaboration of members in class.*
- 3. The behaviour of performing and non-performing members, making use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of group members.*
- 4. The manner in which conflict was managed.*
- 5. The use of activities and icebreakers.*
- 6. The use of reflective diary entries.*

7. *The use of online group discussions.*
8. *The challenges and successes experienced.*
9. *The recommendations and learning for future students taking this course.*

Students were required to include the following artefacts as annexures to the group assignment:

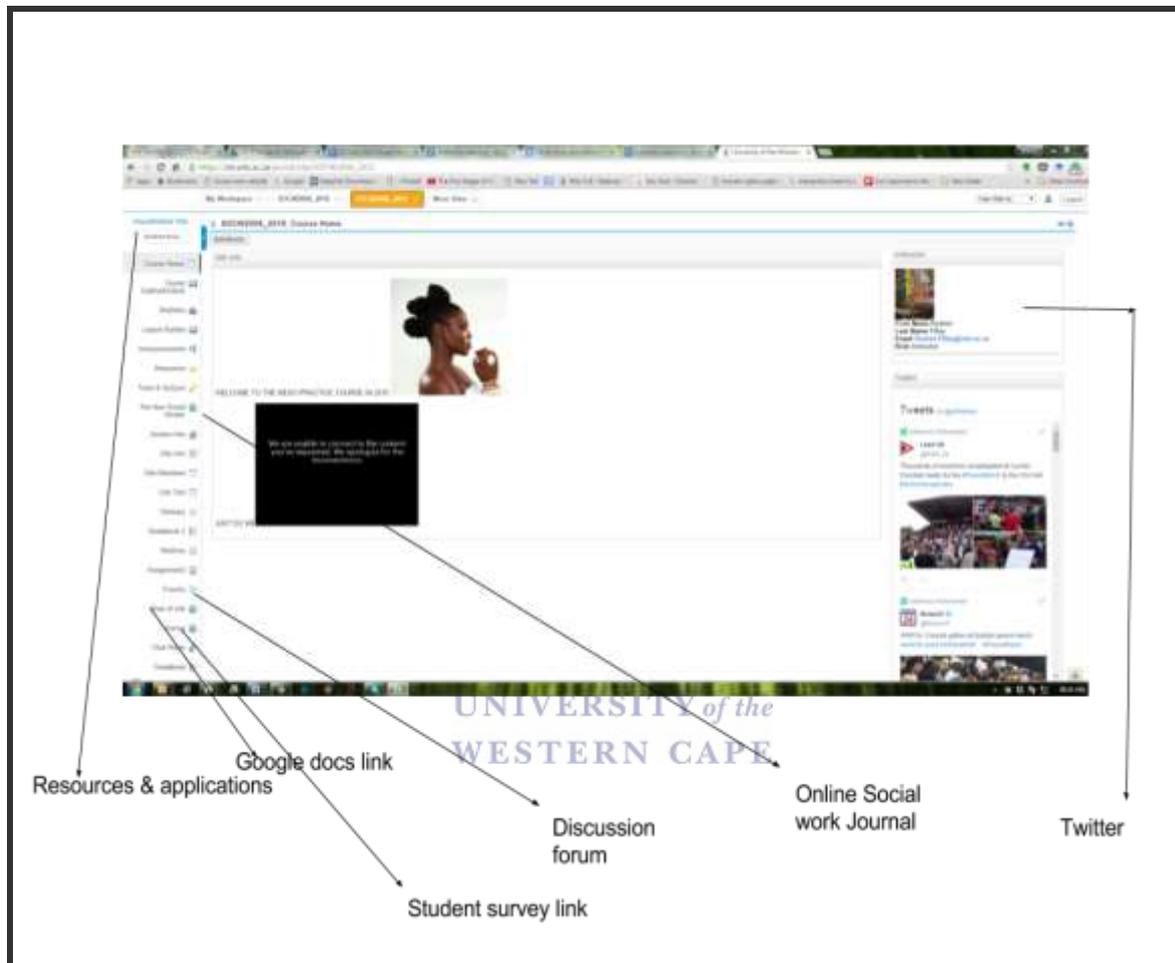
- *Group attendance register with letters from members regarding absence so as to develop professional behaviour required in the world of work.*
- *The group contract, weekly evaluation reports and task schedule.*
- *Ten discussion forum posts that best represented the activity of the group.*
- *A group assessment rating of individual members based on criteria developed by the group rating score, 5 = excellent; 1 = poor.*
- *PowerPoint slides of the group presentation.*
- *A photograph of the group poster that had been created.*
- *An activity log of the group sessions conducted.*
- *The contents of a bag of tools for meso practice (items that can help you conduct meso practice, such as art and craft supplies).*
- *Rivers of Life drawings.*
- *PhotoVoice picture/s developed.*

In addition, the group assignment was to be written using an academic writing style including theory and real life examples to substantiate arguments. Based on the foregoing, the instructions on how to conduct the assignment was explicit but the methods to be used by the students to action these tasks were ill-defined, allowing students to create their own ways to complete the assignment.

#### **6.4 The Sakai LMS**

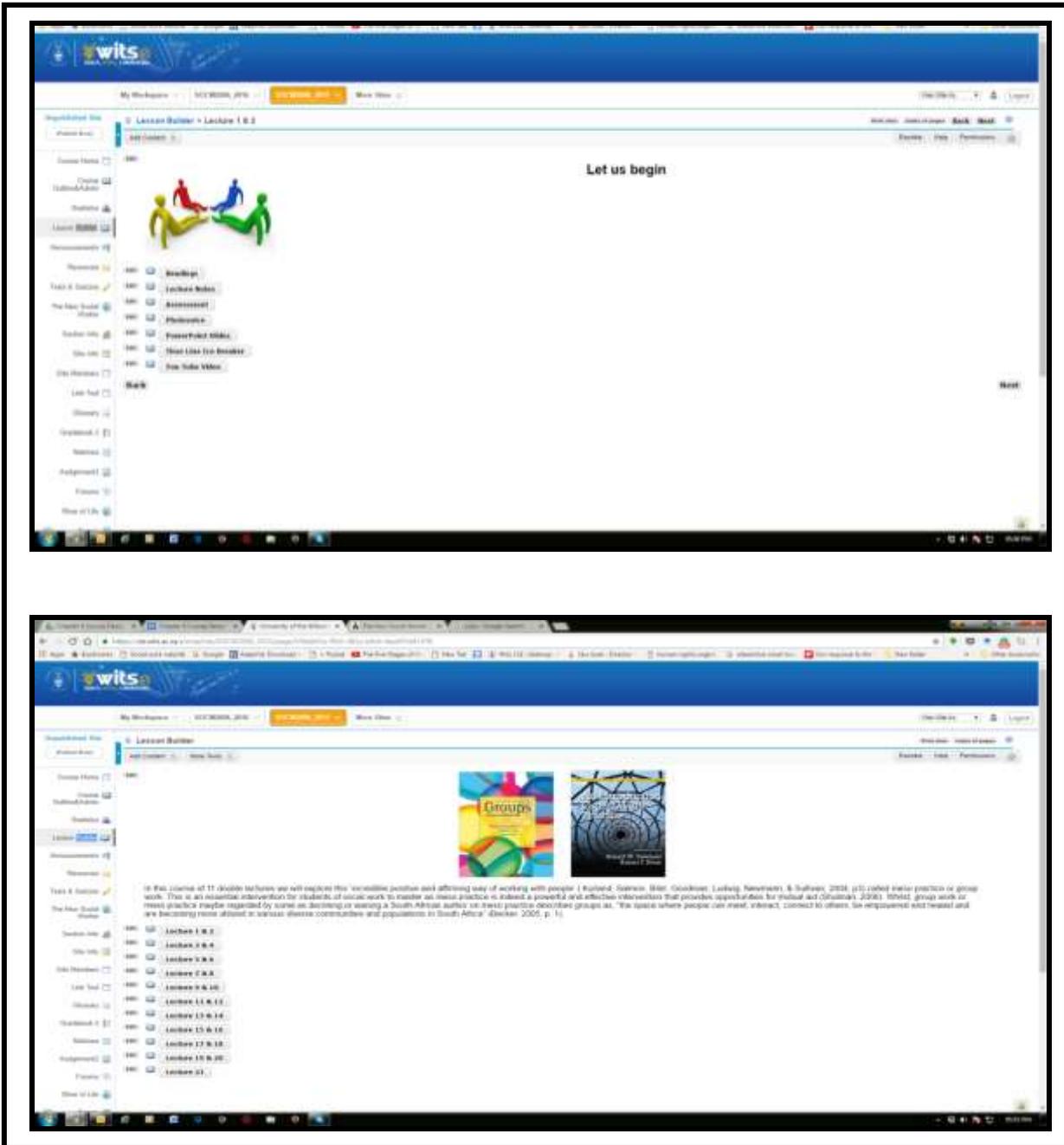
The design of the course for delivery via the LMS was undertaken by the researcher in consultation with an instructional designer, based at the University of the Witwatersrand eLearning, Support and Innovation (eLSI) Unit. Figure 6 is a screenshot of the meso practice course homepage. The aim of developing this site was to expose students to a wide range of online technologies that would be beneficial to their learning. The learning management

system provided safe closed space for students and the educator to engage in, and store and share information. The home page had a link to additional resources such as an online social work journal. Other links on the homepage were to the course outline and course content, lecture PowerPoint slides and videos. Other links were for announcements, discussion forum posts, a chat room and quizzes.



**Figure 6: Screenshot of resources on the LMS**

Figure 6 is a screenshot, one is able to see the various tools or applications that were part of the course, which includes a link to a Google Group for students to post their River of Life pictures as well as the use of the discussion forum and a link to the educator’s Twitter stream. The black rectangle is a link to the singer, India Arie’s YouTube video called, *Just do you*. The inspiring lyrics of this song were chosen used to motivate students to see their role in self-regulating their learning, and reflecting on the process. A quote from the lyrics from the song was “And if you just be You, There is no way you can lose”. These lyrics were incorporated into the course outline.

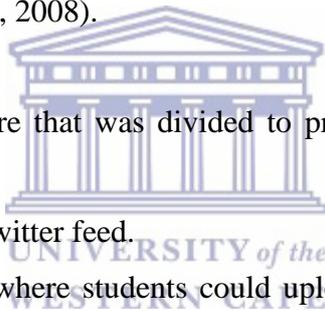


**Figure 7: Illustration of the folders and subfolders to scaffold information**

Figure 7 illustrates the design of a page that contains subfolders with content. The content placed on the LMS provided a rich complex learning environment. The resources included academic articles related to the subject of meso practice, and information on skills needed in

conducting meso practice. The multi-media resources were video clips, on teamwork, group work stages, and the use of icebreakers. The following were other features and content included within the LMS:

- A link to the course outline.
- A link to various terms with definitions related to the field of meso practice.
- A folder for each of the lectures which contained the PowerPoint slides, and additional information related to the lecture posted weekly.
- Interesting and relevant information on the significance of PhotoVoice projects and the development of visual autobiographies as well as the use of art in groups.
- An announcement feature.
- Information on how to use the LMS, for example how to post articles to the forum.
- A link created called *popcorn time*, which contained various funny but educational multimedia clips such as: *Wear Sunscreen* (Luhrmann, 2007) and Edward de Bono's *Six thinking hats* (de Bono, 2008).
- A chat room feature.
- A discussion forum feature that was divided to provide subspaces for the different class groups created.
- A link to the educator's Twitter feed.
- A link to Google Group where students could upload their Rivers of Life drawings and timelines.



The abovementioned items were just some of the features of the learning management system.

## **6.5 The Elements of Authentic Learning and their Influence in Course Design**

The elements of Authentic Learning were incorporated into the meso practice course in the following ways.

### **6.5.1 Real World-relevance**

An authentic learning task should have *real world relevance*, which is why the students were asked to choose a social condition that they were interested in, and which was relevant to the South African context. Allowing students to choose their own social condition was beneficial

as students were empowered and had agency in the type of social condition; this was designed to motivate them to explore the social conditions they chose, using multiple perspectives and considering the issue from different angles.

### **6.5.2 Multiple Perspectives**

The use of *multiple perspectives* is another element of authentic learning. In accordance with authentic learning principles, the task was designed to some extent to be ill-defined, and was dependent on the group members to consider which aspects of the social condition they could explore. Content placed on the LMS and engagement in the various tasks enabled students to see issues and information from various angles.

### **6.5.3 Authentic Activities**

Students were required to engage in *authentic activities* that were relevant to the workplace and the practice of social work: in so-doing, they were required to conduct some research, work with other members in teams, and explore their selected social condition without too many instructions. Students executed activities such as ice-breakers, as if they were conducting a meso practice group in the field with group members.

### **6.5.4 Expert Performances**

The *element of expert performances* was built into the course by providing students with access to multiple resources and videos, and many of these resources relating to group climate exercises, PhotoVoice, the library catalogue, and the use of social networks, were placed on the Sakai LMS. I also added a link to an online journal called the *New Social Worker* (Grobman, 1994). In addition, the final presentation of the project was made to a panel of judges, who provided expert feedback to students on their work.

### **6.5.5 Articulation**

*Articulation* was encouraged through the use of the discussion forum for sharing narrative stories within the small class groups, as well as at the tutorial sessions, where students could share their personal experiences and stories about the links they made with their chosen social

condition. In addition, groups had to develop a PowerPoint presentation on the social condition and on how their group functioned. Other activities that encouraged articulation were the use of the PhotoVoice project and the River of Life drawings.

#### **6.5.6 Collaboration**

*Collaboration* is a process by which individuals “negotiate and share meanings” (Roschelle & Teasley, 1995, p. 8). Inviting students to work in groups allowed them to collaborate to develop and improve understanding of the social condition while working on the group task. In meso practice, the process of working together and sharing group meanings is highly recommended, as it develops group cohesion (Corey et al., 2010). While students were collaborating, there were some activities that required cooperation, where individual members worked on their own and then contributed to the larger task; these activities occurred socially. In this way, students were able to learn how collaboration and cooperation contributed to fulfilment of the task.

The manner in which collaboration was encouraged in this course was in the following ways: firstly, the role of group leader was rotated amongst the group members of the sessions. The group leader was required to select and conduct relevant ice-breakers. At the end of the session the leader recorded all the aspects of group dynamics that occurred in the session. Secondly, students were asked to contribute to the discussion forums and share and add information. Thirdly, students were expected to meet and work outside of class-hours to engage in various activities such the PhotoVoice project. Fourthly, students met in tutorial groups and engaged in PLA activities such as the River of Life engaging across their differences, and in their commonalities.

#### **6.5.7 Reflection**

Developing skills in *reflection* and reflexivity are important in meso practice and within the BSW degree. Reflection, an element of authentic learning was encouraged, by asking students to keep a personal journal as well as to write down an evaluation of the group session when they acted as the group leader. These reports were then posted by the group leader on the LMS. In the group assignment, students were required to include three personal diary entry posts. In addition, at the end of the course, students were asked to reflect and

evaluate the entire course in a focus group, the student survey, as well as in their group assignment. A novel way, of encouraging students to reflect was asking them to write down the advice they would provide to future students taking the meso practice course.

#### ***6.5.8 Iteration and the Creations of a Polished Product***

The element of *iteration and the creation of a polished product* was built into the course, by giving students the opportunity to submit a draft of their assignment for formative feedback; this enabled me to assess the assignment and provide feedback indicating areas of strength and weakness.

#### ***6.5.9 Coaching and Scaffolding***

*Coaching and scaffolding* was achieved by creating various opportunities for students to consult with me individually and as a group; students could email me as well. I was an active presence on the discussion forum groups and participated in the classroom while the group activities were taking place, in order to offer suggestions and recommendations. After the classroom group work activities, I would invite the group leaders to share interesting aspects, and I used these as learning points. Figure 7 provides examples of how information was scaffolded on the LMS.

#### ***6.5.10 Integrated Assessment***

Integrated assessment is regarded as a type of authentic assessment that should mimic workplace practices (Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009) where people's performance is generally assessed on what they actually do in the day-to-day practice of their job role (Govaerts, Van de Wiel, Schuwirth, Van der Vleuten, & Muijtjens, 2013). In the assessment task, I arranged for students to conduct peer evaluations and invited other staff members from the Social Work Department to evaluate and provide feedback on their tasks, such as the presentation, poster and PhotoVoice slides depicting their project. The most common form of assessment in HE is the formal test; however, there was only one pen and paper test for the course. In Annexure P is the rubric for the presentation and annexure Q is the rubric used for the group assignment.

It is desirable that when conducting assessment that there are multiple measures of competencies that are related to how an activity is conducted within a real world setting (Drisko, 2014). Students were required to use multiple sources of information and evaluate the veracity of the sources that were used in the group assignment. While working on the authentic task students were required to demonstrate the ability to use professional values and make judgement relevant to social work.

### ***6.5.11 Technology Enhanced Learning***

TEL was incorporated into the course through the use of the Sakai LMS and Twitter, with the aim of encouraging communication between students and the educator. The discussion forums were a feature that allowed students to post, chat and debate on various aspects of the course (Pillay, & Alexander, 2015). A closed Google Group was set up for students to share their River of Life exercises. The course was designed to incorporate the various elements of authentic learning related to meso practice shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: The nine elements of authentic learning used in the course. Table adapted from Teras (2016)**

Elements of authentic learning	How they were used in the design
<b>Authentic context</b>	The environment was non-linear and included the development of a group assignment centred around a real world social condition that the students had chosen. The group were requested to collaborate on a discussion forum using a learning management system. Students also set up informal chat groups on Facebook and WhatsApp.
<b>Authentic task</b>	The course was designed to last seven weeks and aimed to introduce second year social work students to the concepts and skills in the use of meso practice interventions in the social work curriculum. Students worked in groups and conducted aspects of meso practice as they would in the field around a real world problem. A key aspect of an authentic task is that it should mimic the way activities are conducted in the real world. Each group was asked to choose a social condition within the South African context, for which a social worker could conduct a meso practice intervention. This social condition needed to be realistic in order to create an authentic learning

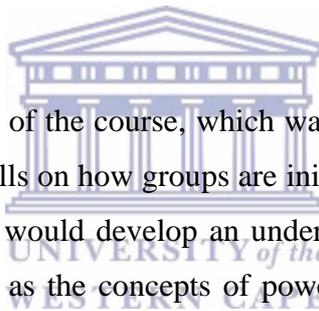
Elements of authentic learning	How they were used in the design
	environment. Authentic products were developed by students in the form of PowerPoint presentations, and PhotoVoice, which showed their experience of the course and the social condition.
<b>Access to expert performances and modelling of the processes</b>	The course was designed to encourage peer sharing of information, skills and activities. The course was designed to make it possible to network with outside experts, to conduct interviews and site visits, as well as independent reading and research. Readings and resources chosen were those that provided different perspectives. Students were given rubrics and exemplars of the group assignments as a further basis for modelling.
<b>Multiple perspectives</b>	Students were advised to use a variety of sources of information and many of these sources were posted on the discussion forum for all other student to access, comment on and add to.
<b>Collaborative construction of knowledge</b>	Students were divided into groups for the duration of the intervention. There were opportunities created for quality face-to-face and online discussions. There were small group discussions in class, with role-play, and there were also online discussion forums created on the Sakai LMS.
<b>Reflection</b>	There were various activities built into the course to promote reflection which included: the completion of a reflection form after a group session was conducted; the use of participatory learning and action techniques such as the development of a time-line and a River of Life. The discussion forum was another platform for reflection, as well as a section in the assignments where the groups had to reflect on the process of working together. In addition, each of the group members had to evaluate each other regarding their contribution to the group. Students were also encouraged to keep a journal of their experiences in the course. The survey, focus groups and the individual interviews were other opportunities for reflection.

Elements of authentic learning	How they were used in the design
<b>Articulation</b>	Students had opportunities to debate and share their views. In addition, students developed and presented a PowerPoint presentation, developed a poster and a PhotoVoice project that was presented to a panel of judges and class members.
<b>Scaffolding and coaching</b>	The educator presence offered students information, advice and guidance. Students could also use each other as sources of information. Scaffolding was achieved through the content of the course and the activities facilitated. Tutorials were built into the course to provide another opportunity for scaffolding and coaching. Students could submit an initial draft for assessment and then work on a final polished artefact.
<b>Authentic assessment</b>	Assessment was developed to consider individual and group effort across the various activities. Students were encouraged to engage with the educator throughout the course, regarding assessment. The students were provided with opportunities to evaluate each other's work. Rubrics for the assignment and the presentations were developed and shared with the students. Students were able to submit a draft assignment that they reworked to create a more polished product.

## 6.6 The course outline

The formal meso practice course was designed to extend over eleven lectures of 90-minute duration each. In order to orientate the students, the course included my teaching philosophy, to enable students to better understand me and the teaching strategies that would be using. I explained that I endeavour to create an open and transparent learning environment that is horizontal rather than hierarchical, and to be sensitive to diversity and dynamics in class. I also declared the value I place on enabling students to acquire three fundamental skills: critical thinking; lifelong learning abilities and problem-solving strategies. I also spoke of my desire to develop a teaching and learning space that supports knowledge-sharing, cooperation, collaboration and critical thinking. In this way I made the learning design and learning theory explicit to students.

I shared with students in the course outline that my intention in designing the course was to encourage the integration of knowledge and skills required in running meso practice interventions; I acknowledged that aspects of the course had been designed to encourage students to engage in reflection on the content as well as on the process of this course. I provided examples of the method that will be used, to encourage the achievement of these outcomes which would include active engagement in face-to-face and online discussion, short written exercises, extensive reading and role-play in classroom simulations. In addition, students were made aware of the various integrated assessment activities that would occur during the course. A classic principle of andragogy (Knowles, 1973) is that adults learn better if they know why they are asked to engage in certain activities: I therefore shared aspects of my intentions in course design which would help students understand why they were requested to engage in certain activities, and would help them make connections with the learning outcomes.



The outline included the outcome of the course, which was for the student to have expanded and developed knowledge and skills on how groups are initiated, implemented, evaluated and terminated. I added that students would develop an understanding of the roles of the social worker in meso practice, as well as the concepts of power and leadership in small groups. Furthermore, I provided a detailed timetable of the course, outlining a breakdown of learning time as noted in Table 7.

**Table 7: Breakdown of Learning Time**

Type	No of hours	Requirements
<b>Face-to face contact with lecturer</b>	21 hours	Attendance of lectures 2 per week
<b>Tutorials</b>	4 hours	1 group assignment and individual tasks
<b>Assignment and tasks</b>	25 hours	
<b>Self-study</b>	30 hours	1 post on Sakai 1 reflection report
<b>TOTAL</b>	80 hours	
<b>Methods of student assessment</b>	Continuous assessment 50% Final Assessment 50%	

In the course outline, I provided the reasons for using blended learning in the course, as well as why we would use PLA techniques. I also set out the expectations I have of students regarding their learning and participation in the course. Links were provided to the values and ethics of the social work profession as provided by the SACSSP, as well as graduate attributes and ELOs. Table 8 provides an example of an ELO provided in the course outline.

**Table 8: Exit Level Outcome: Assess client system’s social functioning**

Associated Assessment Criteria	Teaching and learning activities	Assessment tasks	Graduate attributes	
			Critical Cross-field Outcomes	Purpose (knowledge, skills and values)
2.1 Assessments reflect the ability to undertake a comprehensive analysis of client system’s needs and strengths. 2.2 Analyses of client systems’ needs and strengths reflect the application of appropriate theoretical frameworks. 2.3 Assessments demonstrate the use of appropriate social work tools and data. 2.4 Assessments clearly reflect the influence and impact of social circumstances and social systems on client systems’ functioning. 2.5 Assessments result in, as far as is reasonable and possible, mutually agreed upon goals. 2.6 Assessment processes and conclusions are recorded clearly, systematically and accurately.	Reading Toseland and Rivas (2009, pp. 216-244); Becker (2005) on assessment. Lectures and role play. Students present drawings of their River of Life. Online discussion forum posts. Reflective diary entries that students will share with one another.	Class test, response to discussion forum, and an assignment will be used to evaluate understanding regarding the assessment process during the various group stages. The ELO will be assessed in the June and November examinations.	Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.	The student should be able to demonstrate, through their written work and verbal discussions in class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a commitment to ethical practice in relation to clients, colleagues, practice settings, profession of social work and the broader community.</li> <li>- a commitment to culturally sensitive practice and respect for human diversity.</li> </ul>

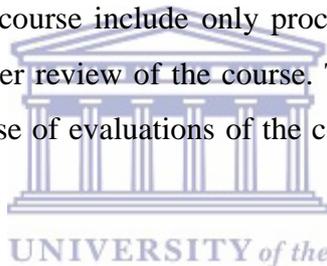
The course outline is a pragmatic tool that provides the student with an overview of the course, and gives an understanding of why a range of artefacts will be created in the teaching

and learning process. In the design, various visual tools were included in the course that were relevant to understanding meso practice, using the elements of authentic learning.

## 6.7 Conclusion

In Chapter Six, I have provided the reasons I chose to design the meso practice course, using blended learning methods. I have described the pedagogical reasons for the inclusion of various activities into the course that were linked to the elements of authentic learning. In addition, I showed why it was important to make my course decisions explicit to the students in the course outline, so that they could form connections as they engage in the activities.

Limitations in the design of the course include only processing one iteration of the course since its redesign, and lack of peer review of the course. These limitations suggest areas of future research that include the use of evaluations of the course by a peer or by an expert in teaching and learning.



In Chapter Seven I begin to describe the findings of the study according to the nine elements of authentic learning. The findings emanated from various data sources which included a student survey, individual interviews with students, focus groups with students, as well as the various artefacts produced during the course. The analysis of these various sources of data provided evidence of how the elements of authentic learning were demonstrated in the 2015 course.

# CHAPTER 7 - FINDINGS ON THE ELEMENTS OF AUTHENTIC LEARNING

*All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today.*

Anon

## 7.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have helped shape areas of this chapter, which is related to elements of authentic learning. In Chapter 5, I considered the ways in which teaching and supervision of meso practice had occurred, by exploring the views of meso practitioners. Educational DBR foregrounds the importance of seeking understanding and local opinions from practitioners in the field (McKenney & Reeves, 2013). The practitioners' views gave me greater insight into elements which could be included in the course I had designed. In Chapter 6, I looked at elements that were part of the blended learning course, that had been implemented. I provided the aims, objectives and outputs that were part of the course, and outlined how the group assignment, which was the main task, had been developed.

In this chapter, I make use of various data sets to compose a bricolage of findings and analysis. The data sets include the student survey, the various discussion forum posts, the individual student interviews, the student focus groups, the artefacts created as part of the group assignment (PhotoVoice project), the River of Life (RoL) drawings, the PowerPoint presentations and the interviews with the FI Supervisors, after the students had conducted meso practice groups in the field. The aim of this process was to understand the students' experiences of and supervisors' learnings about the meso practice course design, and how the various elements of authentic learning are incorporated. Following the recommendations of McKenney and Reeves (2011), who suggest that the data and themes arising from DBR should be reported according to the different phases of the study, in this chapter I present the

data arising from phase three, and consider the multiple methods employed to assess the 2015 course, using the elements of authentic learning as themes.

In Educational DBR, the evaluation of interventions is “framed directly or indirectly by the design propositions”, which in this project, were formulated around the elements of authentic learning (McKenney & Reeves, 2012, p. 150). The research objectives that are addressed in this chapter are to identify the students’ perceptions of the meso practice course through an interrogation of the data gathered by means of a survey, through individual and group interviews.

The student survey, which comprised of forty-three closed-ended questions and nine open-ended questions, provided an overview of the demographic characteristics and perceptions of the students, who were participants in this course. Questions were divided into the following topics: demographic information, elements of authentic learning and TEL. The discussion forum posts provided some insight into the complexity of the online environment and showed how the students and the educator interacted in the online space. The final objective was to consider the views of the field instruction supervisors at the end of both the courses, after students had completed their practical work. Thus, the supervisors were able to comment on the ability of students to put the learnings created by the course into practice.

An overall description of the students is provided, followed by an analysis of the students’ and field instructors’ perceptions of how effectively or ineffectively the elements of authentic learning were incorporated into the course. The findings related to elements of authentic learning have been provided.

## **7.2 The students**

The demographic characteristics of the students presented in Table 9 were identified from the student survey, and set the context for the study. Sixty-six (82.5%) of a class of 80 students participated in this survey.

**Table 9: Student survey participant information**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>	<b>% Number</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<i>Female</i>	80.5% (53)
	<i>Male</i>	18% (12)
	<i>Transgender</i>	1.5% (1)
<b>Race</b>	<i>African</i>	97% (64)
	<i>Coloured</i>	1.5% (1)
	<i>White</i>	1.5% (1)
<b>Age</b>	<i>18-19</i>	18% (12)
	<i>20-21</i>	73% (48)
	<i>22-23</i>	4.5% (3)
	<i>24-25</i>	1.5% (1)
	<i>29-30</i>	3% (2)
<b>Home Language</b>	<i>English</i>	12% (8)
	<i>African language</i>	88% (58)
<b>Funding of Studies</b>	<i>Self-funded</i>	11% (7)
	<i>Parents and family</i>	26% (17)
	<i>NSFAS (National Students Financial Aid Scheme)</i>	60% (40)
	<i>Other</i>	3% (2)



Eighty percent (n=53) of the participants were identified as female, reflecting the well-documented dominance of females in the social work profession (Earle, 2008; Furman, Coyne, & Negi, 2008; Khunou et al., 2012). In terms of racial classification, the majority of the participants identified themselves as African (96.4% with n=64), with only 1.5% (n=1) participant being identified as coloured and 1.5% (n=1) identified as white. The majority of

students, 91% (n=60) were aged between 18-21 years at the time of the study, which suggests that these participants entered this course directly after completing their schooling. There were 9 % (n=6) participants in the age range of 22 and older, who may have taken longer to complete their schooling or Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), or did not enter higher education directly from school for various reasons, although they could have had some work experience.

The respondents were not a homogenous group and spoke many home languages, being from various cultures from within South Africa and the rest of Africa. While Wits is an English-medium university, only 12% of the participants use English as a home language, while 88% were Additional English Language (AEL) speakers.

The home language spoken by almost a quarter of the participants (24.24 %, n=16) was isiZulu, and the next most frequent home language reported was Sesotho, which pertained to 15% (n=10) participants. English was the home language of 12% (n=8) of the participants, followed by isiXhosa, spoken by 11% (n=7). Setswana, Tshivenda and Xitsonga were spoken by 6% (n=4) of the participants. Three (4.5%) participants spoke Sepedi, Shona and siSwati. Two (3%) of the participants spoke Ndebele, and 1.5% (n=1) of the participants spoke Chichewa (Malawi). One participant was unsure of his language on account of “complications”, although there was no reason given for the complications.

Significantly, 60% (n=40) of the participants funded their studies through a loan from the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), suggesting that they were South Africans from resource-scarce backgrounds with the likelihood of limited access to additional resources to support their studies: 11% (n=7) of the participants were self-funded, 26% (n=17) were funded by family members or relatives, and 3% (n=2) of the participants had other sources of funding. In 2015 and 2016 there were national student protests for transformation and the development of creative cost-effective solutions to fund and support student learning. More effective course design strategies, like using the elements of authentic learning, may be a potential response to this call.

### 7.3 Elements of Authentic Learning

The data analysis in the next sections of this chapter will focus on the themes that characterised authentic learning as “real world ways of doing and knowing” (Bennett, Harper, & Hedberg, 2002, p. 73), and will be discussed under various sub-headings, including themes that were generated in relation to meso practice education, and other insights gleaned from the data.

#### 7.3.1 *Authentic Context*

An authentic context for this course was created by using blended learning, and designing a course that used twenty-one face-to-face lectures and the Sakai Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS could be described as resource-rich, as it included multimedia files, PowerPoint slides, and a discussion forum in which students added various resources, a chat room and a link to a Twitter feed created by the educator. In addition, the course was created around real world social conditions that have relevance for meso practice interventions in social work, allowing students to actively engage in the learning process. The course included the use of experiential learning, with eight class groups.

Table 10 depicts the group names that were created, the number of members in each group, the gender distribution of the members and the social conditions that the groups used as part of the authentic learning context.

**Table 10: Meso practice course social conditions and group demographics**

Group	Social condition selected	No. of members	Males	Females	Trans gender
<i>All Blacks</i>	Corrective rape	10		10	
<i>Catalysts of Change</i>	Early sexual debut	10		10	
<i>Juice</i>	High school drop-out	10	2	8	
<i>Rated Meso Pros</i>	Sex education	10	3	6	1
<i>Social Stars</i>	Financial exclusion from HEI	11	1	10	
<i>The Girl Gang</i>	Tuberculosis	9		9	
<i>Tshanduko</i>	Medical negligence	10		10	
<i>Ubuntu - the black snow</i>	Age-disparate relationships	10	3	10	
<b>Total</b>		<b>80</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>1</b>

The social conditions chosen by the groups were complex, real world issues that occur within the South African context, and are relevant to the discipline of social work. Students' perceptions of the experience of undertaking their own chosen real world task in the group assignment, was reported in their responses to the survey, showing that 83% (n=53) found this to be useful. In addition, authentic learning recommends that tasks should be complex and 74% (n=49) of the participants reported that the social conditions they chose, and the various activities that were developed around the task, were complex. One student said "... so by us using a real condition taught us about every what's going on in the everyday world. So it like took us out of our comfort zone and out of our bubble" (Focus Group, All Blacks).

Since groups choose their own social condition around which the group was formed, the students had a vested interest in and attachment to the topic, as reported in the survey: "*the topic that was chosen which made it easy to link the social conditions to actual events in reality*" (Student Survey). Furthermore, the real-life learning was significant, in that some

students wanted to share their knowledge with the wider community, as the following discussion forum posts support suggest: *“We can indeed make a difference [sic] with this issue” [the social condition of this group was corrective rape]* (Discussion Forum Post, All Blacks).

Another post illustrating knowledge about the value of meso practice and the students’ role in working with social problems in a real world context is this:

*... I realise the importance of group work not for self-gratification but for alleviating social conditions in society not as experts in the field but as members of the same profession and same country.* (Discussion Forum (DF) Post, All Blacks)

The above quote indicates the development of a social work student identity and coherence with the role of a social worker as an agent of social change. These quotes support the design principle that the use of a real world social condition is of value to students studying meso practice, in a practicing profession such as social work.

A complex task should be conducted over a significant time-duration which, in this course, was a seven-week period. The task should be all-embracing, and complex, and in this case it took place over a four-month period in the first two semesters of 2015, allowing sufficient engagement with the activities. This was seen by some students to be satisfactory:

*The time frame for the content was perfect and the 7-week period was by far productive. we learnt a lot in the 7 weeks period time taken to learn meso practice was enough.* (Student Survey)

Moreover, students engaged in the activities of the course beyond the classroom, as reported in the survey question, asking participants if they had engaged in out-of-class meetings: 86% (n=57) of the participants confirmed that their group held regular out-of-class meetings. The reported positive benefits of these engagements are explained by a student in an individual interview with a research facilitator. She says:

*I thought the course was very engaging and it was very diverse as well. It required a lot of work outside the classroom ... because we had to choose a social issue it required a lot of out of class work in terms of research and interviewing people, so we had to do a lot of that to contribute in our assignment.*

(Individual interview, Patience)

These meetings enabled students to develop greater rapport, enhance an ethic of care (Owens & Ennis, 2005) and provide support to each other at a personal level. An example of this care was described in a focus group, in the course of April 2015, after several xenophobic attacks against foreigners (South African History Online, 2015). The Social Stars group met to work on the assignment and later held a prayer service for safety of their members who were international students. The following student comment about these prayers reflects the cohesion that developed between group members: *“yah that is so true Jabu, we should always be like that. I also loved the prayer session it is good to belong to a group that shares the same values big up to you Emily.* (International student, FG, Social Stars)

In addition, there was evidence that some learning was transferred into the practice of report-writing skills, as indicated by the following comments made by Field Instruction (FI) supervisors, Bob and Ed, after reading the students' report:

*... their report writing skills were very good in terms of how they presented their work because when they were conducting the sessions we were not there so; I can have a clear picture when I look at the reports that they presented that is when I can actually be able to evaluate how prepared they were.* (FI supervisor, Bob)

Similarly, this next quote from Ed indicates that he considered that the students he supervised were able to transfer meso theory skills into practice:

*There is a section in their reports where they could assess each individual and they could assess the individual in relation to other individuals within the group and in relation to the environment which they come from, and it was quite impressive. I could see based on the information they were writing in their reports – for me it was quite impressive – I did not really have to say you know, ‘you guys are not putting enough information in the reports’, because the information was there. So for me it was quite impressive.* (Ed, FI supervisor, after students conducted meso practice)

In summary, the authentic context that was developed included complexity, with real world relevance, and was conducted over an extended time period. The students become more engaged and self-directed in their learning, which was transferred into their practical

placements. The potential of the course to translate into praxis is key in a practicing profession like social work: significantly, 94% (n= 62) of the participants who answered this question in the survey indicated that the skills learned could be used when working in the field. These findings suggest that the context was sufficiently developed to mirror the activities in field work.

### *7.3.2 Authentic Activities*

The hallmark of authentic learning activities is that they are ill-defined, can be used to solve complex problems, encourage sustained thinking and are integrated over more than one subject area (Herrington, 1997). Meso practice, founded on the Activity and Recreation Movement, which is a movement that encourages group members to engage in collective activity and synergises with authentic learning activities (Ables, 2013; Rosenwald et al., 2013).

Consistent with the university's requirement, that courses included both formative and summative assessments, the group assignment required students to undertake sub-tasks, and rate each other. As regards the summative task, students were asked to imagine themselves as Social Workers employed at a Social Work agency, and to develop a meso practice intervention around a social condition. The students had to enact the processes attached to conducting a group, including selecting ice-breakers that were relevant to that social condition and the group stage. For example, at "the beginning stages" of a group, members are least likely to share personal feelings and experiences, compared to when the group members developed rapport and were in the "working stage" of the group (Corey et al., 2010).

Further evidence of real world activities was that groups had to keep a register of all meetings held, as well as the sub-tasks which they allocated amongst themselves, to finish the main task. Students were asked to rate each other on their performance in the group, as some companies and social work agencies may use a 360 feedback process, which includes peers as part of the performance management process (Brett & Atwater, 2001). Thus, peer evaluation was used to mimic the human resource performance management process and to improve the assessment ability of students.

Although there were no specific instructions given by the educator to conduct interviews, some groups of students saw the value in exploring the social conditions they chose in the real world and did their own informal research into the social condition. In this next quote from an individual interview with a student, the student relates an encounter which occurred when the group visited a public hospital to explore aspects of negligence, and attempted to engage social work staff at the facility on the topic: they were curtly dismissed by the social workers. The student's comment indicates that she was able to discern the impracticality or lack of client-centred focus when all the hospital Social Work staff took their lunch break at the same time. She was able to articulate what she perceived to be issues of negligence in public health care centres offering a service to people with limited resources, who are dependent on the service. This example demonstrates that the student is aware of an ethic of care as a public good professional.

*... when we went to social workers to ask if they encounter issues on the surface they didn't want even to entertain us like what we were talking about, they all went on lunch they were like social workers are on lunch but like it's a hospital you would expect that when someone is on lunch one [social worker] will be there. In terms of that I would say there is negligence in the health sector especially if you look in black communities a lot of people don't know their rights, if you go to a clinic people will be insulted and will not be helped the way they are supposed to be helped and no one reports because people are thinking its messy and it's free why should I complain about it which is not true because if you pay tax then you should get services. (Individual interview, Ayanda)*

The following comment by a student suggests that the use of activities was new and facilitated experiential learning that contributed to a learning climate that brought fun and joy to the learning process:

*... the use of activities was very creative and it allowed me to be more intellect [intelligent] and it kept me on my toes. It is fascinating how the use of activities make [made] the class much more fun. I hope the use of activities carries on and improves every year.... (Student Survey)*

However, not all the comments were positive regarding the various activities that made up the course. A frequently reported concern was that the course was labour-intensive, as mentioned in a focus group:

*Uhm I think it [the course] was way too time consuming compared to other courses that we do. (FG, Jane)*

Another student found the course to be unstructured and made the following comment:

*I also think it's [the course] unstructured and there wasn't enough information given beforehand we [were] just expected to know what's going on and we didn't have enough time to prepare as a group. (FG, Brownie)*

Designing a course to incorporate all nine elements of authentic learning required student engagement with the content through various activities, and also necessitated collaborative activities: this was perceived by some students as time-consuming and unstructured. However, careful thought was given to the task, and the activities were deliberately ill-defined, which is not merely about what students know and what they can do with the knowledge, but who they become (Kreber, 2013). This position refers to the aim of education that concerns itself with students “becoming”, or the formation of their authenticity and “self-authorship when students make meaning of their experience from inside themselves rather than have their views determined by other[s]” (Kreber, 2013, p. 46).

The process of students gaining proficiency was displayed in the work produced in the group assignments, as students were able to demonstrate the ability to write in an academic style, to identify challenges and achievements in the development of their groups, and to integrate these experiences with theory. Integration and experiential learning were demonstrated when the assignments and the discussion forum posts included a clear understanding of how getting students to work in groups and learn about a social condition can be used to teach the process of conducting meso practice. Examples of integrating theory with practice included the group contract developed by members, the type of information posted on the discussion forum and the student reflections included in the assignment. All assignments submitted included information on the social condition, the types of group dynamics and collaboration that occurred in the groups, and identification of behaviours of performing and non-performing members, though their names were withheld. In addition, the assignment required students to consider how conflict was managed in the group, the value of reflective diaries and the discussion forum in their learning. The assignment included a section on the advice students would like to offer future course participants. The annexures that formed part of the group assignment were as follows: a group attendance register; the group contract; the weekly

evaluation reports of the in-class group sessions; the division of activities between group members; a selection of discussion forum posts; the group assessment ratings; the PowerPoint slides; a photograph of the group poster; the members' timeline; River of Life drawings and their PhotoVoice pictures. In this way, the group assignment complied with the guidelines for developing authentic activities by requiring: sustained thinking in the course and exploring a topic in depth from multiple perspectives; this is evident in the various types of evidence that constituted the group assignment.

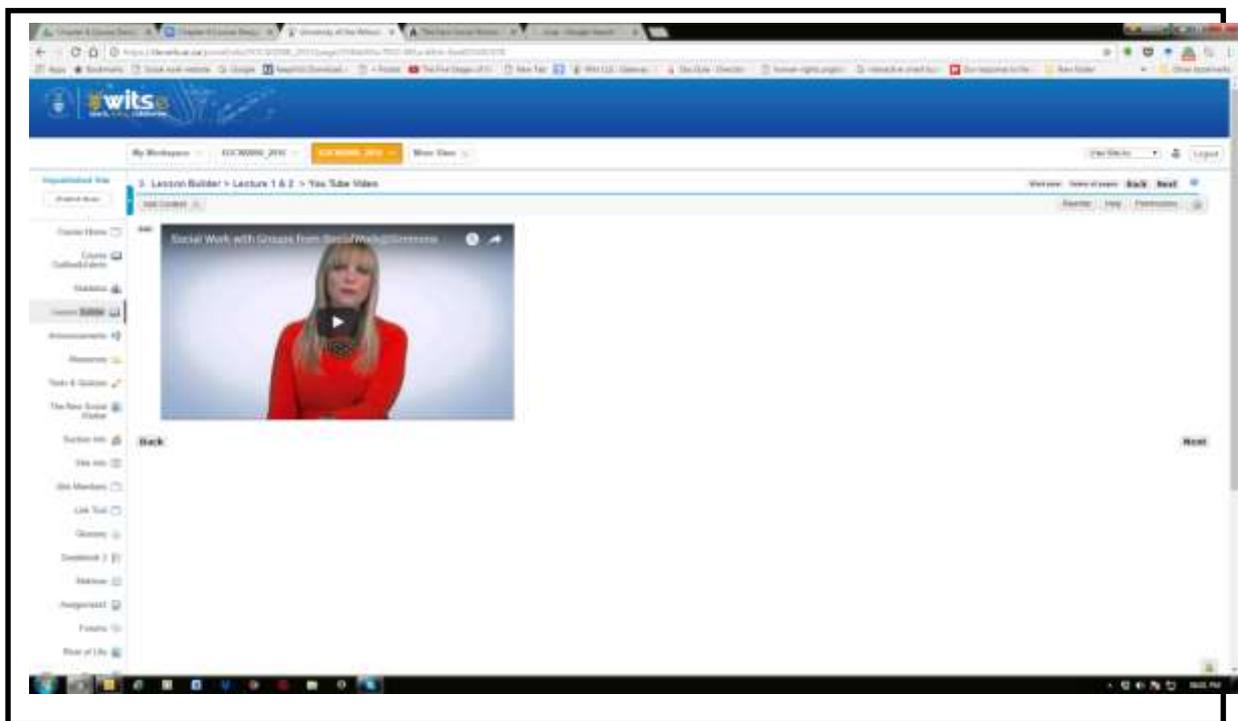
### **7.3.3 Expert Performances**

Authentic learning provides the opportunity for students to be exposed to expert thinking and modelling (Collins et al., 1989; Spiro, Feltovich, Jacobson, & Coulson, 1991). By having access to expert opinions and modelling, students would, it was hoped, become more knowledgeable about the social conditions they had chosen, and able to access various types of information and performances as they crisscrossed the learning environment (Brown et al., 1989), while allowing them to “go back to the same material at different times in rearranged contexts” (Herrington et al., 2010, p. 26). Moreover, information by experts in the field of meso practice was shared with students through journal articles and YouTube clips (Figure 8). This element of authentic learning draws on its foundational theories of cognitive apprenticeship and situated learning (Brown et al., 1989; Collins et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 2003) and, as Herrington and Kervin (2007) suggest, is based on the premise that a student may understand things better when a skill or activity is demonstrated and explained by an expert. A more knowledgeable student may also play the role of expert in the learning experience, and working in a group provides opportunities for learning by watching a more knowledgeable other. This was evident, as 94% (n=58) of survey respondents indicated that watching other members in the group and the class perform different roles, was helpful.

During meso practice, access to expert performances occurred in the classroom space and in the online space. Expert input was provided by the social work educator, who had more than 20 years of experience in the field, and actively participated and made use of practical examples during teaching. In addition, the tutor had also conducted group work, thus contributing another expert role. Beyond the limited environment of the course, networking occurred with another educator who is responsible for field instruction education and who

taught students skills in meso practice.

The discussion forum groups also created a safe space where students could take an “expert position” and share and teach one another aspects of meso practice. An indication of the effectiveness of the LMS as a space for facilitating and supporting expert performance is the number of authored posts (534), as opposed to the number of read posts (3 504) shown in Table 11. This illustrates student engagement, albeit not to the extent that they actively engaged in contributing posts to the online space, but rather by lurking. It was, however, the educator who read the highest number of posts in order to keep abreast of the posts on the discussion forum, as illustrated in Table 11.



**Figure 8: Image of a screenshot depicting the use of YouTube clips on meso practice**

Factors that could have contributed to the limited engagement in the discussion by some students could have been the lack of time to use computers, as was noted in other studies conducted on the use of TEL within the South African HE environment (Bozalek & Ng'ambi, 2015).

**Table 11: Discussion Forum Analytics Metrics**

	<b>Authored</b>	<b>Read</b>
<b>Students</b>	534	3 504
<b>Educator</b>	175	660
<b>TOTAL</b>	709	4 164
<b>Mean</b>	6.7	43.8
<b>Minimum posts by students</b>	0	0
<b>Maximum by students</b>	28	461

Although a number of multimedia clips were incorporated into the LMS in an attempt to enhance the provision of expert performances, student engagement with these resources was limited for various reasons, including time pressure and lack of interest. One student, Jane, says:

*I didn't bother looking at them [multi-media content on the LMS] because (laughter) like the other groups, like I've got, we've all got other stuff to do, like the course gave us so much work we don't have time to sit and like watch, like other groups and stuff you can't, you just wanna get your own work done. (Focus Group (FG), All Blacks, Jane)*

In the next iteration of the course, expert performance would be further enhanced if greater consideration were given to improving the ability of students to navigate within the LMS, which student Glory identified as a challenge: *“Technically Sakai is one thing I had a problem with. It was something I couldn't get used to”*. (FG, Student post course in 2016, Glory)

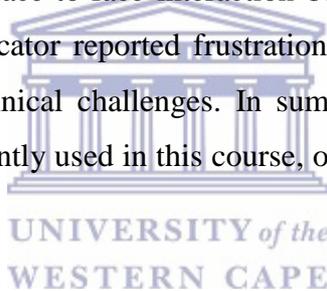
Not all students shared Glory's view, as when students were asked in the survey if they require further training on the LMS, there were only 12 (18%) who indicated that more

training was required. What was more telling being that 34 (52%) of the students stated that they experienced difficulty using the LMS because the system did not work, as further evidenced by this quote:

*... technology makes this easier however Sakai was by far the worst mode of communication, reason being network failure and Sakai CRASHING when we need to use it. (Student Survey, open-ended question)*

Nevertheless, the benefits of the resources provided by the LMS appeared to have extended beyond the duration of the course, with some students continuing to access the resources after the course was completed and collectively assessed by the end of June 2015. Between the period 1 July to 8 September 2015, 33% (n=26) students visited the course site.

While the use of TEL to support the element of expert performances was attempted, it had limited success, compared with face-to-face interaction between educator, students and the tutor. Both students and the educator reported frustration, as the LMS did not work at an optimal level as a result of technical challenges. In summary, while expert performances using the LMS were not significantly used in this course, opportunity for redesign in the next iteration should be explored.



#### **7.3.4 Multiple perspectives**

The course was designed around a social condition which supported the use of multiple roles and perspectives, as a means for facilitating students' cognitive flexibility (Herrington, 1997). The examination of the social condition, the development of meso practice skills and the examination of problems from multiple perspectives have been defined as important cognitive activities. Multiple perspectives offer students an awareness of different points of view across the learning environment (Herrington & Oliver, 2000).

Multiple perspectives add complexity, as can be ascertained from the next discussion forum post, where a student offered the group an alternate perspective after posting and viewing a video, while providing evidence of the value of observing non-verbal behaviours when viewing the video posted on the LSM:

*This [video] gives insight into our social issue in a different way. rather than having to read the harsh facts, you will be able to listen and also take note of*

*non-verbal behaviours!* (DF Post, All Blacks, 3: 88)

The use of TEL was seen to provide opportunities for attaining the element of multiple perspectives, as evidenced by the 70% (n=46) of students who in the survey agreed with the view that reading the discussion forum posts gave them different perspectives on the social condition.

### ***Multiple perspectives of tasks***

This complex task required students to work as a group, using meso practice skills and developing artefacts including a poster, a PhotoVoice project and PowerPoint slides; they were required to present these to their class, as well as expert judges who were educators in the social work profession. The PhotoVoice pictures were displayed on the walls of the classroom. These activities enabled students to present their social condition, as would a social worker who is employed at an agency, and has to present findings to various stakeholders such as board members.

The process of development of these artefacts required students to revisit the same material several times “for different purposes and from different conceptual perspectives” (Spiro, Feltovich, Jacobson & Coulson cited in Herrington et al., 2010, p. 26). The development process required the amalgamation of multiple views, reviewing the content and carefully selecting of material. Students were immersed in the task to such an extent that some even created or posted poetry on aspects of the social condition that the group was exploring. There were four posts that made use of poetry to depict a range of subject matter. A poem authored by a group member of All Blacks was called “Let my voice be heard”, and described the feelings experienced by a person who identified themselves as homosexual. This poem related to their focus, the social condition called corrective rape; writing this type poetry sensitised the students to the discrimination that people who identified as homosexual experience. These activities could have helped students to develop greater empathy towards the kind of future clients that may present to them in their professional roles as social workers. The educator added to the poetry collection by posting the “Desiderata”, to share a personal poem that was meaningful to understanding one’s own life journey, in response to a River of Life that was shared in the discussion forum. The educator also used a poem called “Saying Goodbye” by Suzanne Juhasz (cited in Brandler & Roman, 2015, p.83), to show the

kinds of feelings members may experience in the final stages of meso practice.

*Saying goodbye*

*by Suzanne Juhasz*

*Now I am breaking the circle*

*which will close again without me,*

*close over me*

*I will go away*

*Leaving behind the circle*

*leaving you behind*

*in the lamplight, talking:*

*talking of what has happened*

*of what to do, planning revolution or salvation.*

The use of various types of resources and genres such as poetry were helpful to develop an understanding of multiple perspectives. Also, students developed an understanding of multiple perspectives by being able to distinguish how they performed when engaging in a simulated role-play situation, and were able recognise where their own areas needed development. This meta-cognitive understanding suggests a deeper understanding of the subject matter and envisions the future of a helping professional. Thus, there is a degree of occupational realism in the comments made by the student in the excerpt below, taken from a discussion forum posting. In the post, the student alludes to her lack of competence in conducting therapeutic interventions such as trauma counselling:

*Currently I don't have the capacity to counsel a client suffering from trauma, as we haven't gone in depth with counselling in the social work course. Of course, once I have the knowledge of trauma counselling, I would do my utmost best for the client to overcome such as experience. I also believe it will include a multi-disciplinary team, such as a psychiatrist prescribing medication to the patient and possibly the clinic supplying ARV's as a precaution while the client undergoes HIV testing. (DF Post, All Blacks)*

Moreover, developing multiple perspectives around a social condition demands more than a surface understanding of an issue which is demonstrated when a student challenges the group to read beyond the post and asks a controversial question regarding the social condition of age- disparate relationships. The comment is revealing, as neither of the people mentioned in the post is extremely young nor are issues of poverty part of the age-disparate relationship described here:

*hey guys, i don't know if this might help you think deeper but how do you describe the marriage of president robert mugabe and his second wife, the current first lady of zimbabwe, grace mugabe she is 49 and he is almost double her age at 91 ...? <http://www.thebiographychannel.co.uk/biographies/robert-mugabe.html> you can read this story as a brief example. (DF Post, Ubuntu Group)*

Another learning design feature of the course, which supported students in developing multiple perspectives, was achieved by ensuring group diversity: 57 (86%) survey respondents agreed with the statement that the members of their group were diverse and shared different views on issues. An example of respect for diversity was evident from the postings made by members of the Social Stars group, who used the discussion forum to share the phrase “no man is an island” in different languages, including Venda, Zulu, Shona and Chichewa. These posts contributed to the group understanding the multiple and unique perspectives offered by members from different cultural backgrounds, and potentially fostered improved group cohesion and an appreciation of diversity.

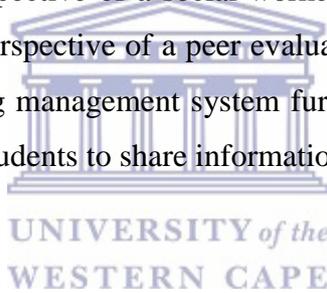
A developing understanding of complexity, gleaned from using multiple perspectives through exploring various facets of the social condition, was demonstrated when a student authored a discussion forum post that provided some information on factors that contribute to age-disparate relationships, but advised that there was a need for the group to consider other factors bearing on this social condition:

*Interesting article Xxxx. Another factor that results in such relationships is poverty. Most Young girls feel the need to move with the times, be it buying the latest fashion and expensive hairstyles. When parents can't afford, some girls find other alternatives such as dating older men. This is not always the case though, I met a few ladies that say they are with older men because they are in love. This topic is broad. We have to tackle every angle there is ... (DF Post, Ubuntu).*

The advantages of evaluating a social condition from multiple perspectives, and obtaining a diversity of views, was again mentioned by a student in a response to an open-ended question in the survey on their experiences of working in groups:

*the social condition we explored was vast and therefore working in groups made it much more easier to go around it. ... also, varied input by various members made the whole process informative.* (Student Survey)

In summary, the students were working on a group assignment that required them to analyse how they worked in a group, and relating these group dynamics to the meso practice intervention using a social condition. The task itself required students to see the development of meso practice skills from various perspectives: from being a member of a class group; from the perspective of a student learning about group work; from the imagined perspective of being a member of a group with the social condition; from the perspective of a client with a social condition; from the perspective of a social worker who leads and conducts a meso practice intervention; from the perspective of a peer evaluator; and from the perspective of a presenter. The use of the learning management system further supported and complemented the group assignment, enabling students to share information from multiple perspectives.



### **7.3.5 Collaboration**

Collaborative learning gives students the opportunity to absorb social nuances and prepare for praxis as a student social worker, specifically when conducting a meso practice intervention (Rust & Gibbs, 1997; Topping & Ehly, 1998). This section on collaboration is longer than the other sections because the subject matter of the course is about meso practice or group work, and was ideally suited for experiential learning collaboration, cooperation and teamwork. While working in a group, the students were able to experience aspects of meso practice skills development.

Teamwork is defined as “working jointly to achieve more” than one could do independently (Repman & Weller, 1993, p. 268) and provides students with the opportunity to share the risks and take joint decisions. Teamwork is also linked to conflict, as students often do not agree on ideas, activities and processes. Cooperation requires the allocation of tasks and subtasks that students can engage in independently and later put together to form the larger project, such as students who create a duty roster of members who will lead the group.

The course was designed to include activities that promoted cooperation and collaboration. Collaboration did create conflict, disruption and discomfort, which was accepted as part of the learning process, both in the learning space and in the real world. This is why 50% (n=31) of the respondents agreed with the statement that they experienced conflict in their group. However, only 27% (n=17) participants indicated that they would have preferred to work independently, which suggests that the participants were able to work with and manage the conflict that arose in their group and did not see it as an impediment to their learning. This explanation is further supported by 46.8% (n=29) respondents, who noted that they enjoyed working in a group. As one student noted in an individual interview:

*working in a group may be challenging, my experiences working in the group helped a lot in such a way that i learned how to handle/address conflict and i also learned that a group needs trust, hard work and cooperation in order to achieve [sic] targetted goals. (Individual interview, Tweety)*

Collaborative work is dependent on the support provided by members to one another, and 84% (n=52) of survey respondents noted that members of the group supported each other. Another way collaborative learning is helpful for meso practice is the communication and feedback that is provided by members about one other. The course was designed so that group members rated the performance of one another; 74% (n=49) of survey respondents found the feedback from their group members to be of value, which suggests that this collaborative activity may have led to learning.

Not all students enjoyed working in a group, but and some indicated a gradual understanding of how the process developed their skills in addressing social conditions.

*When I heard I have to do group work I was angry and anxious as to the members I will have, as time goes by I realise the importance of group work not for self-gratification but for alleviating social conditions in society as experts in the field but as members of the same profession and same country. (DF Post, All Blacks)*

Another discussion forum post that was authored at the end of the course speaks to the development of bonds and collaboration between members around an authentic real world task. The post further affirms the value of working on a real world social condition that

continues to have meaning; this is especially so within the South African HEI context, where the issues of funding of students from low socio-economic groups have culminated in a national student protest under the banner of the following social media hashtags: #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall (Ng'ambi et al., 2016). These financial problems, or even the threat of financial exclusion, were personally experienced by some students in this group, which made their bonding and engagement in the *financial exclusion* social condition both powerful and passionate.

*hey guys. Its that time that we've all been dreading. we have come a long way and have bonded a lot. I'm pretty sure that our perspective of mesopractice [sic] has changed and we are now peositive [sic] about it. im also certain that this has created a platform for us to be able to facilitate group meetings in futer [future] , including for practicals I hope through this will not stop here and we will be able to help students facing financial exclusion to regain their rightful [sic] place in their academic institution (DF post, Social Stars)*

Posts contributed to the discussion forum demonstrate the way in which students were able to articulate their various positions regarding the social condition of the task around which they had developed their opinions. These posts show a degree of reflection, as well as the use of multiple perspectives, collaboration and articulation, especially with regard to this particular question:

*guys I am struggling to understand the definition of our social condition. I don't get how a person who is five years older than you can be classified as a "sugar daddy" or "ben 10s", if 8 this is the case so people should date people you are in the same age as they who think at their level which is not the good idea because in relationships people learn, how are they suppose to learn they people in their levels? (#swimming in the pool of confusion, DF Post, Ubuntu)*

The response shows many of the features of reflective thinking:

*well in my understanding we don't actually say they are sugar daddies. It depend on the type and the purpose of the relationship. Our assignment will basically focus on age disparities that contribute to our social, economic and emotional factors. Yes, one might argue that they are not bad, but research shows that majority of these relationships contribute to the rise in HIV and AIDS. WE will not argue that they are wrong but instead, look at some of the factors that*

*contribute to it. Though the part of love is still questionable, we would do further research on that.* (DF Post, Ubuntu)

In these posts, information is sought by one. In the response, further information is provided on how age-disparate relations have been found to be a factor that increased the spread of HIV and AIDS in Africa (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). While both authors of these posts try to adopt non-judgemental positions, they question aspects that motivate people to develop age-disparate relationships. The positive use of collaboration, and working in groups in the discussion forum posts, reflects the benefits students received through the process:

*you get to learn a few things from your colleagues and what-so not. I think they can always be there for you even if you have problems, even if you drown and you're failing they can always be there to assist you.* (Individual Interview, Keaboka)

Despite the conflict that arose when working in groups, the course created valuable learning opportunities for students to learn about conflict, while actually working with conflict, which was not pleasant but did result in skills development. Skills developed included being non-judgmental, appreciating diversity, being understanding of stages in a group and fostering group cohesion (Corey et al., 2010).

*I also feel like in the group there was a lot of miscommunication and the miscommunication was obviously taken like a personal thing, instead of being dealt with. So I also feel like once that was dealt with and was confronted in the group it grew everybody. The group had a bit of a rough patch and it was like a lot of conflict in the group. but I think once that was solved, like our group really moved into like a flowing productive working stage, where everybody got on really really well ...* (FG, All Blacks)

The student noted how conflict later resulted in group cohesion and improved teamwork. Similarly, a survey respondent said:

*I HAVE TEND TO REALISE THAT GROUPS REQUIRE A PERSON WITH STRONG LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND PATIENCE ANAD (sic) I BELIEVE I HAVE ACQUIRED THOSE.* (Student Survey)

As the preceding quotes suggests, most students were of the opinion that they benefited from

the experiential learning activities. By using a real world task, students were engaged in challenging activities that fostered social work skills development (Strozier, 1997). The process of collaboration may result in better understanding of self:

*I learnt to value people's opinions but to also be critical in my evaluation of them I also learnt that being a group leader is actually fun as long as you do not patronise or disrespect other people. i also learnt that inasmuch as we are different we share similarities (especially when it comes to background or our journey to Wits university). I also learnt a new language, Shona from two group members I also learnt that when we work together we actually achieve more in a short space of time. i also learnt the need to stop loafing and contribute as this is necessary for my personal growth (Individual interview, Conqueror)*

While many students supported the use of collaboration, other views suggest that some students were uncomfortable with group work activities.

### ***Disadvantages of collaboration***

Disadvantages associated with collaborative activities include a lack of freedom to abstain from participation, and ambiguity in task distribution (Strozier, 1997), but experiential learning activities using the elements of authentic learning have particular benefits in the teaching of meso practice. A major challenge of group work is that some members assume more of the work, while others play a more passive role (Hafner & Ellis, 2004; Laurillard, 2009), as was reported in the All Blacks focus group:

*... personally I disagree with group work because it's inevitable that people, that there are people in the group who will slack and there are others who have to take on more work because of others not participating and that uhm when you have an individual task and you do it yourself out of group work you know that you can rely on yourself, but when it's group work everyone else's mark affects yours and people don't understand that and so they mess up with your marks, with your academics because they're not committed and responsive- and taking responsibility for what they're supposed to do and it's very time consuming to constantly have meetings and having to run after people send their work in cause [because] they're not doing properly or they're not sending it on time and it causes a continuous delay. (FG, All Blacks, Alice)*

In designing the course, I attempted to use the following strategies to reduce the imbalances that could occur in task distribution and thereby decrease the incidences of *freeriding*, a term used to describe students who assume fewer tasks than the other group members (Johnston & Miles, 2004). Students engaged in group appraisal, and were encouraged to provide timely, constructive feedback to members who were not cooperative. There were numerous discussion forum posts urging members to actively engage in the allocated activities. One such example of a student establishing the expected engagement of group members was evident from his/her posting to the discussion forum:

*We are having a group meeting next week Friday. Each group member must have their completed tasks, no excuses. If anyone has a query or suggestion, give me a call or post on the forum.* (DF Post, Juice)

It was evident that some students were frustrated by the lack of peer engagement in collaborative activities, as one student comments:

*did not enjoy my experience at all as a lot of the work became my responsibility due to members not wanting to fully participate and do their part. Initiative was never taken by other members to get tasks done and i had to often ask people on numerous occasions to remember to submit their work and it would still end up being submitted late.* (Student Survey)

Despite some of the challenges reported by students, collaboration and learning from others in the group did enable some students to engage more actively in the classroom. As one student explains:

*I think it was more about being in class because it is more practical. So you [the educator] might say something in class probably that day I am not concentrating that moment and will not hear what you say but by the time you [the educator] say role playing do this with your group that's when I have to participate because it's a small group but if it's in a class I will be like Johnson, [a student who participates actively in class] will answer that because probably because you [the educator] don't know my name,, so but in groups you have to participate in order to be part of the group .So it was more practical.* (Focus Group, Lolo)

Collaboration on the discussion forum using TEL

Collaboration occurred both in physical and online spaces. I have chosen to use one discussion thread from the group called Ubuntu, to highlight how the process of communication flowed amongst the group members and the educator. This analysis depicts the level of participation and the manner in which participants engaged with various topics. While acknowledging at the same time that not all student participation in a discussion forum will result in deep learning, there is some evidence of deeper thinking about the social condition as members articulate their positions. Nevertheless, it can be argued that collaborative activities can foster communication that may result in learning (Dennen, 2005).

Figure 9 shows the collaboration and communication in a discussion forum thread from the group called Ubuntu.

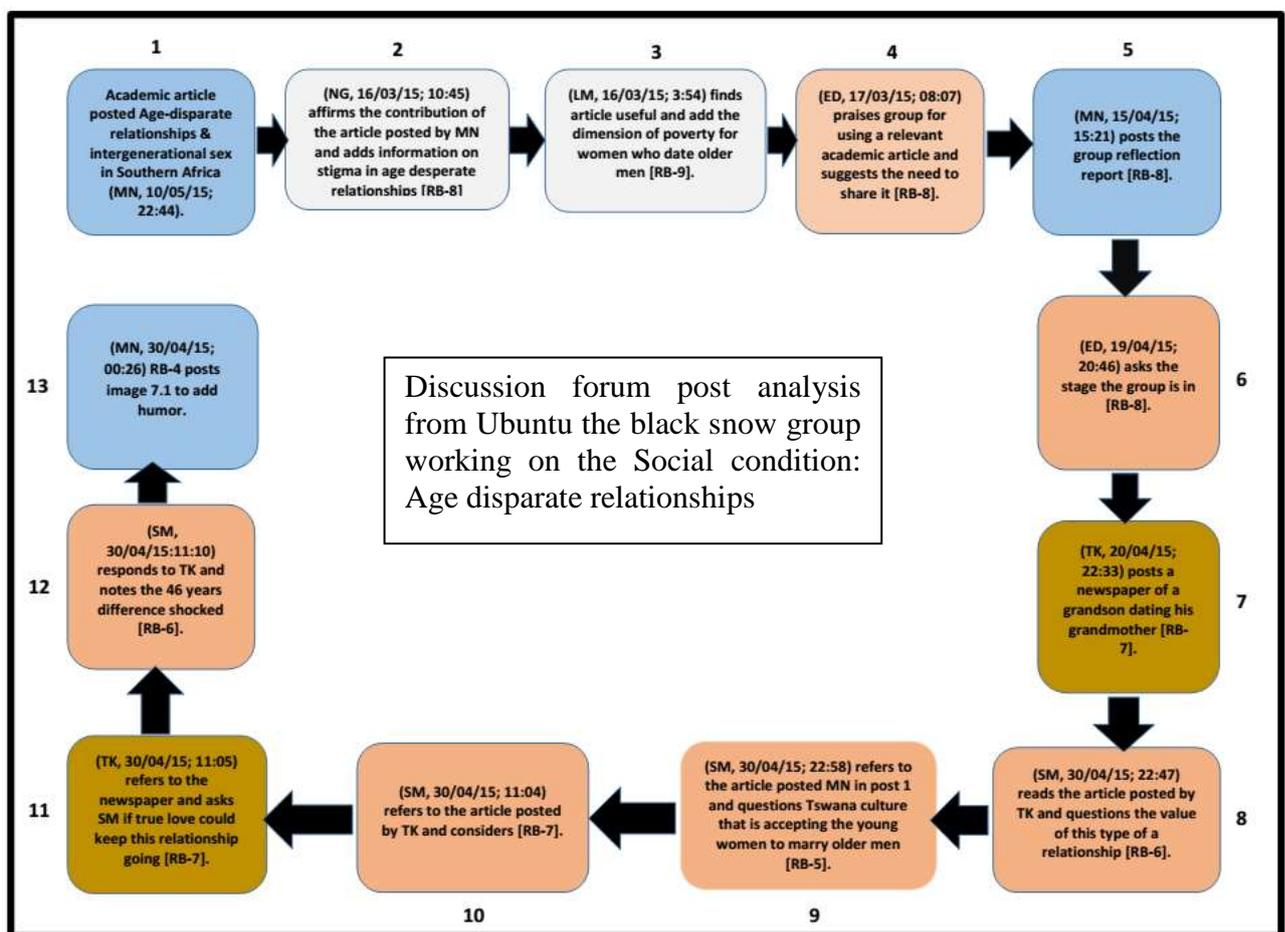


Figure 9: Discussion Thread

**Key:**

The colour of the text box is related to the members on this thread.

RB - Read by

Figure 9 shows how a discussion thread evolved, with 13 different posts made by five students and the educator. The diagram indicates the date, the time of the post and the number of people who read the post. Also included is a short summary of the post and how various members of the group and the educator responded to the information. It shows how resources, both from academic sources and from newspapers, were shared on the social condition. The thread shows interesting and robust collaboration in the course between and amongst students and the educator. The findings confirm that the course encouraged collaboration and that the students were generally positive about working in a group and saw value in learning from each other.

### **7.3.6 Reflection**

Reflective activities are described as reflective practice, critical thinking, critical awareness, critical consciousness, critical inquiry, critical self-awareness or emancipatory reflection (Fook, White & Gardner, 2006). Reflection is an essential skill in social work practice and its value has been acknowledged by several learning theorists (Freire, 2000; Kolb, 2014; Mezirow, 2000; Molloy & Boud, 2013; Schön, 1983). Reflection includes intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to develop “new understandings and appreciations” (Boud, Keogh, and Walker, 1985, p. 19).

The course attempted to include reflection within a safe teaching and learning space that is free from coercion, allowing for evaluation of evidence and assessment of arguments, creating links between values and action through sometimes painful rethinking or “unthinking” of feelings, concepts and experiences (White et al., 2006, p. 16). Activities such as journal writing and evaluation were used so that thoughts were brought to a conscious level to allow for introspection.

In the meso practice course certain aspects of reflection were done individually, such as journaling, while others happened in a group setting when students provided advice for future students, as part of the assignment. Students were encouraged to use the following steps for reflection. Firstly, they were guided to return to the experience, which involved recollecting the salient features of the experience, recounting them for others and demonstrating these techniques in the focus groups and interviews; secondly, they were to attend to positive and

negative feelings about the experience and, finally, re-evaluate the experience by associating and integrating new knowledge into the learner's conceptual framework (Boud et al., 1985; Herrington & Oliver, 2000).

Other activities to prompt reflection included the group leader's evaluation of the class group session on the discussion forum, developing time-lines, drawings of Rivers of Life. Students shared some of these reflections with each other and on the discussion forum. A phrase often used in meso practice is "all in the same boat together" Shulman (2006, p. 43), suggesting that members of a group help and support each other, even at the expense of personal risk and discomfort (White et al., 2006). This comment from a focus group discussion links the process of reflection with meso practice:

*Rivers of live [sic] gave me time to reflect back and see how far I have come as an individual. It also allowed me to realise my personal strengths and weaknesses. After, we reflected on our river of life, we noticed that we had similar life experiences, expectations and goals. We also noted that we have developed trust and empathy from the group. We also learned how to conduct group work. (Focus Group, Girl Gang)*

Another post reflecting the student's ability to think and "unthink" at a deeper level beyond the current social condition is illustrated by the student's comments about financial exclusion in higher education:

*While doing this assignment, a thought came to mind. How sustainable are the steps that have been taken by the different institutions in response to this year's Nasfas [sic] [National Students Financial Aid Scheme] scandal? It is true that milestones were reached or [sic] example, the Wits SRC raised close to 2 million rands, But I can't help but wonder what is going to happen next year? Are there any sustainable plans in place to ensure that the thousands of deserving students who are not lucky enough to get a bursary are able to complete their degrees? Let's talk. (DF Post, Social Stars, 7: 49)*

Further information on the use of reflection and emotion will be discussed in the next chapter, which considers the use of PLA techniques and the role of emotions within the pedagogy of discomfort. In short, the element of reflection was found to be present in the course and helped facilitate the creation of new knowledge beyond the course. However, reflection is a

broad generic term used to describe intellectual and affective activities, where new meanings are created and integration with theory and practice occur. There is greater self-awareness in the individual (White et al., 2003), but it is difficult to isolate the exact changes that were brought about by reflection as a single element in course design.

### 7.3.7 *Articulation*

Articulation in authentic learning is promoted “to enable tacit knowledge to be made explicit” (Herrington, et al, 2010, p. 18). Students demonstrated their growing understanding of meso practice as they collaborated, developed arguments and used the discourse of the discipline, both in face-to-face and in online spaces. Through articulation, students share their points of view and may encounter cognitive conflict and disparate thinking: in this way they open themselves up to understanding multiple perspectives on various issues related to the social conditions they were studying, enabling them to learn about the unfolding of group processes as they experience them (Herrington et al., 2010). An oral presentation allowed students to demonstrate their growing understanding of the social condition, and their group dynamic, in relation to meso practice. One of the course participants, Keaboka, explains the value of such a presentation:

*... like presenting your findings to the whole class. Like that was nice like because I think you, (..) like you showed people like what, have you been up to and what-so not and you also get to share their findings with you so I think in a way like you, you get to learn. (Individual Interview, Keaboka)*

The presentation allowed students to write and defend their position, in the assignment and on the discussion forums. Writing was another way students showed growing understanding, as was expressed in the assignment from the group Tshanduko: “... we used these icebreakers to provide familiarity and to create an unthreatening environment for members” (Assignment, Tshanduko). This comment shows that the students were able to understand the purpose of icebreakers to create cohesion and students could make this knowledge explicit in their writing.

Some students saw the need to articulate their position beyond the classroom, and develop greater awareness around the various social conditions, thus displaying the need to share

information they had learnt with others, using social media. This suggested an independent desire by the students, when empowered with the knowledge, to articulate and to write about their learnings, which was a positive aspect of the process.

*Jane and Cindy I think we need to create that Facebook page we spoke about and start teaching the world about corrective rape because what we are learning about this topic doesn't stay in our books it has to go out there. (DF Post, All Blacks)*

A poster was another artefact created by students. Figure 10 shows the poster made by a group called the Social Stars. As can be seen from the photo, students used a computerised image, with some similarities to an academic poster, to showcase their social condition. This was not required but showed innovation for students at second-year level.

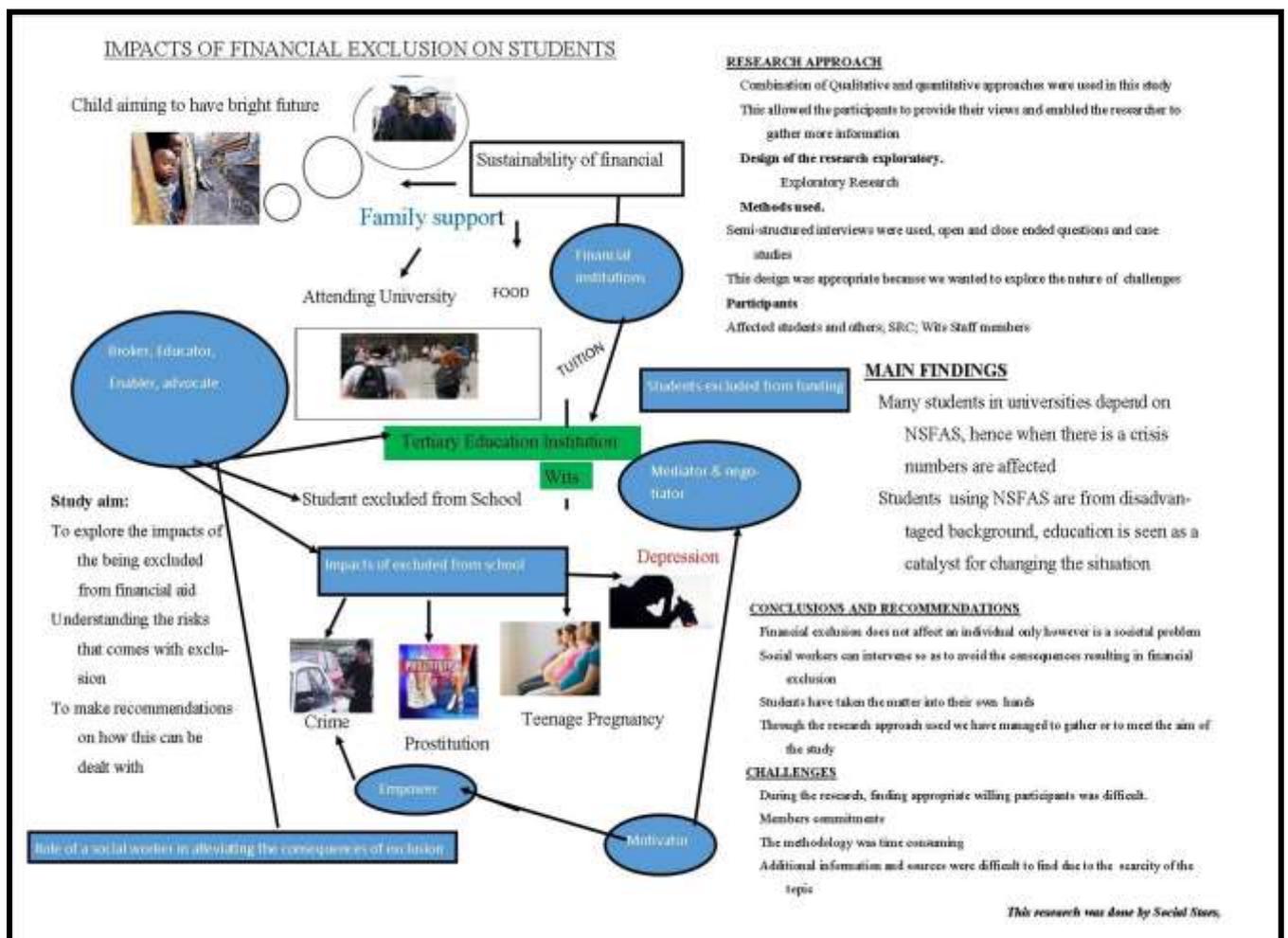
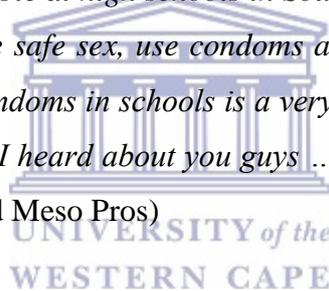


Figure 10: Poster created by the Social Stars Group

Articulation of the social condition was not confined to the course, but extended beyond the formal learning situation into the societal realm. Members of the Girl Gang group conducted a once-off lunch-hour awareness drive to spread education and information through talks, conversations and the distribution of pamphlets on tuberculosis to the general student population on campus on World TB day. As one member of the group who posted to the forum noted, “... *we went out and raised awareness about TB today for World TB Day. we did great ladies*”. (DF Post, Girl Gang)

The articulation on a discussion forum was different from the face-to-face encounters. Over and above the opportunities incorporated into the course for articulation, one student found a creative method of articulation, which raised awareness about sex education, by adopting the persona of a young person who is sexually active when writing posts on the discussion forum.

*Good morning? My name is Nomonde, I am in grade 10. I heard talks about condoms being available at high schools in South Africa. I am sexually active and proud of it. I practice safe sex, use condoms and only had one sexual partner. I don't think having condoms in schools is a very wise decision. Me and my friends argue about this and I heard about you guys ... AND I wanted to know what you think.* (DF Post, Rated Meso Pros)



This post was read by 19 other students and triggered debate, and higher internal mental functions, such as critical thinking and reflective reasoning within the group (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 126), through thinking about the distribution of condoms at schools:

*Hi Nomonde thanks for bringing this issue to our attention, well as a member of the RATED MESO PROS personally think it's not advisable to have condoms at school because pupils would practice safe sex at the school premises thereby turning a school to be a lovers nest. I therefore advise you to practise safe sex since you are sexually active, yes it may be hard to take condoms at a local clinic since nurses gossip about young adults who take condoms, but then you can wisely ask a staff member to supply you with condoms as they are part of your school project.* (DF Post, Rated Meso Pros)

The findings suggest that these opportunities to talk, debate and engage in formal presentations provided students with the opportunity to demonstrate their use of articulation to defend their points of view, and communicate not only with their group members, but also

with the broader community, through Facebook and at a university awareness event.

### 7.3.8 *Scaffolding and Coaching*

Scaffolding and coaching are elements of authentic learning, whereby the educator, or a more knowledgeable peer, selectively provides support and thereby extends the range of the student in achieving greater learning (Herrington et al., 2010). In this course, scaffolding was used to help the students through incremental provision of information by the educator and other more knowledgeable students, to understand concepts related to the meso practice intervention, thereby enhancing students' learning through their Zone of Proximal Development, which is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). For learning to happen, it is necessary to begin by understanding the knowledge base and experience of students. In the teaching of meso practice, I began by exploring, with the students, the various groups they belong to, from their primary family group to the groups of which they are currently a part. In the LMS, information was broken down into lectures and was released just before the section was going to be covered in class, so that students could go backwards and forwards in the learning environment; there was also some repetition in order to develop understanding. Although icebreakers occurred at every group session, even they developed greater understanding of the social condition, the evolution of the group and the maturation of the students.

The role played by the educator was acknowledged as positive by 86% (n=57), with respondents to the survey indicating that the educator offered advice and guidance at various stages of the course. Scaffolding requires that the educator be responsive to questions posed by students. Feedback should be suitable and offered without significant delay, as one student pointed out in their response to the survey:

*... made work much easier and less complicated in having to book an appointment with the lecturer - one simply had to post on Sakai and Roshini would reply within hours. (Student Survey)*

In addition, students were given feedback, advice and guidance on the first draft they submitted of their assignment, and feedback was provided by the educator and the tutor. The

results of the open-ended question in the survey, regarding the use of iteration and feedback to improve student assignments, was that 80% (n=53) of the students surveyed found the feedback provided by the educator and tutor effective in helping them to make changes to the final artefacts they submitted.

The type of comments, questions and observations made by the educator on the discussion forum provided another way of scaffolding and selectively directing students towards making linkages and creating integration between theory and practice:

*Xxx, the role you are playing in this group is as a motivator, this is an important role to get members to come together and work together. Can others in the SS group identify other roles played by members? Roles will be an aspect covered in class today.* (DF Post, Educator comment)

As course designer, implementer and evaluator of this course, it was important for me to understand how my teaching, coaching and facilitation skills, behaviours and attributes had contributed both positively and negatively to the students' experience of the course. There were many comments on the value of having good communication with the students and the role of the educator as an effective coach. "... she [the educator] was always [sic] open for questions and helped us understand when we were lost and also showed us direction" (Student Survey).

A key feature of a responsive, safe learning environment is one where students are comfortable about requesting assistance. This is evidenced by a survey response in the student survey: "... that [the course] was allowing and gave the members the ability to freely participate in activities projecting a non-judgmental attitude" (Student Survey).

Furthermore, scaffolding requires an educator to have the requisite knowledge, experience and passion for the subject matter, especially for a professional degree such as social work. This characteristic of the educator was acknowledged by a student, who noted that: "the lecturer is very good at what she does and she was helpful when asked questions..." (Student Survey).

Moreover, the course provided a space in which students could discuss uncomfortable and painful situations, requiring the educator to demonstrate care and support, as suggested by

one student who commented that: “*She [the educator] also very understanding*”. This comment suggests that there is a need for an ethic of care (Owens & Ennis, 2005) for educators when engaging with students generally, and especially when certain activities such as the River of Life are incorporated into the course, which may cause psychological distress.

### ***7.3.9 Challenges students experienced in communication with the educator***

While 80% (n=53) of the respondents reported they were satisfied with communication with the educator, there were 9% (n=6) of the respondents who were unsure and 4.5% (n=3) who disagreed that the feedback provided by the educator was helpful. There could be many reasons for some students to respond in this way, including that the task was too complex or that students wanted more explicit instructions. As one student responding to the survey commented:

*the communication was absurd sometimes and inconvenient I felt the lecturer gave brief information as to what she expects from us and the assignment.*

(Student Survey)

In authentic learning, the challenge is to allow students to engage in self-discovery and not provide all the answers; so responses like the one above should be accepted as part of the process, but should make the educator reflect on how communication can be improved in the next iteration.

In summary, roles played by the educator to achieve the scaffolding and coaching element included being a broker, a teacher, a communicator and making conscious use of self throughout the course. The role of broker was played by helping students make connections between theory and practice, and deliberately using the chosen social condition to create these linkages that extended beyond the teaching of basic meso practice. In the role of teacher, relevant information was provided to students at different phases of the course. I used my past experience of practice in social work to build positive relationships between group members. The complex authentic task, together with the chosen social condition, allowed students to extend their knowledge beyond a basic understanding of the meso practice intervention. The effects of scaffolding were enhanced by the creation of a safe learning environment.

### 7.3.10 Authentic Assessment

Authentic learning (Herrington et al., 2010) requires assessment to be integrated into the complex task, which occurs over a sustained time period and results in a finished polished product. Herrington et al. (2010) advise against traditional pen and paper assessments, though these are often required by HEIs, both as part of summative and formative assessment (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). It is suggested that assessments should be more relevant to real world tasks suitable to the workplace (Burton et al., 2008; Govaerts et al., 2013). The course gave groups an opportunity to hear the viewpoints and assessments of various stakeholders, such as peers and other educators. Rubrics were used for standardising the criteria for feedback (Wiggins cited in Herrington et al., 2010). Multiple artefacts and tools were part of the assessment, such as a group assignment, the authoring of at least one discussion forum post, a PhotoVoice project and a poster. The assessment processes were conducted over a sustained period of time, and required effort and collaboration. The course was examined at a mid-year examination, as required by the university rules.

Efforts could be made in subsequent iterations to amend the assessment rules and practices at faculty level. The course was designed so that groups could submit a draft of the assignment and get feedback, so that a more polished final product could be submitted, which was highlighted by a student in the survey:

*... as an individual I got to see where I with the course and to evaluate my understanding and see were (sic) I can improve. (Student Survey)*

The benefits of integrated authentic assessment and the creation of links between the social condition and meso practice, as well as the use of experiential learning, was evident from the comments made by a student during an individual interview:

*... pairing it [the course] with the assignment is like everything that we were learning in the lecture we are having to apply it immediately because we are already in a group so the group work that we were learning about were the same things that we had to apply immediately. (Individual interview, Patience)*

This course enabled the students to engage in various forms of assessment, including an appraisal of each other's performance and the functioning of the group. The following post on the discussion forum illustrates a student's ability to communicate her assessment of her

group functioning. She comments on the group stage, the manner in which the group is able to address conflict, skills usage and the actions that are taken to achieve cohesion. The post indicates the student's knowledge of the assessment criteria and understanding of the link between shared consequences of group effort and assessment, as is noted in her last comment on the poor mark attained for the presentation.

*I agree that our group is in the working stage. Members are highly productive in meeting due dates set. The group is flowing as when conflict arises there is an attentive listening, understanding, acceptance and personal choice to take on what has been said. Members want too [to] work together and be a cohesive unit instead of being individual entities as members realise what happens to one happens and reflects on the rest of the group such as when we got a bad mark for our presentation. (DF Post, All Blacks)*

Integrated assessment in authentic learning “requires the critical analysis of multiple forms of evidence that learning outcomes have been attained” (Herrington et al., 2010, p. 111). The course assessment included a check-list that all aspects of the assignment should cover, as well as a rubric of how the presentations would be evaluated (Annexure P). In the survey, students were questioned about their knowledge of the assessment criteria and 73% (n=48) of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the assessment criteria. The educator gave students an opportunity to view various exemplars of previous assignments conducted by students, as another way to elucidate what was required in the polished final group assignment.

In summary, the course was designed to achieve an aspect of authentic assessment by ensuring that students worked towards a polished finished product over a sustained period: the first draft of the assignment provided the students with areas for improvement; in addition, more than one method was used for assessment, and the final assessment was the sum of various individual and group activities, which were part of the development of the group assignment.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the elements of authentic learning that were incorporated into

the course design were experienced by students, using various data sources. The complex task around which this course was designed provided valuable real world significance that fostered the development of meso practice skills, albeit with challenges experienced using TEL. The collaborative aspect of the authentic learning framework provided students with an experiential learning opportunity to understand meso practice, while working in groups. While the authentic learning framework was valuable to meso practice and social work education, compared to a didactic course, greater consideration about the role played by affect is required. The following chapter considers how the concept of affect, which is not explicitly part of the elements of authentic learning, is highly significant for meso practice in social work. Affect is an aspect that was highlighted through the use of participatory learning and action techniques.



## CHAPTER 8 - FINDINGS ON AFFECT

*The power of human connectedness, of identification with the other as “bone of my bone ... draws us to “rescue” others in pain, almost as if this were a learned response embedded deep in our evolutionary past. We cannot help it. We are induced to empathy because there is something in the other that is felt to be part of the self, and something in the self that is felt to belong to the other.*

Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003, p. 127

### 8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I considered how the various elements of authentic learning were incorporated into the course, and analysed the students’ responses to these elements. I provided demographic information on the sample of students who were enrolled in the class of 2015. Through the use of students’ and field instruction supervisors’ verbatim quotes, as well as excerpts from the discussion forum and the group assignment, I provided evidence of how the elements of authentic learning were interwoven within the meso practice course. In chapter 8, I offer a description of how students collaborated on the group assignment and engaged in affective interchanges, as a result of deeper group cohesion. Educators often focus on the attainment of cognitive objectives in courses, at the expense of affective learning (Bolin, Khramtsova & Saarnia, 2005).

I had designed the meso practice course within the AL framework and made use of PLA techniques as I was part of a project on Participatory Parity and found that these techniques served to highlight the affective interchanges between students with was an area I have not anticipated at the commencement of this study. I was introduced to Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) techniques through being a member of a National Research Fund Project (Grant No. 90384), looking at Participatory Parity and Socially Just Pedagogies in South African Higher Education (Bozalek, 2014). PLA techniques are seen as a group of “open-ended flexible visual learning methods” (Bozalek, 2014, p. 471). These techniques allow groups of people to tell their story and speak about their past, present, and imagined future

lives within their lived context. An example of this method is drawing one's River of Life (see Figure 11). The other method used was PhotoVoice, whereby students were requested to compose, capture and display photographs that depicted the social condition on which they were working. The PhotoVoice project has been used in various settings to highlight social conditions that build on feminist research, to highlight issues within a real world context (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004). This project made use of PLA techniques for collecting data, as part of the methodology for engaging with socially just pedagogies. I saw the value of these exercises for the teaching of meso practice, and later introduced these PLA techniques into courses. Thus as I worked on the study I was surprised to discovered that the use of these techniques served to highlight the affective interchanges between students: that were evident when they engaged in exercises to develop a River of Life (RoL) and a PhotoVoice project.

Chapter 8 argues for the importance of including affect in teaching and learning, and the role of the educator in doing this. Affect is then an additional element that needs inclusion in the design process, which is different from the element of reflection in authentic learning course design, placing greater focus on individual process reflection and the experience of the activity. It does not, however, consider the relational aspects of the affective interchanges amongst the students and educator when engaged in the learning process. However, s interchanges that are laden with emotion and feelings are important to consider within social work, in order to understand the complexity of communication, and enable social work to adopt a holistic view of people within their environment.

Chapter 8 also covers the importance of bringing to the fore both positive and negative affect in social work, and, more specifically, for meso practice education. I have added brief information about PLA techniques and the use of the River of Life exercise, and the PhotoVoice project. This chapter also specifies the particular definitions of affect for this research, and how affect might be foregrounded in the meso practice course.

## **8.2 What is Affect?**

At a physical level, affect may be seen as *the forces that rage*, which according to Wetherell (2012), are part of physical and bodily functions; they include crying, blushing, grunting and

various levels of arousal. In social work, these functions of the body are called non-verbal communication. In a similar vein, affect is seen to include emotions that are often involuntary and physiological (Gerdes & Segal, 2009). Sometimes affect is seen as including every aspect of emotion, including thoughts and beliefs. Zembylas, for example, regards affect in the following way: “emotions [that] connect people’s thoughts, judgements and beliefs and are seen as the ‘glue of identity’” (2003, p. 222).

There is a multiplicity of words and terms used to describe affect, such as “feelings”, “emotions”, and “mood”, which adds to the complexity of the term, and makes it hard to identify. Dore (2016) confirms this by referring to emotions as a “gelatinous mass, bounded, deducible and recognisable, yet malleable, indeterminate and abstract” (p. 2).

At some levels, it is important for affect not to have a very precise definition and to have some fuzzy edges, as affect can mean many things, depending on the course being designed, the socio-historical context and the students (Howe, 2008). Irrespective of the definition of affect, it is an aspect that requires highlighting in a course such as meso practice, as students will work in an environment that is multifaceted and varied, and will engage in various affective encounters with many stakeholders, from clients who have aroused emotions, community members, supervisors, and management of the agencies where they are placed as students, or when qualified as social workers (Howe, 2008).

### **8.3 Related Terms Used to Describe Empathy**

Terms related to affect include compassionate imagining, empathy, *strategic empathy*, testimonial reading and affective solidarity, and these will be discussed in this section. Although regarded as an important skill in social work, there has been much criticism of the term “empathy” by Boler (2005) and Hemmings (2012). These feminist theorists are critical of the concentration on empathy, which they describe as a debilitating emotion that may lead to sentimental attachment to the other, rather than a genuine engagement with concern. According to these theorists, empathy is provided by a powerful helper, to a service-user who has less power, which reinforces hierarchy, power and social control, and does not acknowledge the enjoyment of authority and judgment felt by the person who is seen as the helper to the other person who is less fortunate (Boler, 2005; Hemmings, 2012). Power is also

a feature of the relationship between educator and student, as learning impacts on attention, focus and memory and is linked to power; therefore, power cannot be divorced from the emotions (Goralnik, Millenbah, Nelson, & Thorp, 2012). Power dynamics also exist in the relationship between educator and students, as the educator has power over the students regarding whether they pass or fail the course; this is also a factor that needs to be considered in relation to how teaching and learning occurs.

Testimonial reading is a process that acknowledges the role played by affect; here affect is described as the forces that sometimes rage within us because of emotional dissonance, which creates encounters that make us question our own values and beliefs, and in so doing creates opportunities to engage in a “willingness to challenge cherished beliefs and assumptions” (Boler, 2005, p. 176). This type of cognitive awareness of the dissonance created by affect makes the educator and the student more aware of the power relations that exist at universities and in the meso practice context.

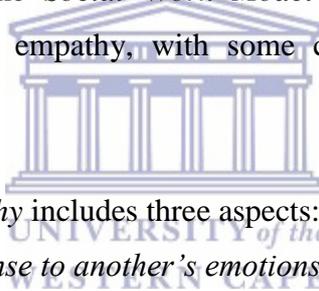
An understanding of power is important in social work too, because it enables the student social worker and educator to be more prepared to take risks, be flexible and become fully aware of their own roles in the helping process, as well as the teaching and learning processes (Freedberg, 2007). Boler suggests that in order to achieve a more effective type of empathy, with fewer power dynamics, one can use testimonial reading and “collective witnessing, which are understood in relation to others, and in relation to personal and cultural histories and material conditions” (2005, p. 178). In doing so, there is greater understanding of cultural and socio-political factors that are at play within the helping process (Freedberg, 2007). This would create a better understanding of the world view of the other person, which includes a recognition of power, race, economic status and gender.

Hemmings’ response to power and dissonance is the use of affective *solidarity*, which is the embedding of affective dissonance in a struggle for alternative values and ways of seeing, being and becoming, which calls for mutual recognition and affective solidarity; this may even include a type of empathy (Hemmings, 2012) that shows a commitment to social justice.

Bozalek (2011a) found that, within the South African context, factors such as race, gender and generational influences played a role regarding differing degrees of access to “food, care, education” (p. 470). Therefore, as students engaged with the information around the social

condition as well as the River of Life exercises, these provided opportunities to engage in conversations about race, access to opportunities and diverse cultural beliefs and values within the South African context, as well as creating opportunities for engagement regarding broader issues of social justice within the teaching and learning space.

Slamat (2009) refers to affect as developing “compassionate imagining, [which] opens up possibilities for the creation of a community inspired by a passion for multiplicity and social change” (p. 1153). Here compassion is seen as the ability to see oneself in the situation of the other, and this is similar to the *Social Work Model of Empathy* developed by Gerdes and Segal, 2009. This model provides a comprehensive way to view empathy, which is more than a skill used to “see the world through their [the other person’s] eyes” (Corey, 2006, p. 143). While empathy may be seen as an essential skill in social work, there are many inconsistent and confusing definitions of empathy, and these can include listening and trying to understand the other person. The *Social Work Model of Empathy* considers affective, cognitive and action aspects of empathy, with some consideration of power dynamics (Gerdes & Segal, 2009).



The *Social Work Model of Empathy* includes three aspects:

1. *The affective response to another’s emotions and actions,*
  2. *the cognitive processing of one’s affective response and the other person’s perspective and,*
  3. *the conscious decision-making to take empathic action*
- (Gerdes & Segal, 2009, p. 114).

The *Social Work Model of Empathy* is similar to the notion of *Strategic Empathy* written about by Zembylas, who acknowledges the commitment to make “affective connections without dismissing the critical interrogation” and processing of the information (2012, p.123). However, what the *Social Work Model of Empathy* lacks is the clear acknowledgement of the power relations between the person who is regarded as the social worker (the helper) juxtaposed against the person who is seen to be the client (or the person in need of help), as well as the pleasure that is derived by the social worker in the provision of empathy (Boler, 2005; Hemmings, 2012). These important aspects demand attention, especially regarding the power aspects of the helping relationship in the provision of empathy. It is the recognition of affect, power relations, empathy and emotions by the educator who is teaching meso practice

which may trigger personal growth, awareness, learning, better understanding of the situation of the *other* and change when students encounter various affective responses in themselves and in encounters with others (Hemmings, 2012) within the teaching and learning space. Segal and Wagaman (2017) add that the teaching of social empathy facilitates an understanding of “social and economic justice” (p. 1), as students become aware of how people are marginalised and oppressed, as was displayed in some of the PhotoVoice pictures. Also, students were able to understand their own position and that of their peers within that context.

#### **8.4 The Importance of Affect in Social Work**

In the light of the use of empathy and developing a better understanding of the social worker’s role in the provision of empathy, there is a need to better understand the importance of affect within the helping relationship. Affect, which is about awareness and monitoring of emotions both within the self and others, to improve reasoning, cooperation and collaboration, has long been a concern of the social work profession (Howe, 2008). Affect is important in social work, so much so that Steinberg, when writing a tribute to Roselle Kurland, noted that Kurland saw four aspects as important for effective meso practice, including “skill, art, heart, and ethical sensitivity” (Steinberg, 2007, p. 35). Social work is emotional and affective work (Howe, 2008). To be able to practice as a social worker requires an alignment between behaviour, affect and cognition, to allow for appropriate and thoughtful observation, description, explanation, prediction and intervention (Dolan, 2002). In this way, there is a better understanding of how to work with clients who have “pressing needs and whose emotions are aroused” (Howe, 2008, p. 2).

This interest in affect in the social work profession is also consistent with findings by Dore (2016), Boler (2005), MacFadden (2009) and Zembylas (2002), who have linked teaching and learning and course design with affect and emotions. The lack of acknowledgement of the importance of affect in teaching, learning and social work has, according to Howe (1996, p. 92), resulted in change:

*Relationships between social workers and their clients change from interpersonal to economic, from therapeutic to transactional, from nurturing and supportive to contractual and service oriented. The personal relationship once a central feature of social work practice is stripped of its social, cultural, emotional and interpersonal dimensions.*

A disregard for people and the affect they bring to relationships supports the development of a managerial culture and language in social work. This disregard has also been observed by Gregson and Holloway (2005), internationally and locally, by Bozalek (2009) and Simpson (2010) in social work education. So, while the use of quality standards offers quality assurance, teaching and learning are compromised when course design becomes an exercise that is just performed as a tick-box exercise and not woven into the course. The importance of affect, both positive and negative, was further highlighted in this course through the use of PLA techniques.

### **8.5 Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) Techniques**

PLA developed in the 1970s as a response to unsatisfactory results obtained from top-down, subject-object relationships in conventional research methods used in rural development (Pretty, 1995; Wetmore & Theron, 1998). Hence the need arose for PLA techniques that created flexible methods that embraced human consciousness, emphasised people's capabilities, moved from the bottom up and recognised indigenous knowledge and a two-way learning processes (Abbot, 1999; Mukherjee, 2002). PLA is seen as visual and tangible activities done with small groups of people, who facilitate the sharing of information, deeper reflection of context and experience, and allow for students to become co-creators of knowledge within the teaching and learning space (Bozalek, 2011b; Chambers, 2007).

The methods have been developed by non-governmental organisation (NGO) workers in India, and are suitable for people with varying levels of literacy (Chambers, 2007). PLA is an innovative, creative process that considers how human experiences are lived, spoken about openly and felt by participants (Mukherjee, 2002; Wetmore & Theron, 1998). Amongst students, the use of PLA techniques contributes to developing reflection, listening and critical consciousness through sharing information (Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010).

In the meso practice course, the combination of the aspects seen as valuable by Kurland, such as creative activities (Steinberg, 2007), was facilitated by the use of PLA techniques, and served to reinforce the need for affect in course design. PLA techniques can be used to foster a greater use of imagination, respect and recognition across racial and class differences, and engagement in deep reflection on various issues which could lead to action amongst students

(Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010; Leibowitz, Bozalek, Rohleder, Carolissen, & Swartz, 2010). PLA techniques enable students to learn more about themselves, their values and beliefs. Using these techniques also provides an opportunity for students to learn how to use such activities when they conduct meso practice, thereby showing sensitivity, empathy and humility in trying to recognise the views of the service-users who will be their group members (Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010; Wetmore & Theron, 1998). PLA has been successfully used in South African HE to teach students to become critically reflective in learning about difference, through sharing their histories and talking about race, gender and inequalities (Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010). PLA has certain aspects that are similar to the authentic learning framework, as well as to education design-based research with its phases of analysis, action and reflection, as well as the collaborative, and reflective aspects of course design (Wetmore & Theron, 1998).

A key factor for the inclusion of PLA in the meso practice course was to facilitate engagement with affect. Levels of reflection and an understanding of affective relations requires “iterations and depth transformation and criticality” (Redmond, cited in White et al., 2006). The engagement of students in simple reflection is regarded as single-loop learning, whereas double-loop learning is the process when there is a questioning of accepted values (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Hatton & Smith, 1995). The deeper level of reflection that includes affect, which is a feature of the *pedagogy of discomfort*, includes disruption, because it requires that students question their deeply-held values and beliefs while they learn and reflect (Boler, 2005). Unlike the element of reflection in the authentic learning framework, there is experiential learning through sharing, role play, and the articulation and development of support networks, which allow for seeing difference beyond the cognitive level, to include power relations, *strategic empathy* and affect amongst educators and students (Bozalek, 2011; Zembylas, 2012).

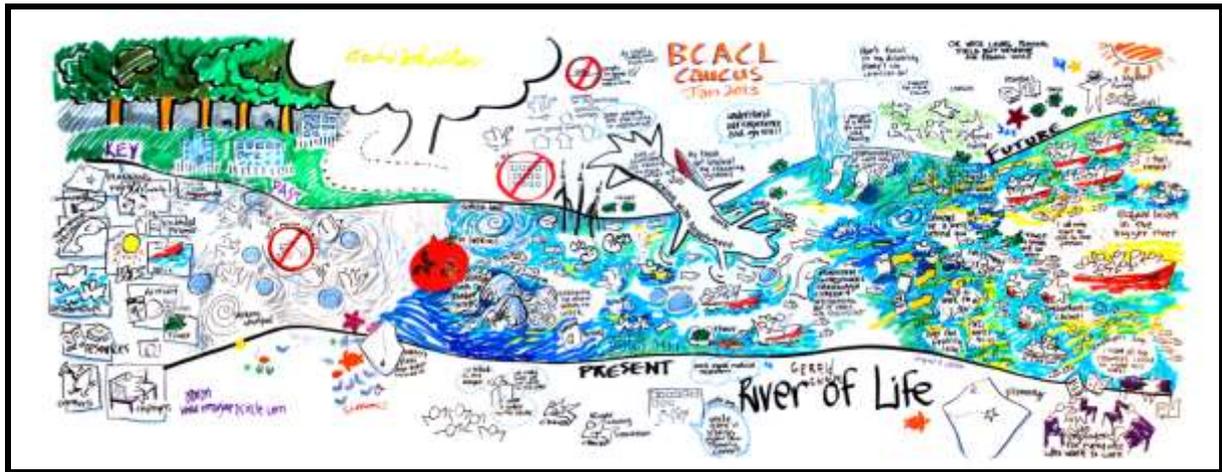
PLA techniques give students the opportunity to express affect and to provide a better understanding of issues regarding power and control that emerge within groups. Also, students may, through the use of PLA techniques (River of Life and PhotoVoice), carefully “consider issues of where they have been placed in relation to resources in [the] light of their own experiences” and that of their group members (Bozalek, 2011, p. 475). Furthermore, PLA techniques have been found to develop deeper reflective capacities, which may lead to a “critical, self-conscious concern for social justice” (Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010, p. 553).

## 8.6 The River of Life Exercise

The River of Life is a PLA technique that gives a person the opportunity to tell the story of their past, present and future, and is an activity that was incorporated into the meso practice course. In this visual technique, students can identify, draw and share critical incidents about their own life journeys (Gachago, Ivala, Condy, & Chigona, 2013). While these activities are linked to the reflection and articulation element of authentic learning, here the students compose a narrative that is shared with group members. The aspect of affect develops as students and the facilitator obtain a better understanding of each other, while engaging in affective interchanges which strengthen rapport, cooperation, collaboration and the active participation of students in the learning process. In this regard, Vygotsky noted that, “All higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57).

In this way, students reassess their own identity and see this activity as a springboard for change, skills development, fun, creativity, transformation and learning (Bozalek, 2011). While the River of Life exercise was conducted in a tutorial session, facilitated by the educator and a Masters level social work student, the smaller group-setting arrangement, which was open only to students belonging to a specific group, allowed for deeper sharing of affect and, as both facilitators were registered social workers, they were able to manage any psychological distress experienced by the students. In this way, connections are made not just at an academic and group level, but also at a personal relational level, which includes emotions (Gardner, Fook, & White, 2006).

In drawing, their Rivers of Life, students were asked to include significant milestones in their life and then explain their drawings to the group. The instructions were to draw a river depicting past, present and future aspects of life, and aspirations for the future. Students were shown a sample picture of a River of Life, as an example of how symbols can be used to depict various aspects of their life journey (Figure 11).



**Figure 11: Example of a River of Life Drawing (Johannes, 2013)**

The students were in control regarding how much information they wished to share, as well as the depth of information they shared. The students also knew that the session was being audio-taped. Ethics clearance for this aspect of the study was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Non-medical committee (Annexure R). The object of the exercise was to get students to relate to each other at a deeper level and become more aware of each other's differences and similarities, which would in turn develop group cohesion, collegiality and a trusting climate (Gardner et al., 2006). At another level, the River of Life exercise was designed to assist students to see the value of using such an exercise to learn more about how emotions and affect can be depicted through narratives and pictures.

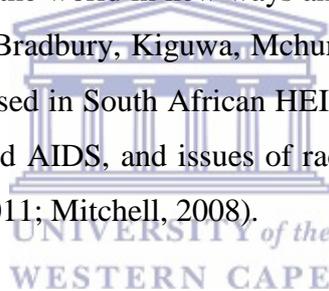
During the River of Life activity, the educator played both the role of facilitator of the session and teacher, by offering guidance and suggestions to students who might use this activity in group sessions they might conduct in the future (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006). The educator shared how drawings and the narratives that accompany the pictures could provide a rich source of data, and be a non-threatening strategy for learning, self-discovery, exploring affect and emotions (Walker, Caine-Bish & Wait, 2009) and the establishment of group identity, as well as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2003). The other PLA technique used was PhotoVoice.

## **8.7 PhotoVoice**

PhotoVoice was a term developed by (Wang & Burris, 1997), who worked with rural women

in China and were able to use the photographs taken by the women to highlight their work and health concerns to policy makers. The PhotoVoice project affords students the opportunity to engage critically and have greater affective interchanges on the selected social condition, to stimulate articulation, encourage social justice, support collaboration and develop multiple perspectives. Many of the elements of authentic learning were achieved using this activity (Herrington et al., 2010) and this has extended the affective component of the course.

Other advantages of PhotoVoice for students are the development of documentary photography skills, capacity building, developing group cohesion by exploring affective interchanges and creative ways to highlight a social condition (Strack et al., 2004). These skills are of value to students, as they may later tap into these skills to develop novel and creative ways to advocate for social justice in the communities where they will practice. In the process, students learn to see the world in new ways and create a learning community for teaching themselves and others (Bradbury, Kiguwa, Mchunu, Mogopudi, & Ngubeni, 2013). This tool has been successfully used in South African HEIs, in rural areas to explore various social conditions such as HIV and AIDS, and issues of race in higher education institutions (Cornell & Kessi, 2016; Kessi, 2011; Mitchell, 2008).



In this course, an adapted version of the PhotoVoice process was incorporated into the group assignment, to get the groups to use photographs to develop the identity of their groups, explore affect and see the social condition around which the group was created in a different way (Cornell & Kessi, 2016; Mitchell, 2008). To assist with understanding this activity, students were given a short introduction on how to take photographs by considering the use of light, perspective, position and background, by a fellow student who had worked as a professional photographer. The photographs created by the students were then printed and displayed in class. These artefacts were assessed by judges who were part of the academic staff within the Social Work Department, and also assessed in the process of group presentations conducted by students. The students were able to use pictures to look at aspects of their social condition. Another advantage of the PhotoVoice project, was that, like the River of Life process, it allowed students to observe and acknowledge the value and talents that different members bring to the project.

## 8.8 Role of the Educator

Course design requires the thoughtful consideration of affect as, despite the recognition that emotions are important in learning, most educators when designing and developing curricula, focus on the cognitive objectives of the course, giving little consideration to the affective aspects (Bolin, Khramtsova, & Saarnio, 2005). However, there are instances, especially in social work, where students may question the value of the content of a course in relation to its relevance in the workplace. The educator's response to this question would often include a rich example based on experience, explaining the value of the intervention as it is conducted in practice; this might include an in-depth description of the feelings and emotions that accompanied the experience, such as the removal of a child from a situation of harm. Weiss (2000, p. 47) notes that:

*Emotion impels what we attend to, and attention drives learning. So one of the most important things we [educators] have to do is ensure that learners become emotionally involved in whatever we are teaching them.*

The role of the educator is to be actively involved in constructing a curriculum which encourages the expression of affective encounters. The educator needs to ensure that the teaching space is a safe one, where difference is appreciated and a non-judgmental attitude is upheld. At the same time, the educator needs to be aware of the inherent power dynamics at play, and would require engagement in “ethical pedagogy” to ensure that even the painful and discomfiting views and perspectives of all students are heard with sensitivity and introspection, as to how the educator's perspective has been shaped by the dominant culture (Boler, 2005, p. 179). This is not an easy task, and working with large class sizes, this type of sensitivity and introspection by the educator is compromised.

At another level, the educator needs to have a degree of self-awareness regarding how affect and privilege have influenced their own teaching and course design. I engaged in my own reflections on my own journey that has led me to teaching in Higher Education and I have shared some of my personal history in this process (Appendix 1).

The educator is part of the affective interchange and has an important role to play in student-centred learning. This type of learning requires exposing students and the educator to

discomfort and tension, and being prepared to acknowledge this discomfort and see the areas that are risky, as we “inhabit a morally ambiguous self” (Boler, 2005, p. 182) In the real world, dissonance and tension exist, and it is important to acknowledge that these tensions do occur in professional practice; students and educators need to develop the insight to manage these situations, first in the teaching and learning space, and then in the messiness of the real world.

Having provided some insight into affect and its role in social work education, my view is that the element of reflection within the authentic learning framework falls short of addressing affective interchanges that occur in courses, especially in meso practice education.

## **8.9 The Limits of Reflection in Authentic Learning**

The authentic learning framework has reflection as one of its nine elements. Reflection is achieved when the course design creates opportunities for students to have agency in the task they are working on, and where they can move freely in the learning environment and return to the elements to act, after reflection (Herrington, 1997, 2011). In addition, reflection is seen to occur socially when students compare their thoughts with those of experts, teachers, guides and other students, as they work collaboratively and share ideas (Herrington, 1997; 2011). To support the idea that learning occurs in reflection, Herrington (1997) borrows the following definition of reflection:

*Those intellectual and affective activities [used] to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations (Boud, Keogh and Walker, cited in Herrington, 1997, p. 54.).*

Boud et al. (1985) see reflection as supporting the need to revisit the experience, to pick out the important aspects, to understand the positive and negative feelings about the experience and to assess how the experience develops new knowledge for the student. These views on reflection are individualistic rather than relational, and thus do not provide explanations of how empathy and the understanding of the affect displayed towards others affects what happens between people, or how the affect of an individual is processed more deeply. Often the methods suggested to promote reflection include the use of an e-journal to copy information and add one’s own notes, within an electronic learning programme (Herrington,

1997); it can also be achieved by keeping a diary, but too little focus is placed on the influence of affect on the learning process, and on affect from a relational perspective, which is so important for meso practice.

In authentic learning studies, there is very little mention made of emotion (Herrington, 1997; Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2006), except when developing the real world task to ensure that students are emotionally invested, so that they have a “personal frame of reference that involves an emotional commitment within the student in addition to a cognitive interest” (Rule, 2006, p. 2). This comment suggests that while not all aspects of emotion and learning are disregarded within the authentic learning framework, there is no focus on the relational component of affect, which is the human sharing of personal history and identity, and how students and educators work with affective interchanges. This may include understandings of how the sharing of experiences when working collaboratively include an affective response to the feelings and emotions of others, an understanding of the other person's perspective and the processing of this information, in order to engage in a plan of action which is what Gerdes and Segal (2009) refer to as *empathy* in social work.

Social work students need to develop empathy and be aware of affect, within their own bodies, and have greater self-awareness of the affect and feeling of others. The authentic learning framework is comprehensive, but does not give substantial attention to the role played by emotion and empathy, as well as personal sharing in learning, which is crucial, especially within disciplines such as social work. This brings me to conclude that an understanding of the reciprocal nature of sharing of positive and negative affect needs to be developed within course design, so that there is an awareness of how the actions and comments of people within the learning environment make others feel, behave and think. Affect integrates emotional and cognitive aspects, fosters better collaboration, improves engagement, develops better understanding of diversity and better self-awareness, and enables assessment of personal values and beliefs.

In addition, *emotion work*, which is seen as relational, and is used by an educator to negotiate “meanings about roles and relations”, cannot be separated from teaching and learning (Zembylas, 2002, p. 197). The challenge posed to educators is for them to engage in a type of *Strategic Empathy* and be prepared to question their own beliefs, to better understand their students, in order to develop “affective connections without dismissing the critical

interrogation of past emotional, histories, knowledges and experiences” (Zembylas, 2012, p. 123). Nevertheless, this type of empathy still requires a critical and analytical ability to accept the other side and acknowledge the context and the cultural aspects and values of the student and the educator that contribute to these affective interchanges.

While the nine elements in authentic learning provided a sound pedagogical foundation for course development in meso practice, by ensuring collaborative learning while learning about group dynamics, the authentic learning framework did not provide for the inclusion of emotions, particularly from a relational perspective. PLA techniques were thus incorporated within the course to bring out affective interchanges. Authentic learning provides a foundation for getting students to work together and reflect, but falls short of teaching the type of empathy required in social work. This type of empathy would enable the development of students as caring professionals who, according to Zembylas (2013), would need to exhibit the skill of *strategic empathy*, which is aligned with social justice and interconnectedness, as students and educator engage with each other, even within an environment of ambiguity or hostility, because of troubled knowledges carried by students.

So the question to be asked is: *how do we teach students to develop affective solidarity or empathy in terms of the Social Work Model of Empathy, in a course such as meso practice?* Developing this type of empathy would mean that the students would attempt to better understand or imagine what the other person is feeling and thinking, process this information as an individual, and then make choices based on this understanding. In addition, it would require the educator to be prepared to engage with a variety of knowledges, even if they go against the views of the educator and the dominant views of society. This type of engagement may result in the opening up of the affective spaces which will result in improved group cohesion, because this type of empathy will create a solidarity that will extend beyond the group and develop students as caring public professionals (Walker & McLean, 2010). Next consideration is given to how the use of various activities and PLA techniques contribute to learning with affect and about affect.

### **8.10 Findings**

The following are the findings that refer to aspects of affect, the use of PLA techniques and the role of the educator in this study.

### 8.10.1 Emotions

In the assignment submitted by the class group called the “Girl Gang”, direct reference is made to the power of affective interchanges in the course, which created dissonance for students. In the assignment, this group offers the following advice to future students, undertaking this course:

*Emotions are [the]causes and [the]results of conflict. When conflict arises, the group leader should be objective by listening to both sides of the story. Group members must find ways of dealing with conflict in the group. Members in conflict have strong and negative feelings against one another. [H]owever these emotions are real and must be addressed so that conflicts may be resolved.* (Group Assignment, Girl Gang, p. 23- 24)

As the above suggestion notes, emotions are a strong part of the learning process, and therefore there is a need to acknowledge emotions in the course design, and for educators to play a role in allowing students to work through these emotions and areas of dissonance. This type of dissonance requires the use of what Boler (2006) regards as testimonial reading, or affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012) and *Strategic Empathy* (Zembylas, 2012), so that students can cognitively process the affective aspects of communication to see the other view, in order to address issues that relate to positioning, power and working with others.

Another area of dissonance that emerged in this course was the management of *freeloaders*, who are described as members of a group who provide very little input to a functioning group (Johnston & Miles, 2004). While positive affect is a motivator for learning, negative affect is also part of the process and should be shared in the teaching and learning space (Boekaerts, 2007). Students have to feel the changes that occur within them, both in their minds and their bodies, as when emotions become overwhelming they will need to know how to exercise calm and reason. It is natural to get upset and angry when members let you down and do not submit the work they had agreed to do, but how the group responds to this is also important. Developing awareness of one’s own emotions and receiving feedback about one’s own emotions and behaviour should be used to develop skills of self-regulation and control of one’s own emotions, which are of value in the real world and when working with clients. When trying understand better ways to resolve these issues in the group, consideration may be given to the use of empathy as described in a model by Gerdes and Segal (2009). An

example of negative affect can be observed in the following discussion forum posts (Figure 12):

**Post 1: a concerned member** (Apr 18, 2015 5:55 PM)

*dear members*

*i just wanted to express my feelings so that all of you can see it. well i know that my personal issues have nothing to do with the group, but considering that you guys are studying social work i really expected you guys to be more considerate. for Christ sake my mum was in hospital and had an operation of which i shared with you guys and the reason i could not attend some classes. even sent Roshini an email. yet i still find it difficult to understand how is it possible that when you were giving out tasks how is it possible that i was not given a task. and each and everyone of you is telling me they do not know some are saying i was issued a task they just do not know which one, and it is very dissapointing [sic] that even the group leader is failing to assist me with an accurate answer.*

**Post 2: Re: a concerned member Educator** (Apr 19, 2015 8:38 PM) - Read by: 3

*Dear Imbali*

UNIVERSITY of the

*Let us talk and see how you can be assisted. Juice [Imbali's group], let us make a plan.*

*Regards*

**Post 3: Re: a concerned member**(Apr 20, 2015 6:16 PM) - Read by: 4 

*Hi Imbali ,*

*I was told that you were unable to attend meetings because you had a crisis. What I would have appreciated is that you could have provided a letter of absence. It is even stipulated in course outline that if you are absent for a meeting, then you need to issue a letter. I know that you have told your friends but still, the protocol needs to be followed. I think that in the second meeting which was held in 1st week of March, the group mentioned the letter of absence.*

*We do fully understand that you going through a rough time. It is not like we are trying to be ignorant but it would be appreciated that you follow the protocol.*

*Regards,*

*Thando*

*Post 4: Re: a concerned member (Apr 25, 2015 11:17 AM) - Read by: 1*

*Hi Imbali ,*

*Can you please draft letters of absence so that they will be part of the annexures*

*Thanks,*

*Thando*

### **Figure 12: Discussion Forum Posts from the Juice Group**

The responses in Posts 3 and 4 by Thando to Imbali (pseudonyms used) display a lack of affective solidarity and the adoption of a managerial response to the difficulties expressed by Imbali in Post 1. In Post 4, Thando is mainly interested in the letter of absence of Imbali. Morrison (2006) notes that a similar lack of emotional sensitivity by helping professionals creates problems in the field, and can spill over into the teams. On the other hand, professionals who understood affect, such as nursing staff who displayed anticipatory, observational and relational patient care skills, were patient-centred, caring and life-saving (Benner, 2001). Factors that may account for Thando's business-like response could be linked to performativity, when compared to my response in Post 2 suggesting that the issue be addressed, but not providing strategies and methods. While I concede that some aspects may become obscured within a large class of about 80 students, there is definitely a need to be alert to affect in future planning and implementation of courses.

Here is another example of conflict regarding *free-loaders* and incidents of conflict, as shown in communication between students, Pono and Buhle, in the focus group after the course, which alludes to a multiplicity of feelings that arose while engaged in the course:

*Pono: For instance if maybe you find that uhm some members are not submitting their work or they are they are distancing themselves, they are not attending meetings you find that we [the rest of the group] become frustrated. But then you find to achieve our goals we all had this excited feeling. So in all it was mixed, it depended on what was going on because sometimes we had these bad conflicts and sometimes we had a lot of disagreements. Sometimes we laughed, so in overall it was, it was okay, just okay.*

*Buhle: I believe that ups and downs are essential for every relationship so that we are able to grow in that. [The Ubuntu group, Focus group]*

How this type of conflict, created by members who were seen as freeloaders, may be mitigated when teaching meso practice or when group work is used, remains a challenge in social work education, and teaching and learning in HE generally (Connery & Vohs, 1989; Haigh & Gold, 1993; Laurillard, 2009). The identification of such members who are termed *freeloaders* requires careful consideration, so that strategies may be developed to support group cohesion. Also, in groups there are difficult personalities, including members who want to dominate, and at the other end of the continuum, members who do not engage; furthermore, other members may be marginalised for various reasons. It is important to consider strategies that will mitigate these practices and behaviours that occur in most groups (Hafner & Ellis, 2004; Johnston & Miles, 2004).

Relationships are at the heart of social work, and students need to develop skills that show competence in a relational understanding, especially when undertaking meso practice (Corey et al., 2010; Trevithick, 2006). Thus, the idea of helping students better understand their own emotions, and those of their group members, can help reduce the degree of freeloading in the group, and get students to engage in conversations around how to work with the freeloaders. Skills that can be useful in improving group cohesion are: describing emotions, appraising basic emotions in oneself and others, conflict management, seeing the view of the other and problem-solving. These skills reside not only in the individual but especially within the group. Teaching students to develop their “emotional antennae” better prepares them for the workplace and improves their work in these teams (Morrison, 2006, p. 9).

However, not all affective interchanges in the course stem from conflict, as can be seen in the following example, where Ngozi explains the value of getting to know class members at a deeper level and being able to be more caring and supportive of one other as a result of cohesion within the group:

*... the strength of this course was we got to know like learners from our class in a more personal level, because normally when we go to class we get there [and then] we get out, we don't talk much, we don't care much of what is happening in another person's life. But then with this [course] we got to realise kuthi [Zulu term for “that”] you can notice when Ngozi [name of group member] is not fine or when Lelo is feeling kind of somehow ja. So, we got to see, to understand each other on another level. (Focus Group, Social*

Stars)

The following excerpt also shows how positive affect, created by relational interchanges between students through singing, sharing, supporting, dancing and taking selfies, was a motivator within the course, and enabled students to see the varied talents and positions of the group members:

*also it was a very great experience because we were able to bond, together, we, were able to si-i-ng and have fun and da-ance and take a lot of self-i-i-ies, we were able to, not only focus on like, you know the intense part of the course, but to focus on us building a relationship as group members, it enabled us to [...] see other parts of each other that we didn't know and you know, some people are more talented in singing and that's what we were able to discover through this and ja, basically there is plenty of fun. (Focus Group, Social Stars)*

When students have fun while learning, they find the course more engaging, and this quote, also from the Social Stars focus group, speaks of the fun aspect of the exercises – a similar observation to that in the study by Bradbury et al. (2013). The fun aspects of working together were a motivator for learning and did not trivialise or detract from the serious issues that were part of the social conditions or the difficulties students spoke about, as part of engaging in PLA techniques. The River of Life is the next exercise that will be considered in this chapter.

### ***8.10.2 River of Life***

This section considers the findings that relate to the River of Life exercises that were conducted with the students.



**Figure 13: Painting of a River of Life (Watercolour)**

Figure 13 is an example of a River of Life using watercolour, texture and space to illustrate affect and show happy and sad points in the student artist's past and future life. Dark, dirty water represents difficult points in the past, but clean fresh flowing water represents her future.

Importantly, the use of a deep kind of reflection, which is similar to what Boler (2005) refers to as testimonial reading, was observed in the comments made by student Diamond, in a focus group. In the quote, the student is able to reflect on her various positions or standpoints, as she describes herself as a resilient person and can acknowledge her own strengths and the action she would like to take in future to help and empower others:

*I also appreciated the fact that we did the river of life again this year and this year it was a bit more reflective than it was last year, this time we were able to, for me it was an opportunity for me to ... look at my journey, you know from a young age, to to to sort of evaluate where I've come and to set new goals for myself and to realise that I am a winner in a lot of ways and that, there's a lot of things in store for me. And that I have potential to do a lots and that I am a very resilient person it taught me a lot about myself and with that said, with the rivers of lifes for the group members, I was also able to be inspired to know that other people had [...] way worse [...] uh circumstances but they still made it and that not only empowers me but it also encourages me not only, to not take the course lightly, but also to to make sure that when I graduate, I'll be able to now (pause) help other people, empower other people and do my part to alleviate poverty, to do my part to prevent what happened to me or others from happening to other*

people. (Diamond, Focus Group Social Stars)

The River of Life activity acknowledges the past experiences of students, their struggles, their successes and their privileges, and when explored using PLA research techniques, can provide a means by which students may be confronted with privileges and marginality through encountering the “other” (Bozalek, 2011, p. 469). It also may serve to develop group cohesion - which is a similar finding to that of Bozalek and Biersteker (2010) regarding students who felt strengthened by sharing using the River of Life drawings.

For example, students shared about the difficulties experienced by many of the female students in accessing funding to attend university. Here, a student explains part of her River of Life drawing (Figure 14), how her social circumstances impacted on her access to education and how this made her feel.

*Then after matric I did not go to any university because I lacked finance if you see up there there is something like a dark cloud it was kind of difficult - it was a difficult phase for me, there were times whereby I wanted to attempt suicide because I felt like it was the end of everything. I felt like education was the only thing that was going to take me out of my situation Things were just so bad (sigh).*  
(Social Stars, River of Life discussion)

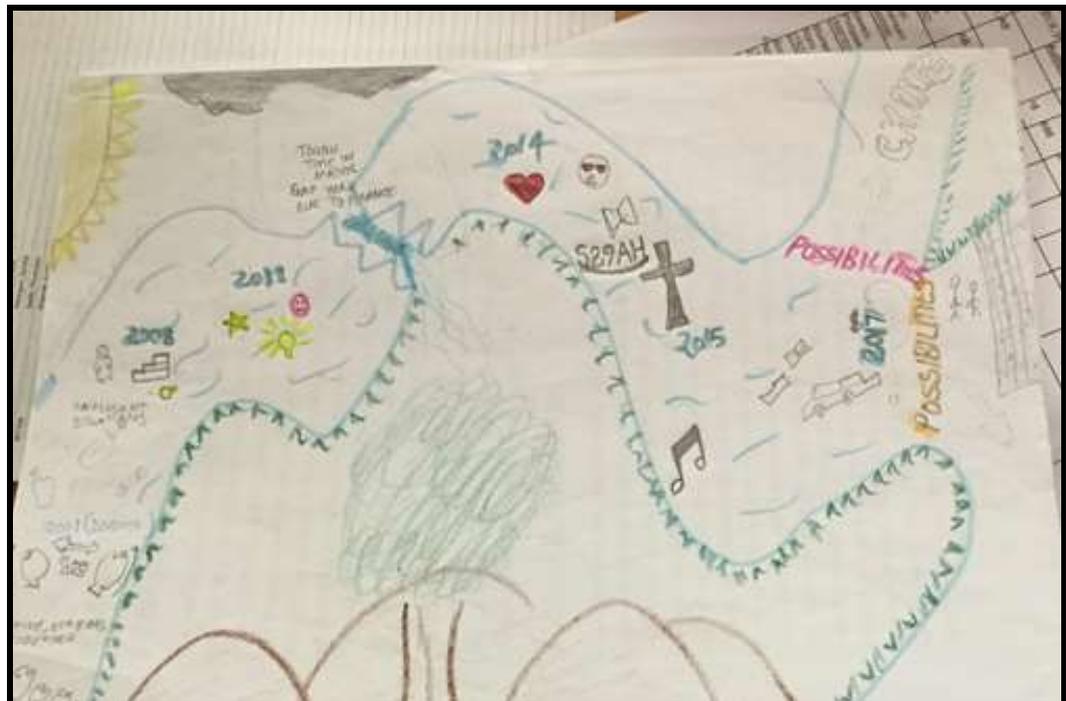
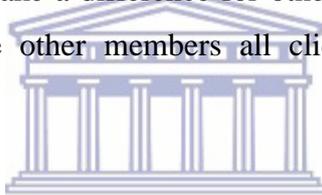


Figure 14: Drawing of a River of Life (Pencil)

In Fig 14, the words under the cloud on the left side of the drawing reads, “Tough time in matric, Gap year due to finances”. It should be noted that this “gap year” was spent working to pay for her studies.

The earlier quote and the drawing in Fig 14 display the type of affective communication shared by students through the use of PLA techniques. This type of sharing of experiences facilitated an understanding of difference and similarity among students. Furthermore, the same student explained that as a result of her experiences of not having enough money to attend university, she and her friends are setting up a “not-for-profit” organisation to help other students with similar challenges. The use of the River of Life provided the student with an opportunity to display the affect of discomfort when she struggled to get into university, and then the affect of joy when she showcased her position within this context, as well as her plans to engage in actions that make a difference for others. When this student finished the explanation of her drawing, the other members all clicked their fingers to show their happiness.



Another example of a River of Life is depicted in Fig. 15, which shows how a student depicted transition in her life and was prepared to share very sensitive and personal information in the tutorial group. The process of sharing her story was a powerful way of allowing other group members to understand more about the high and low points in her River of Life and indicated the level of comfort she had in the group and the tutorial process in her feeling safe to share her story in this space.



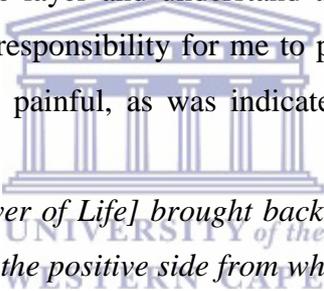
**Figure 15: Drawing of a River of Life (Crayon)**

The drawing in Figure 15 is bold and has a strong visual effect with bright colours, but drawings alone are not enough to understand the pictures and symbols, as it is through the narrative that meaning is developed (Bozalek, 2011; Walker, Caine-Bish, & Wait, 2009). The narrative provides greater information on how the story was told, and for what purpose, and discusses the cultural and social resources that were present or not present, which played a role in the situation depicted in the drawing (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). Narratives can serve to remember, make sense of and at times even “mislead the audience” (Riessman & Quinney, 2005, p. 395). The narrative that accompanies the artefact in figure 15 indicates that there were two distinct set of emotions illustrated in the drawing: on the left-hand side - sadness and on the right-hand side - happiness. The student revealed to the group that she had been diagnosed as bipolar and notes that “... *the time that I was depressed I felt like was in a dark hole...*”. One side of the drawing makes use of the night sky, with yellow stars and the moon. The student describes the left hand side of the picture:

*This side represents the dark side of my past mmh! As you can see there is a shark mmh! Chasing the fish, the fish is me mmh! ... there is rocks here showing that it was very narrow path that I had to go through... You see the water, this side is like darker and its dirtyish like so that of like my, my past.* (Student author)

of River of Life in Fig 15)

Next she goes on to describe the right hand side of the drawing, by saying that on the one hand, the fish is how she represents herself and it is growing bigger and swimming with other fish around her and the largest fish is her, as she becomes a “flying fish” that is coloured with a yellow light surrounding the fish. In this drawing she is able to talk about her emotions and where she sees her future, as she adds “*I have used sunlight to shine over the fish showing that I have a bright future*”. Figure 15 and the narrative accompanying it serve to offer the other group members an understanding of the various emotions and moods that were part of her journey. By sharing this pedagogical space, there was a collective witnessing of her story by the group members and the educator, in relation to personal, cultural histories and physical and mental conditions that can result in the development of “genealogies of one’s positionalities and emotional resistances” (Boler, 2005, p.178). It invites students to develop empathy, look beyond the surface layer and understand the lived experience. This type of exercise does demand an ethical responsibility for me to protect the student, be responsible and be sensitive when sharing is painful, as was indicated by the student who developed Figure 15:



*So it [drawing the River of Life] brought back some of those memories but then too, for me to think of the positive side from where I came from to what I am now through the challenges that I have go through that is, is actually a positive note so it actually was a positive exercise* (Student author of River of Life in Fig 8.5)

The River of Life exercise resulted in deep self-reflection and sharing, as the student says: “*I am a quiet person and I talk softly most of the time and I had to come out of my shell*”. This type of open and honest sharing does expose vulnerability, but at the same time it allows members of the group to develop an understanding of affect, and highlights the necessity to use a nuanced way to feel one’s way through the uncomfortable interchanges, as well as the need to acknowledge emotions in course design. The River of Life activity contributed to developing a sense of belonging, assisted by understanding affect, while encouraging creativity and the learning of practice skills for meso practice (Malekoff cited in Rosenwald et al., 2013). The other PLA technique that was used was PhotoVoice.

### 8.10.3 PhotoVoice Project

In this project students were able to develop different aspects of their identity within the group, and were given an opportunity to use a different skill set beyond the verbal and written skills that are often prized in the academic setting.

*Oh ja, so it creates space, even if maybe you're not so excellent with the written assignments. (Focus group, Juice)*

The topics chosen by many of the groups have a high affective component, such as the groups that worked on social conditions, such as early sexual debut and corrective rape (Figures 16 & 17). These are examples of some of the pictures they submitted in their assignments.

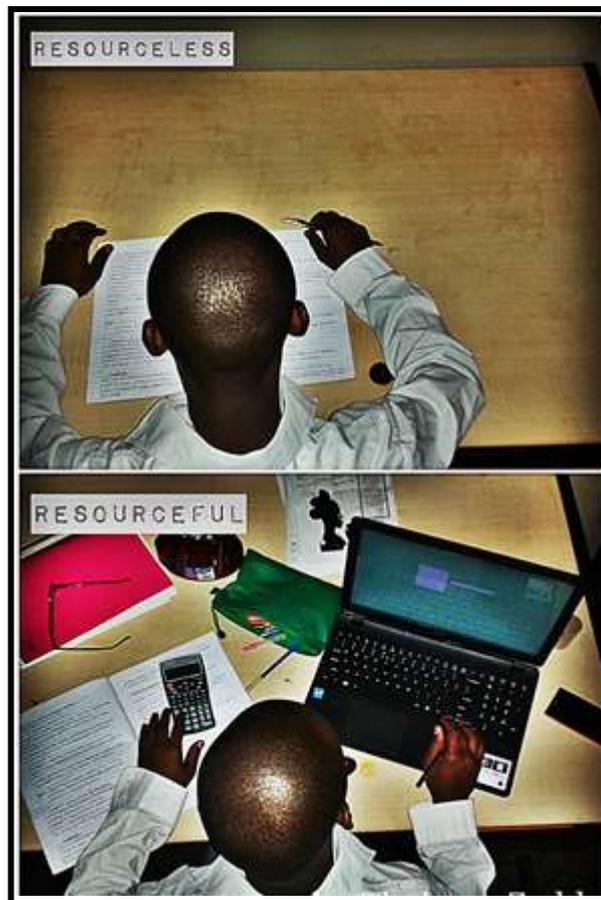


**Figure 16: PhotoVoice Project -Early Sexual Debut**



**Figure 17: PhotoVoice pictures are on age-disparate relationships**

The PhotoVoice project was meaningful for students at different levels, as they used themselves as models in the pictures, infusing them with multiple layers. In so-doing, students were able to make affective interchanges with the kind of worlds people inhabit, and with the social conditions they had studied. In addition, the students were able to observe their own position in relation to people with certain social conditions and regarding social conditions, such as financial exclusion from HE with which some could personally identify.

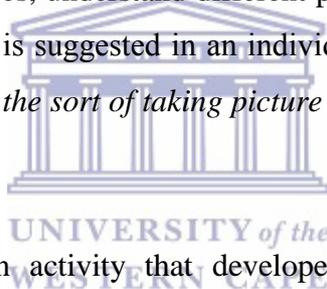


**Figure 18: PhotoVoice Project Student Access to Resources**

In Figure 18, there are PhotoVoice pictures from the group called Juice which focused on student access to resources. The photographs in Figure 18 show the differences between students who have access to various resources, such as a mobile phone, computer and spectacles to support them in their academic studies, compared to the student in the first picture labelled “Resourceless”. This lack of resources is a real social issue that concerns the

“epistemological access” (Morrow, 2009) that students could identify with, and has been found to impact on many students in higher education who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Badat 2016; Badat & Sayed, 2014; Spaul, 2013). The affective component of these projects was very real, as some of the students who engaged in the group assignment experienced social conditions such as financial exclusion, and school drop-out, often being in age-disparate relationships with partners older than themselves. These students were able to engage with mind, body, heart and skill with the PhotoVoice project; they did so both from a social development perspective, and a feminist theory perspective, which states that the best place to study the issues of a group or community is by engaging with people experiencing the issue, which needs analysis, implementation and evaluation of the project (Bradbury et al., 2013; Patel, 2008; Strack et al., 2004).

In addition, the PhotoVoice project allowed students to use another voice, use more than one sense and to see different audiences, understand different perspectives and narratives that are accessed when using pictures, as is suggested in an individual response from a student: “*Ja, PhotoVoice, like it was nice. Like the sort of taking picture that can tell many stories*” (Kebo, Juice, Individual Interview).



The PhotoVoice project was an activity that developed student identity as apprentice researchers (Bradbury et al., 2013), as social justice advocates (Cornell & Kessi, 2016) and as more reflective, more affectively attuned and empathetic, critical future social workers who could observe the interconnection between real world social conditions and meso practice. At a broad level, these PLA exercises support affective interchanges and contribute to a wider engagement of the students with the real world social conditions they were investigating. The PLA techniques were valuable, as they allowed for the playing out of various social and political factors, so that students were able to see and feel differently and could link these factors with social justice (Boler, 2005). The next section focuses on the role of the educator regarding affect in the classroom.

#### ***8.10.4 Role of the Educator***

The deliberate use of affect within a course requires an educator to work toward ensuring that the teaching space is safe. This is important so that students are able to feel comfortable and share in a non-judgmental way. Being non-judgmental is one of the values of the social work

profession. Here a student explains the role of the educator during the course:

*... she [the educator] made the space, eh what can I say. It is (...), like everybody was able to say what they wanted to say irrespective of her being there. So she set an atmosphere of (...) what can I say, I don't know, I don't know how like, like we were free kind of, she allowed us to be ourselves so I think that was something that she did good. You did not think of "what if I say this and she's gonna judge me, or what if, and she's gonna look at me in, I don't know" ja, so we were kind of like content to the fact that whatever it is that I say here is confidential, nobody else is gonna know about it, unless I want them to know, ja, so ja. (Focus Group, Social Stars)*

This suggests that it is crucial for educators to play a role in designing, as well as being part of, the affective interchanges, as they also have their own identity, beliefs, goals and emotions that they bring to bear in the teaching and learning space.



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## 8.11 Conclusion

Knowledge of the role played by emotion in course design, as well as in social work education, does not discount the role of cognition and reason: rather, it serves to understand the role played by emotion in order that holistic meaningful decisions be made to support pedagogy and student-centred learning. The acknowledgement of emotion throughout course design privileges the connections between emotion, cognition and behaviour in the teaching and learning process (Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006).

The use of PLA techniques was found to be helpful in making these connections in the meso practice course. Importantly, the affective interchanges within the learning space and the nature of the relationships that developed between students as they spent long stretches of time engaged in collaborative activities, supported learning. The meso practice course developed around the authentic learning framework, and the use of PLA techniques provided multiple occurrences or examples, where students commented on their own learning and insights that were made through these affective interchanges. Some of these interchanges were fun, others were sad, some frustrating and even conflictual.

In this chapter, comments and examples of affective interchanges were provided through direct quotes and artefacts collected in the meso practice course. It is evident that affective encounters influenced the personal growth and development of the students in learning practice skills for social work. In the light of this, I propose that affect be added as a learning principle or element within the design and learning process, particularly in the field of social work education within the South African HE space, but also more broadly too. The preceding two chapters enabled me to develop guidelines that could influence future course design plans. The focus of Chapter 9 is the guidelines I have elicited, that would support such course design.

The inclusion of affect within the authentic learning framework gives pause for consideration of the role played by educators and students in understanding emotions and feelings that frame and shape what we do and learn, and how courses are designed to infuse value and context (Bolin, et al.2005). Furthermore, richness of experience, humanity and diversity are embedded within course design when students are engaged with the understanding of difference (Boler, 2005). To be “real” and authentic in the world requires exposing students to aspects of discomfort and difference, and acknowledging the importance of social justice. Therefore, the use of discomfiting situations, critically engaging in open discussion while imbibing aspects such as working with members who are freeloaders or sharing sensitive details about one’s past and/or talking about mental health conditions, are helpful and meaningful. These interchanges allow educators and students to “engage in affective relations with others” which moves beyond the element of reflection within the authentic learning framework and teaches aspects relevant to meso practice education (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012, p. 45).

Thus, while authentic learning has been shown to be a very effective method for course design, it does also acknowledge the importance of reflection. Authentic learning does not include the relational aspects of affective interchanges in teaching, learning and in course design only for social work education and other vital disciplines. But learning about and experiencing relational affective interchanges are essential for the student social worker, so that they may find ways to see their own role and position, as well as the role and position of the “other” in the various relationships they will form. The introduction of the PLA exercises allowed for the exploration of affect within the meso practice course. In addition, the affective exchanges were seen to be contribute to skills development in students, which

prepares them for engagement in the real world as good public professionals (Walker & McLean, 2010). This aspect of affect and other aspects of the learning obtained from the meso practice course will be used to develop the guidelines for course development in Chapter 9.



## CHAPTER 9 - REFLECTION AND GUIDELINES

*I have come to tell you that we, the children of Busoga Kingdom, the children of Afrika will never realize our full potential as people in our communities and as contributors to the global treasury of knowledge if we continue to depend wholly on the content and ways of knowledge of the European peoples. Our way forward must be linked to the recovery, replenishment and revitalization of our thousands of years old Indigenous knowledge.*

Wangoola, cited in Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 12



### 9.1 Introduction

In previous chapters I have reported on the insights of meso practice teachers and their field instruction supervisors on how they teach and supervise students; now I “move from reflection and criticism to creation” (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 14). I have considered the experiences and examined the various artefacts produced as a result of the course. The authentic learning framework and PLA techniques were used to inform many of my decisions in course design. I have found that the synergy created by the use of authentic learning and PLA techniques enabled students to learn with discomfort, question their beliefs and grapple with real world social conditions (Boler, 2005; Zembylas, & McGlynn, 2012). These affective interchanges resulted in students being discomforted, learning how to use empathy, working with conflict and understanding the role played by non-verbal communication. The students’ engagement in authentic learning activities were helpful in understanding how the initial design principles were adapted, reinforced and extended in the current design guidelines. In the initial course design process, care was taken to incorporate all nine elements of authentic learning and, as the course proceeded, it became evident that the use of PLA techniques contributed to highlighting the value of affective interchanges. This is

posited as an important additional element within the authentic learning framework. I have thus included this as an additional element in an extended authentic learning framework that supports learning, particularly of meso practice, in the South African HE context.

In design-based research, an important outcome is the production of guidelines that can be used to support further iterations of the course, as well as, suggestions that can be used by other educators in their own course development. This penultimate chapter focuses on these guidelines, in which I review the initial design principles that were developed at the outset of the course, and consider the data analysis that was undertaken after the meso practice course, in order to create course guidelines.

This four-year study, undertaken on teaching a meso practice course in a South African HEI has sought ways to improve the course. The literature review provided a context and understanding of concepts and pertinent theory, which informed a subsequent needs analysis. Next there was an exploration of the methods used by practitioners to teach and supervise. This process provided a slice of the real world context regarding the issues, strengths and challenges around meso practice education. Both the literature review and the data from stakeholders offered valuable insights that informed the redesign of the course, using TEL and authentic learning elements. The implementation and evaluation of the course provided useful data for the process of designing guidelines. This chapter focuses on these guidelines, which constitute Phase Four of the study, and addresses the sub-question of the study about suggesting guidelines for the teaching of meso practice.

To summarise, the process of developing guidelines proceeded in the following way:

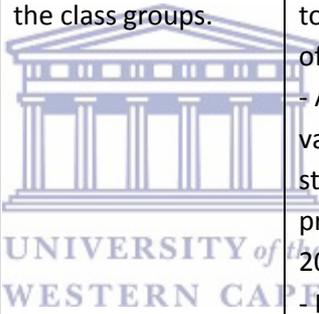
- Application of the authentic learning framework to the course design.
- Analysis of the findings from the implementation of the course.
- Reflection on the implementation of the meso practice course and the use of TEL.
- Reflection on the findings.
- The development of guidelines that were informed by the findings of the previous stages.

## 9.2 Course Design Principles

Table 12 provides an overview of the how the initial draft design principles were used as a starting point to create the current design guidelines. The design guidelines offer suggestions that will be used in a future iteration and may be useful for other educators. Affect emerged as an additional element of AL and was found to be a major contributor to learning in the meso practice course that was designed within the South African context.

**Table 12: Moving from draft design principles to design guidelines**

<b>Draft principles</b>	<b>How design principles were implemented in the meso practice course for social work students</b>	<b>Course occurrences</b>	<b>Design guidelines</b>
<p><b>Draft Principle 1:</b> <i>Develop an authentic task</i></p>	<p>A comprehensive real world task encompassing the elements of AL was designed. The task included activities related to meso practice. Details of the task can be found in Chapter 6.</p>	<p>A rich non-linear learning environment was created and students worked collaboratively on a variety of sub-tasks. The task was linked to a social condition that was chosen by the students and had relevance to social work and meso practice. The activities that students engaged in were similar to activities they would conduct in the workplace. The task was complex and required sustained involvement over a period of 12 weeks. The use of a social condition provided an authentic context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create a flexible non-linear learning environment.</li> <li>- Use discussion forums to facilitate opportunities for students to revisit information at different points (Dennen, 2005).</li> <li>- Use TEL to support collaboration and the development of a community of practice for support and learning (Lave &amp; Wenger, 1998).</li> <li>- Link the authentic task to activities required in the workspace, as this allows for better integration of theory with practice, such as the use of icebreakers (Herrington, et al., 2010; Zastrow, 2009).</li> <li>- Provide students with a choice of social conditions related to the real world, as this enhances their motivation to work on the task (Rule, 2006).</li> <li>- Offer guidance so that the social condition has relevance to the discipline of the profession and is related to the context in which the students will practise. This results in the creation of examples that will draw</li> </ul>

Draft principles	How design principles were implemented in the meso practice course for social work students	Course occurrences	Design guidelines
		<p>that had real-world relevance and created links to South African society using indigenous knowledge systems. The LMS housed various resources for the course, and included a discussion forum for each of the class groups.</p> 	<p>on indigenous knowledge and the creation of knowledge suitable to the context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design the course so that the task is conducted over a significant period of time, so that students can identify and observe the phases and stages that a group goes through in meso practice (Herrington et al., 2010). The extended period of time provides the students and the educator with the opportunity to observe and assess the maturation of learning processes.</li> <li>- Align content and activities to the value base of the profession so that students see their role as public good professionals (Walker, &amp; McLean, 2010).</li> <li>- Make explicit the reasoning for the educators' design decisions so that students are able make connections between their own learning processes and the course (Teras, 2016).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Draft Principle 2:</b> <i>Encourage the use of multiple perspectives</i></p>	<p>Students were asked to make use of multiple resources to investigate the social problem as it occurs in the real world.</p>	<p>Students posted multiple types of information on the discussion forum. The PLA techniques facilitated learning and affective interchanges. The educator and the students used poetry. Examples of these data- gathering exercises by students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-create a repository of information with students on the LMS.</li> <li>- Include a variety of resources from academic sources, local newspapers and websites.</li> <li>- Encourage students to engage in activities that facilitate their learning from their environment and context.</li> <li>- Engage students in robust debate around topical issues in the face-to-face and online space.</li> <li>- Use exemplars created by previous groups of students so that they can compare their own efforts with the</li> </ul>

Draft principles	How design principles were implemented in the meso practice course for social work students	Course occurrences	Design guidelines
		<p>were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- interviews with people experiencing the social condition.</li> <li>- interviews with relevant people in the community.</li> <li>- site visits to public health facilities.</li> <li>- executing a TB Awareness campaign.</li> </ul>	<p>artefacts created by previous groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use PLA techniques to facilitate the use of multiple perspectives and deeper sharing and engagement between students themselves and between students and the educator.</li> <li>- Allow for discomfort and affective interchanges as the course progresses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Draft Principle 3:</b> <i>Focus on meso practice skills to enhance collaboration and cooperation. Share ideas and information.</i></p>	<p>Students self-selected into eight groups, chose their own group names and the social condition that the group would work on. The group experience was designed to include activities conducted inside and outside classrooms and in online spaces.</p>	<p>The students collaborated on the task, as conflict and affective interchanges developed over task allocation and task completion. Some students developed stronger bonds, rapport and a deeper understanding of one other within the group and outside the classroom space. Some teams experienced challenges while working on the activities, although learning occurred even in these teams, as members were able to identify and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do not allow self-selection of students into groups, to encourage diversity in the group (Corey et al., 2010).</li> <li>- Create a safe learning space that supports skill rehearsal and role play (Boler, 2010).</li> <li>- Set up the classroom space to let students work in groups and engage in activities (Brown et al., 1989; Gokhale, 1995).</li> <li>- Support students to work through conflict, and work with members who are seen as <i>free-loaders</i> (Hemmings, 2012).</li> <li>- Use affective interchanges as opportunities to facilitate development, and growth of knowledge and skills (Zembylas, 2002).</li> <li>- Use the affective interchanges as learning opportunities to facilitate understanding around what works and does not work in teams.</li> </ul>

Draft principles	How design principles were implemented in the meso practice course for social work students	Course occurrences	Design guidelines
		reflect upon the occurrences they regarded as problematic in the group.	
<b>Draft Principle 4: Coaching and Scaffolding</b>	All students received a printed copy of the course outline at the start of the course. The course outline included a weekly schedule and showed how the course developed iteratively, based on the previous sections taught. Content such as PowerPoint slides and reading material was made available to students gradually as the course evolved over an eight-week period. Discussion forums on the LMS afforded online space for the educator and more expert students to provide information to support learning. Working in small groups ensured that more knowledgeable students assisted other students to traverse the Zone of Proximal	Coaching and scaffolding was achieved through engagement with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- other knowledgeable peers.</li> <li>- the educator</li> <li>- the tutor who was a Masters student.</li> <li>- the experts who were asked to judge the presentations.</li> <li>- the educator who was available for consultation with students in class during face-to-face consultation sessions and through the learning management system.</li> <li>- The students were given feedback on a draft of the assignment by the educator, so that improvements and changes could be made.</li> <li>- Videos and YouTube clips</li> </ul>	<b>Draft Principle 4: Coaching and Scaffolding</b>

Draft principles	How design principles were implemented in the meso practice course for social work students	Course occurrences	Design guidelines
	<p>Development , through language acts, activities and sharing of resources and information.</p> <p>Language acts included writing, presenting, debating and talking about the task within the authentic learning environment.</p>	<p>provided opportunities for students to learn more about meso practice by observing experts and watching how other groups were conducted.</p>	
<p><b>Draft Principle 5:</b> <i>Engage in critical reflection, acknowledge emotion.</i></p>	<p>Group leadership positions were allocated on a rotational basis to all students, after which each student completed a structured reflection at the end of each session. Specific forms developed by cultural historical activity theorist, Anne Edwards, were completed by some students (Annexure M).</p> <p>Students reflected on the PLA techniques such as their timelines and River of Life drawings.</p>	<p>Reflective activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- self-reflection</li> <li>- group reflection</li> <li>- self-reflection on own learning</li> <li>- self-reflection on being a student social worker.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate the sharing of a diversity of ideas and views.</li> <li>- Create opportunities for reflection through the use of reflection tasks (Edwards, 2016).</li> <li>- Use templates for recording weekly reflections on the group dynamics with the groups.</li> <li>- Teach students the connection between reflection and learning, both individually and in groups.</li> </ul>

Draft principles	How design principles were implemented in the meso practice course for social work students	Course occurrences	Design guidelines
<p><b>Draft Principle 6:</b> <i>Support the development of rapport and group cohesion. Foster professional values, practice and observation of group dynamics.</i></p>	<p>Completion of task performed by students in formal class time and outside of class time. Values and skills of group work were discussed and enacted in the groups. Groups learnt how to manage conflict.</p>	<p>Some groups functioned more optimally than others. Group cohesion was fostered by members working on a complex task and for a common purpose (Toseland &amp; Rivas, 2009). Experiential learning was used to understand group dynamics.</p>	<p>Encourage group cohesion which is a sense of “group togetherness or community” (Corey &amp; Corey, 2006, p. 152).</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide regular feedback and an opportunity for students to rework their final assignment (Boud &amp; Molloy, 2013).</li> <li>- Use the online space to ask relevant questions to extend and mediate the discussion. This is an important part of the educator’s presence (Anderson, Rouke, Garrison, &amp; Archer, 2001).</li> <li>- Stand back, observe and allow for the development of reasonable levels of conflict, to allow students to discover solutions to address these types of group dynamics. The educator should only intervene if no solutions emerge.</li> </ul> <p>The educator should role model the knowledge, skills and attributes of a social worker (Herrington et al., 2010).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information on the LMS should be curated.</li> </ul>

Draft principles	How design principles were implemented in the meso practice course for social work students	Course occurrences	Design guidelines
<p><b>Draft Principle 7: Articulation.</b>  <i>Allow multimodal activities in group work.</i></p>	<p>The following artefacts were created and shared with the class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a poster</li> <li>- a PowerPoint presentation</li> <li>- a PhotoVoice project.</li> </ul>	<p>Communication, debate and argument which requires defending a position, are part of learning (Herrington et al., 2010; Wenger, 1998).</p> <p>The discussion forum and face-to-face communication supported articulation. Role-play allowed students and the educator to observe a student rehearsing skills and roles relevant to meso practice.</p> <p>Examples of students' own initiatives to create multimodal events and artefacts were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facebook page to place educational information in the public domain on the social practice of corrective rape;</li> <li>- An awareness campaign on campus on TB.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use PLA techniques to model activities, create artefacts for students to develop an understanding of difference (Bozalek, 2011a).</li> <li>- Encourage students to debate, share differences and challenge existing beliefs (Boler, 2005).</li> <li>- Facilitate an understanding of social justice issues in the real world.</li> <li>- Use rubrics to make assessment criteria for articulation exercises.</li> <li>- Use other colleagues to provide feedback to students on the presentations.</li> <li>- Offer students the opportunity to engage in the presentations of the group and provide feedback.</li> <li>- Use visual aids to support presentations.</li> <li>- Create opportunities for students to showcase their work.</li> <li>- Give students the freedom to engage in their own problem-solving strategies.</li> </ul>

Draft principles	How design principles were implemented in the meso practice course for social work students	Course occurrences	Design guidelines
<p><b>New Principle &amp; Affect:</b>  <i>encourage the use of affect in course design.</i>            The guideline about emotion and affect is based on the supposition that feelings in the body are visceral and felt in the internal organs of the body - resulting in learning based on deep inward feelings, rather than intellect only.</p>	<p>PLA techniques were used.</p>	<p>Rapport, which is the building of trust between people, was used to facilitate understanding between group members.            Meso practice skills such as listening, reflection and empathy, created awareness of congruence between body, thought and language (Wetherell, 2012).            The use of PLA techniques, such as the River of Life, resulted in discomfort but contributed to students' understanding of relationality, group cohesion and embracing diversity (Zembylas, 2012).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use experiential learning and PLA techniques to support the development of professional practice skills, which result in visioning as a practicing professional.</li> <li>- Encourage the use of deep reflection, affective solidarity and feelings as part of the learning process.</li> <li>- Support introspection by students of their own emotions and the emotions of others and positions held in the relationship.</li> <li>- Acknowledge emotion.</li> <li>- Be aware of discomfort experienced by students and find ways to support students.</li> <li>- Facilitate the development of meso practice skills such as rapport and group cohesion.</li> <li>- Show with examples how students are able to link the theory when demonstrating the use of meso practice skills, both in class and online.</li> </ul>

The use of authentic activities and affect is recommended in meso practice course development. The use of practical activities, incorporated into course design, provided students with opportunities to develop their own problem-solving skills. Moreover, students are able to practice skills, such as researching, presenting, interviewing, conflict management, writing, role play and leadership, conducting and designing PowerPoint presentations, maintaining a journal and even photographic skills. Students were also able to engage in the use of online communication to extend learning.

## 9.3 Design Guidelines

### 9.3.1 *Authentic activities provide opportunities to collaborate*

When developing a course, educators should consider how collaboration occurs in the real world, in that specific profession or discipline, and design the course around these activities. The course should include multiple activities in which students collaborate and share ideas and information. Collaboration is enhanced when groups are operating well and all members are participating in the activities and sub-tasks. Making explicit the course design strategy and using templates for students to assess their own group functioning and their own position, according to aspects of rapport and group cohesion, was shown to be valuable. Moreover, an understanding of the group stages provided a method to analyse group development.

### 9.3.2 *Real world relevance*

The linking of the social condition to the current context and indigenous value systems has recently been demanded by the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests, which require the decolonisation, indigenisation, decentering and Africanisation of teaching and learning spaces (Habib, 2016). The creation of a course around a real world social condition has relevance here. Skills development should be facilitated as students actively engage in the learning process. Careful thought should be given to the task and the activities of education, considering not just what students know and what they can do with the knowledge, but who they may become (Kreber, 2013). Thus students develop an identity and “make meaning of their experience from inside themselves rather than have their views determined by other[s]” (Kreber, 2013, p. 46).

### 9.3.3 *Authentic activities provide opportunities to develop social work skills*

The skills that are relevant in meso practice education include the use of self, working with conflict, assessment of group dynamics, termination and entering into human contracts. Activities such as role play and icebreakers foster group cohesion. Challenges and discord may occur at various stages in the groups and these create opportunities for the development of mediation and conflict resolution skills. These affective interchanges facilitate the understanding of group processes and foster group cohesion (Corey, Corey & Corey, 2012). Group dynamics include members who are *freeloaders*, and the educator should plan for this

aspect of group work by including assessments of individual and group activities or subtasks. These uncomfortable interactions support the creation of agency and voice in students as developing helping professionals in the social work discipline. Relationships are at the heart of social work and students need to develop skills that show a competent understanding of relationship and interconnection (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2010; Trevithick, 2006). The meso practice skills developed in the course could be translated into praxis, which is an important outcome within a practicing profession such as social work (Teater, 2011).

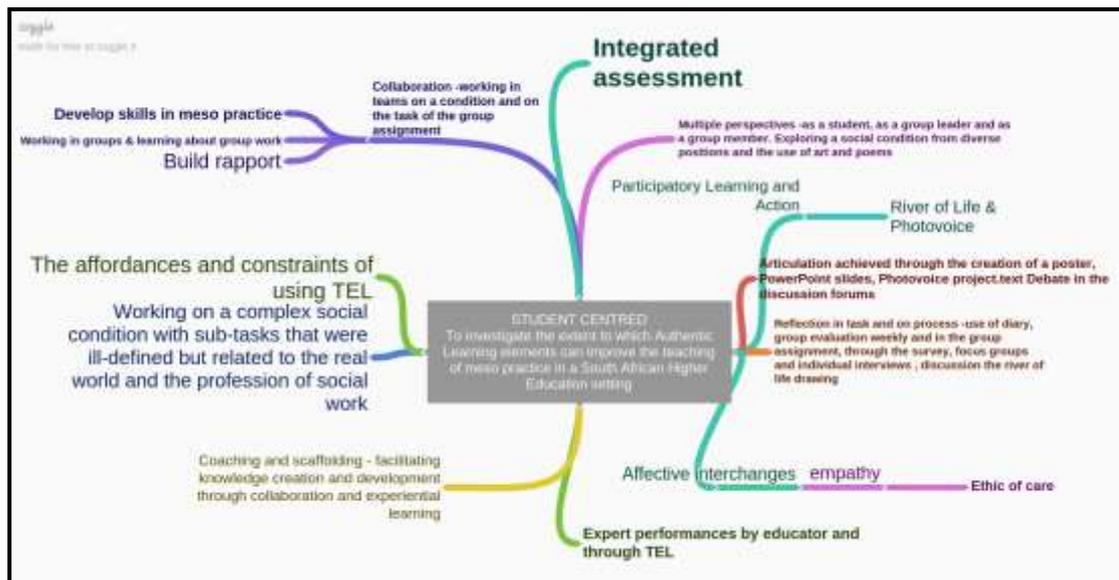
#### ***9.3.4 Affect is an element of course design***

Course design should incorporate the development of affective interchanges between students in the learning environment, using PLA techniques that allow for the expression of affect. The pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 2005; Zembylas, 2007) teaches us that discomfort can be productive of learning and the development of empathy. Learning may occur in disruptive spaces and these are a necessary part of teaching and learning in the real world. In the meso practice course, the use of PLA techniques has the potential to be helpful in:

- engaging students to use multimodal creative means of expression (Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010; Bozalek, 2011a);
- creating opportunities for students to interact with each other at a deep level (Hemmings, 2012);
- allowing for the development of personal growth, knowledge of self, and reflective meaning (Bozalek, & Biersteker, 2010; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012);
- developing solidarity and cohesion in the group (Toseland & Rivas, 2009);
- developing a more reflective community of practice (Bradbury et al., 2013);
- developing a more layered, multifaceted understanding of social conditions (Hemmings, 2012);
- facilitating greater understanding of power relations, social justice and inclusivity from an experiential and conceptual level (Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010; Bozalek, 2011a); and
- normalising the sharing of emotion and developing comfort about going into personal spaces (Zembylas, 20014).

Figure 19 represents a map showing how the various elements of AL and affect were used to meet the aims of this research study and design a student-centred course that contributed to student-centred learning for the teaching of meso practice in a South African Higher

Education setting.



**Figure 19: Authentic Learning Elements and Affect**

The need for innovative, imaginative indigenous learning methods is urgent in the South African HE context. There is a need to transform the educational space where issues were raised as part of the 2016 student protests on #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall (Naicker, 2017). Western knowledge, created by mainly “white male scientists” (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p.7), is being questioned, and knowledge developed from multiple systems related to the indigenous people of the country is gaining greater respect. The use of affective interchanges that facilitate the use of the mind, the body and cognition is a necessary part of social work education. Amsler argues that “affect is central to both learning and to any viable conception of socially responsive education” (Amsler, 2011, p. 52).

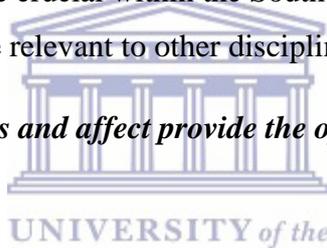
Important considerations when designing curricula to incorporate affect, are:

- the use of real-world social conditions, examples, interventions and artefacts that are relevant to the current context and are not based on western ideology;
- the use of PLA techniques which allow the expression of affect, including discomfort. This serves to heighten student awareness of social justice issues, and their own position in the context in which they live and will work, and which allow students to engage with each other at a deeper level;
- respecting and valuing students’ own experiences, strengths and multiple systems of knowledge and culture which they bring to the teaching and learning space;

- preparing students for the various social work interventions they will engage beyond just meso practice, such as individual counselling, community work and being an advocate for social justice;
- the valuing of knowers, makers and doers of knowledge in the process of learning through relationships;
- the use of multimodal pedagogies - different genres such as music, photography, videos, poetry, drama and drawings to be incorporated into the learning process;
- the affective interchanges between and amongst students and the educator, which are dependent on the honesty and trust that develop in the group; and
- the facilitation of skills regarding congruence between verbal and nonverbal cues which result in synergy and coordination between affect and body.

This thesis has shown how the inclusion of affect and emotion as an additional element of authentic learning was found to be crucial within the South African meso practice course, and suggests that this finding could be relevant to other disciplines and contexts.

### ***9.3.5 Authentic activities and affect provide the opportunity to reflect critically on learning***



Students were able to reflect in action, which is thinking while engaging in the activities, and also reflection on action by looking back at the process of understanding and evaluating what transpired (Schön, 2011), thus highlighting independent and group-learning. Students reflect on their own learning during the various activities that are part of the course. The reflections by students on the paths they took to engage with the course provides them with a better understanding of how certain activities have contributed to their learning.

### ***9.3.6 Authentic activities are conducive to communication and facilitate learning***

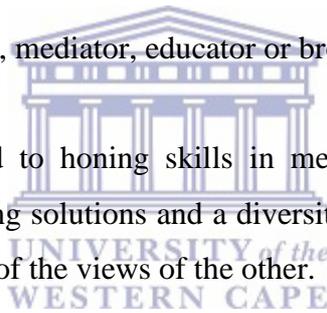
Meso practice course design should include activities that encourage debate, articulation and role modelling by the educator and the students. Students learnt about the skills and practices of meso intervention, by working in groups, practising these skills, collaborating and even debating around a real-world social condition. The teaching and learning space offered a platform for robust, critical engagement, where conflict in the group was framed as a good attribute that leads to growth and development.

### ***9.3.7 Authentic activities and affect provide opportunities for students to engage in multiple roles***

In the course, the creation of an authentic task and the use of affect helped students to understand, imagine, see and - importantly - feel what it was like to adopt the following roles as:

- a student social worker learning about a meso practice intervention;
- a group leader who conducts a meso practice session;
- a group member who is part of a group with a social condition;
- a student who is part of a larger class group;
- a group member who is part of an online group;
- a person who has a social condition, such as being in an age-disparate relationship, faces financial exclusion or has been exposed to sexual assault as a result of their sexual orientation; or
- a peer evaluator, presenter, mediator, educator or broker.

These multiple roles contributed to honing skills in meso practice. These roles allowed students to grapple with competing solutions and a diversity of outcomes, which encouraged flexibility and acknowledgement of the views of the other.



### ***9.3.8 An authentic task should be ill-defined***

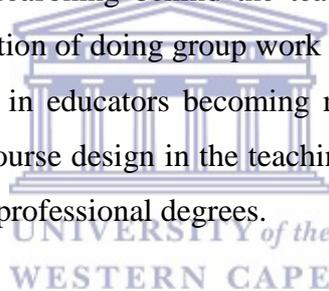
The fulfilling of the task should not be found in one text book but should require sustained and intensive work by the individual student and the group. The task should include independent activities that will require self-regulated learning, such as development of discussion forum posts and independent research, whereby students choose their learning path and take ownership of their learning. The task should also encourage collaborative learning. Finding solutions for the ill-defined task should be well supported through TEL.

## **9.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has depicted how authentic learning and affect were used in the meso practice course. The use of elements of authentic learning and affect served to develop students as doers and knowers, as they engaged in activities such as the creation of posters, PhotoVoice, Rivers of Life and PowerPoint presentations. Enabling students to actively and

collaboratively engage with information relating to a subject encourages the development of skills. This type of “experiential learning is one of the best ways to facilitate learners to engage” (Luckett, 2001, p. 56) and is an effective strategy for inducting students into their future profession.

Guidelines for course design are a key output in educational DBR and could be of value to other educators, especially within the field of social work. The guidelines provided in Chapter 9 may not be relevant to all courses and will require adaptation, as course development is an ongoing and iterative process informed by theory and feedback. The design guidelines provide suggestions for different ways of teaching meso practice. DBR does not claim to offer universal solutions, but guidelines within a context (McKenney, & Reeves, 2012; Özverir, 2014). These design principles can be shared with fieldworkers and educators, so that they may also experiment and develop them further. Students can also benefit from understanding the reasoning behind the teaching methods used, so they can make connections between the action of doing group work and the principles of learning. It is hoped that this study will result in educators becoming more curious regarding their own practice. The methods used for course design in the teaching of meso practice have potential value for other courses and other professional degrees.



It became evident in the implementation of this meso practice course that intensive engagement, both on the part of the educator and the student, is required. In the next iteration of the design of this course, students could engage in fewer activities. In Chapter 10, the study is summarised, areas of future research are considered, and recommendations emanating from the study are provided.

## CHAPTER 10 - CONCLUSIONS

*Knowledge is dynamic, active, engaged and linked to social, political, cultural or sustainable changes*

Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 10

### 10.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together findings, and answers the research question addressing the extent to which the elements of authentic learning improved the teaching of meso practice within a South African higher education context. This section also looks at the limitations of the study, and the future research that should be conducted following this study.

The objectives of the study were addressed as follows:

1. Conduct a literature review on social work education in the area meso practice education and authentic learning. This objective was achieved in chapters 2 and 3 of the study. The literature review provided foundational data to explore field of meso practice education.
2. Analyse the practical problems for teaching meso practice in social work, by conducting interviews with a sample of educators and field instruction supervisors, working in South African higher education institutions. Interviews were conducted with six educators and four field instruction supervisors. Rich data was shared regarding their teaching and supervision practices and the challenges they encountered. Some challenges included the lack of indigenous course material on meso practice, educators having to teach large numbers of students (with between 102 and 33 students at a time); in addition, training and managing field instruction supervisors who were contracted supervise groups of students at external sites where field practicum was conducted. Another identified challenge was that students need a degree of competency in meso practice prior to commencing independent work with

clients. A further issue that was reported was the lack of school social workers, who could supervise meso practice students whose field practice sites were schools. Finally, it was reported that an area in which students experience difficulty in mastering meso practice is the integration of theory with practice.

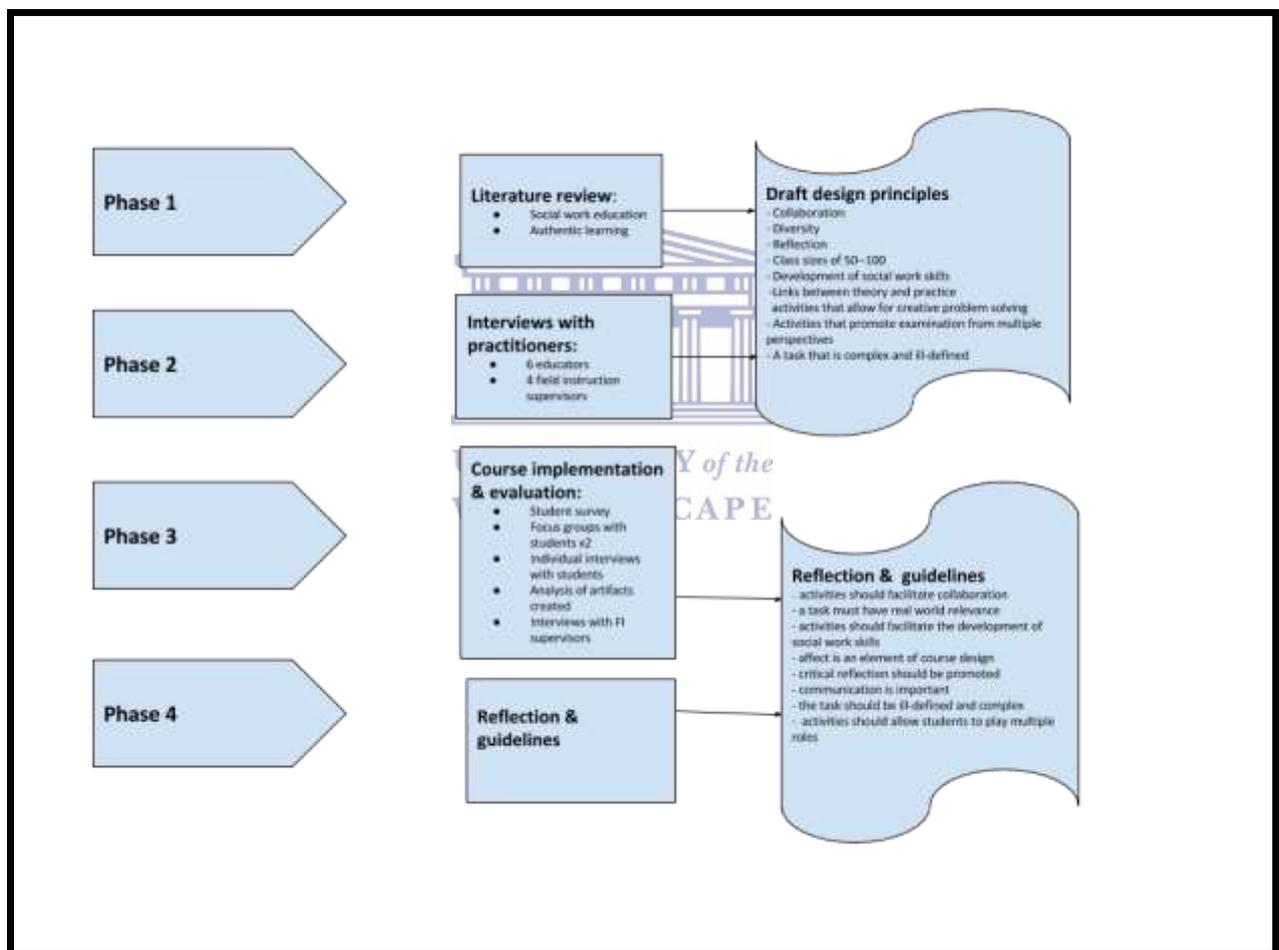
3. The third objective was the implementation of solutions in practice. Thus, based on the challenges noted in objective two, the meso practice course was redesigned and implemented, making use of the nine elements of authentic learning. The course was then evaluated using quantitative and qualitative methods in a modified educational design-based research method. The meso practice course that was designed also included the use of PLA techniques as part of the activities students engaged in during the course. The findings revealed that the use of an authentic learning environment supported learning, but also that learning was extended through the introduction of affect within the learning space. In the study it was found that the use of authentic learning elements, as well the inclusion of activities that incorporate affect, were important for planning and designing a course on social work meso practice for undergraduate students. Furthermore, the study found that the use of PLA techniques such as the PhotoVoice Project, the River of Life as well as an authentic learning framework were valuable ways to enable students to understand more about people with social conditions that contribute to their being marginalised and oppressed; it also enabled students to develop an understanding of their own position in the context of society.
4. The fourth objective was reflection, to produce design guidelines for meso practice and other courses. These guidelines were developed in Chapter 9, and the inclusion of affect was seen as a vital element for course design in meso practice for South African social work students.

This study has contributed to understanding of and strategies for the effective teaching of meso practice in social work within the South African context in the following ways:

- A set of design principles for the teaching of meso practice were developed from classroom practice, and in relation to the authentic learning framework of elements, and participatory learning and action techniques. The findings suggest that the use of authentic learning elements and affect have the potential to facilitate professional growth in students studying professional degree courses such as social work.

- The use of elements of authentic learning and affect serve to develop students as doers and knowers, as they engage in learning within an authentic learning environment.

The study evolved over the period 2013 – 2017, from proposal development, problem exploration to implementation and evaluation. Figure 20 shows how the various phases resulted in the creation of a set of design guidelines.



**Figure 20: From Phases to Design Principles to Guidelines**

## 10.2 Summary of the Study and Recommendations

The research findings suggest the following implications for the teaching of meso practice in

social work, particularly within the South African context:

1. The development of an authentic task facilitates the integration of theory with practice, which is necessary for a professional degree such as social work.
2. The use of a real world social condition that is chosen by students increases their motivation to explore the topic and see the links with society.
3. The knowledge created draws on the past experiences of students and indigenous knowledge systems and cultural values and beliefs.
4. Blended learning and the use of TEL has the potential to extend face-to-face learning and create other platforms for deliberation, debate and sharing of information and the creation of multiple perspectives.
5. The use of contracting as part of group dynamics supports collaboration and conflict management in groups.
6. Coaching and scaffolding requires the educator to enact various roles and be cognisant when to intervene and when to allow affective exchanges between students. Making course design strategies explicit to students facilitated students' knowledge and understanding of their own role in the teaching and learning space.
7. The use of participatory learning and action techniques creates spaces for affective interchanges, sharing of information and valuing of the knowledge that each person brings to the teaching and learning space.
8. Collaboration, affective interchanges and reflection support the facilitation of experiential learning, group cohesion and rapport between students and the educator. This can be achieved when students work in groups to learn about meso practice
9. Articulation, debate and presentation facilitate student skills in public speaking, and helps link knowledge with practice and argument.
10. Teaching requires introspection by the educator on their own values, which in turn affect their teaching and learning practices.
11. Decolonising pedagogies, where students own experiences, strengths and multiple systems of knowledge and culture are brought to the teaching and learning space, needs to be encouraged in higher education.

### **10.3 Limitations of the Study**

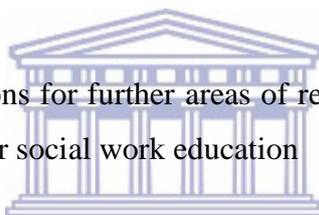
Although there are several limitations to the study, the guidelines arising from the findings of

this study offer educators, and specifically educators in the field of meso practice, greater options and suggestions on how to structure a course using blended methods, and how to incorporate the elements of authentic learning and activities that promote affective interchange, into their course designs.

The limitations of the study include the narrow scope of the study and the limited number of design iterations. A longer period with multiple iterations, and the use of further assessment methods to examine students’ ability to transfer knowledge, are aspects that should be considered in further research. The positive response of the students may be related to the move away from the transmission model of teaching and use of TEL, as well as their engagement in a topic they had chosen.

#### 10.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Table 13 illustrates the implications for further areas of research based on the nine elements of authentic learning and affect for social work education



**Table 13: Types of further research that can be conducted adapted from Herrington (1997)**

Aspect of research	Rationale of limitation	Systematic research	Analytical research
<b>Authentic Learning</b>	There are many elements and they need to be factored into course design more efficiently.	An “all-embracing” context is important for learning (Herrington et al., 2010). Are all nine elements and affect required in all social work education courses?	Is the use of authentic learning and affect suitable for all course design in social work education, including field instruction?
<b>Authentic Context</b>	The context developed was suitable for social work students in South Africa despite the fact that there were challenges with TEL.	Course design using TEL should preserve a real life setting with “situational affordances” (Brown et al.; Collins et al., 1988 cited in Herrington et al., 2010). Can an improved LMS improve the pedagogy of the course?	How might aspects of this course be used in a distance education setting? If so, what are the tools, skills and positionalities required to support such an intervention?

Aspect of research	Rationale of limitation	Systematic research	Analytical research
<b>Authentic Activity</b>	The activity was authentic and the students had choice in their social condition.	Activities should have real world value (Herrington et al., 2010). Might social conditions that are educator-driven in relation to content and the types of field work be more effective for students learning of meso practice?	Are educator-driven social conditions likely to be as effective as student-driven social conditions?
<b>Multiple perspectives</b>	Students were exposed to multiple perspectives through the LMS, the views of other students, the educator and the tutor and from their own research.	“Enable and encourage students to explore different perspectives on topics from various points of view” (Herrington et al., 2010, p. 25). How do multiple perspectives align with the values of social work such as respecting the client's right to self-determination and evidence-based practice?	How might the values of social work be supported by the use of multiple perspectives?
<b>Expert Performances</b>	The use of expert performances provides students with examples on how others in the field of social work conduct meso practice. The educator and the tutor were able to role-play some of these skills.	Watching an “experienced practitioner at work” is linked to apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1989). How might the element of expert performances be incorporated through the use of YouTube videos, role plays and the sharing of experiences by the educator and the tutor?	How might the use of methods such as two-way mirrors, guest lectures and the development of indigenous audio and visual material be used to facilitate the element of expert performances and learning in meso practice course design?
<b>Collaboration</b>	Collaboration was a strength of the course as students worked in groups in class, after hours and online.	Students working on a complex task that is attached to rewards and valuing the views of others, is recommended (Herrington et al., 2010)	How might cooperation, collaboration and teamwork be facilitated in other social work courses such as meso practice and macro practice?

Aspect of research	Rationale of limitation	Systematic research	Analytical research
<b>Reflection</b>	Findings suggest that reflection is significant in course design for social work education.	Empathy is deliberate and active (Gerdes & Segal, 2009). How can active reflection be encouraged in social work education?	How might the use of PLA techniques in social work education promote deep reflection and learning in other courses in social work?
<b>Articulation</b>	Students could articulate in various spaces within the teaching and learning environment.	Articulation supports “peer tutoring” (Herrington et al., 2010, p. 33). What are critical components of articulation that can be fostered in large classes and in the community, for developing students as public good professionals?	How might articulation be facilitated and developed using TEL?
<b>Coaching and scaffolding</b>	Coaching and scaffolding was encouraged by the educator, a more knowledgeable other peers and the tutor.	Coaching and scaffolding is available during the course How can coaching and scaffolding by the more knowledgeable other students be encouraged?	How might coaching and scaffolding be utilised though TEL?
<b>Authentic Assessment</b>	Students were assessed on various activities using formative and summative methods	e-Portfolios enable students to curate, collect and sort from a variety of sources (Bates, 2015). Can the use of e-portfolios encourage better assessment in future courses, including field instruction?	How might authentic learning be better supported in online spaces through the use of e-portfolios that are inclusive of theory and field instruction activities?
	The course was evaluated by the students	Criteria-based assessment linked to learning outcomes is recommended (Biggs, 2012). Can other forms of evaluation be used such as evaluation by a peer or an expert in teaching and learning?	What forms of criteria-based assessment can be used for course evaluation by peers and teaching and learning experts?

Aspect of research	Rationale of limitation	Systematic research	Analytical research
<b>Affect</b>	The importance of engaging with care and support as well as discomfort for social work meso practice students is acknowledged.	Social workers need to display strategic empathy (Zembylas, 2007), care and deal with being discomforted. PLA techniques can assist the students to work and understand emotion at a deeper level. How is discomfort in courses acknowledged, supported and managed, to facilitate the development of social work skills and ethics such as empathy and being non-judgemental?	How can deep reflection be encouraged using experiential learning and affect? How does affect influence course design in other professional degrees? How does the pedagogy of discomfort support the development of social work skills? What tools, social arrangements and positionalities are suitable for the pedagogy of discomfort within professional degrees such as social work?



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## 10.5 Final Word

The world as we know and knew it, is changing rapidly and although the use of technology did not function at optimal levels in this study, on account of the limitations of the LMS, teaching without pedagogically appropriate theories that incorporate technology would not be sustainable, as there is a growing need to “find clever ways of using technology to scale up the quality and value that educators provide” (Laurillard, 2012, p. 153). South African HEI transformation has been brought sharply into focus by the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movements, which have “initiated an irrevocable change to Higher Education not only in South Africa but globally” (Ng'ambi, Jameson, Bozalek, & Carr, 2016, p. 441). These changes require the seeking of new solutions and better teaching and learning methods. Thus crafting and designing courses, especially in a professional degree like social work, can be made more experiential, using the elements of authentic learning and affective interchanges, which are deliberately incorporated to teach and facilitate experiences for students who may become agents for a more just society.

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## APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX 1 – MY REFLECTIONS

### 1. Introduction

In this section I situate myself within this research and reflect upon the factors that shaped my identity as an educator. In doing so, I questioned why I have come to enjoy teaching and the values I attach to the vocation of teaching within the South African higher education context (Kreber, 2013). The reflective process has shown that teaching provides value as an altruistic duty that serves the needs of students. However, in my role as an educator and a researcher I could be perceived as a superior and an expert by the students.

Furthermore, the South African higher education space that I inhabit is a highly contested, conflicted, messy space in which transformation is grappled with and in which various political, social and hegemonic ideas disrupt and abound. Moreover, I have come to understand that the words of Boler (2014) stating, “critiques of difference require unlearning the myth of neutral education,” are very true (p. 30). While writing this section on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2016, I am deeply troubled by the state of education and the events that are unfolding at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am concerned and vicariously traumatised by scenes of violence, pain and hurt. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2016, police and students clashed violently, reminiscent of the clashes between students and police when I was a student at the University of Durban Westville, in the 1980's. Professor Shahana Rasool, writing in her capacity as a concerned social worker, academic and educator-activist calling for social justice, asks a question that resonates with me. She asks the poignant question that resonates within me: why do we (as academics/as educators) stand by and do nothing while our students are hurt and wounded. My colleague and fellow social work educator, Ms Motlalepule Nathane-Taulela worked at the campus health unit on 4 October 2016, and spoke about her own trauma at observing so many rubber bullet wounds on the bodies of students. She added that this experience triggered memories of her own traumatic experiences of the 1980s state of emergency during the township civil unrest. The events of this period make me question my own role as an educator because while I sit blurry-eyed and protected in my comfortable home in the suburbs trying to make sense of this PhD, a few kilometres away the

fight for redress in the way teaching and learning occurs within the South African HE context is taking place. This affects the very people, the students, who are at the centre of good teaching practice.’

I have some understanding of the student’s struggle for money, for food, transport and living expenses. I know these students are in the classes I teach. Yet, what am I doing to advocate for social justice? Which make me question how the courses I design could include elements of affect, empathy, social justice and cultural justice to reflect some of the elements of authentic learning that occur in the real world. I began this research study with the naive belief that good teaching that is based on pedagogical theory is key and the use of teaching practices that go beyond the transmission of information is crucial, but I have come to the realisation that aspects of affect and social justice are equally important. Especially when teaching a course like meso practice in social work in which students explore social conditions such as financial exclusion, clearly show that we as educators have a role to play in building a socially and economically more just world (Segal & Wagman, 2017).

In the following pages, through reflection and reflexivity, I unpack and examine the space in which I work as an educator within the helping profession called social work. Reflection brings new dimensions and views to the practice of social work that is conducted in the real world; one which is not accompanied with a set of rules for all situations and for each individual, client or group member who has their own story to tell and cannot be understood from a purely technical- rational mode (Shulman, 2006).

The field of social work is constantly evolving, requiring students to be prepared for the uncertainties that exist in the real world. Ackoff describes such a workspace as filled with “[c]omplexity, messiness and ambiguity characterised by practice situations and problems are not predefined but become articulated in and through practice, as professionals attempt to manage the messiness” (cited in Taylor, 2006, p. 191). One way to achieve understanding of this complexity is through developing the skill of being reflexive and engaging in reflection, which could result in transformational learning (Grabove, 1997).

In this reflexive piece, consideration is given to the definitions of terms ‘reflection’ and ‘reflexivity’ regarding the skills and methods used by the student and the educator. In doing so, I engage in a process of self-reflection and explore my own past and the stepping stones that shape my teaching. Included is a discussion of the limitations of using reflection and

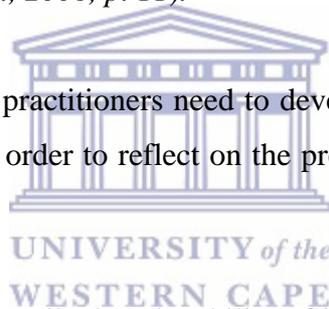
reflexivity and its applicability to the elements of authentic learning.

### **1.1 Definition of terms: reflection and reflexivity**

There is much confusion surrounding the difference between reflection and reflexivity as, despite being different, they are sometimes used synonymously. *Reflection* describes the internal process of carefully considering events and situations outside of oneself so that data is examined in order to draw conclusions and to develop new understandings and appreciation (White et al., 2006). Thus, reflection has cognitive, emotional, social and political meaning within the learning environment. Stein defines critical reflection as:

*... the process by which adults identify the assumptions governing their actions, locate the historical and cultural origins of the assumptions, question the meaning of the assumptions, and develop alternative ways of acting (Stein cited in White et al., 2006, p. 11).*

In the profession of social work, practitioners need to develop this skill and to cultivate this personal attribute of reflection in order to reflect on the process and on the action within the process (Schön, 2011).



*Reflexivity* on the other hand is described as the ability of individuals to process information, create knowledge, guide life choices, and critically think about how knowledge is created and the place of emotions in these processes (Kessl, 2009). Reflexivity is more about understanding one's own role in relation to others (Bolton, 2001, p.13). It is about understanding that no one person is neutral and the context we exist in also defines who we are and become. In addition, the teaching and modelling of reflexivity by the educator is important for student learning. The use of reflective skills results in the scrutiny and development of practice by thinking of, comparing and verifying for the purpose of learning about and improving practice, developing practice-based theory, connecting theory to practice, and improving and changing practice (Fook & Askeland cited in Kessl, 2009).

#### ***1.1.1 On developing Professional Identity***

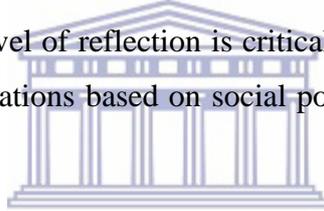
Taylor (2006) posits that through reflection students and social work practitioners develop critical awareness of their own processes and products. This firmly embeds the need for

reflection-in-action as a method for social work education (Schön, 2011).

The process of looking back promotes the development of the student's ability to understand the connections made amongst theory, values, ethics and practice. The students are afforded the opportunity to learn and articulate their learning both from experience and to go through the process of reflection on meso practice skills.

### ***1.1.2 The levels of reflection***

Levels of reflection refer to “iterations and depth transformation and criticality” (Redmond, cited in White et al., 2006). Hatton and Smith (1995 offer a rubric for evaluating the different levels of reflective writing. At the basic level is unreflective descriptive, which is reporting and noting on a personal level. The next level is reflective descriptive that shows a degree of analysis from a personal or another, point of view. At a much deeper level is dialogic reflection, which is the ability to look at an issue from multiple points of view and perspectives. The final highest level of reflection is critical reflection, which includes deeper evaluation of the ethical considerations based on social political, and cultural questioning of how things present in the world.



Based on these Hatton and Smith's levels of reflection, scaffolding can be used to engage students in the various levels of reflection beginning with simple reflection, which is the process where one questions accepted values (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Critical reflection forms part of a deeper level of reflection, which is a feature of the pedagogy of discomfort as it includes disruption because it requires students to question their deeply held values and beliefs while they learn and reflect.

### ***1.1.3 What is the role of emotions in reflection and reflexivity?***

White et al., (2006) have noted that critical reflection is both uncomfortable and distressing because it requires examining the past and learning to accept that there may not be any right answers. Emotion allows an individual to generate questions about assumptions and a more creative attitude to change. Groups learn from the experience, especially when there is a safe and trusting climate established in order to facilitate openness to learning. In this process, learning enables participants to articulate assumptions about values regarding social and cultural differences and to see multiple realities.

Positive outcomes of critical reflection are changes in the construction of identity and

becoming more reflexive, developing an empowered sense of being a professional and, developing a greater sense of mastery, self-control and self-actualisation. Through the process, one may gain a greater sense of new choices created and make connections between the personal and social (White et al., 2006).

## 1.2 *Critical hope*

Critical hope is a relational construct that requires seeing one's self within a historical context and re-evaluating the relationship of one's privilege to others in the world (Zembylas, 2014). It entails seeing how these relations of power shift and change over time and in one's lifetime. The spotlight is shone on one's emotional way of being in the world – it requires an emotional willingness to engage in the difficult work of allowing one's worldview to be shattered. It is a way of getting out of one's comfort zone that reflects emotional investments that by and large remain unexamined because they have been woven into the everyday fabric of what is considered common sense. An example of one such view is the belief that each individual is responsible for their own destiny and does not consider hegemony, which refers to the maintenance of domination, not by sheer exercise of force, but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state the school, the mass media, the political system and the family (McLaren & Hammer, 1989).

The educator needs to attend carefully and compassionately to the relationships created with students when engaging in the painful process of recognising habits that are related to suffering. In the process, the role of the educator is brought into question and there is a further questioning of one's beliefs as a result of the emotional fallout created by hegemony (Trifonas, 2003). Boler (2005) makes reference to the American dream, which can be a myth. It is a myth that if children work harder, parents make an effort to help more they could get to college, but there are times when students denounce their courses, write badly, refuse to engage in the work and become unhappy and angry in the presence of the educator. The aim of good teaching aligns with the views expressed succinctly by Trifonas that suggests an altruistic ideal to strive towards is enshrined in the Freedom Charter that says that “the doors of learning and culture should be open to all” (South African Congress, 1955) and South African education should work towards;

*... actualizing equitable curricular contexts for teaching and learning that are*

*responsive to individual needs and groups within society or culture regardless of race, class, gender, or sexuality* (Trifonas, 2003, p. 1).

Another writer, Henry Giroux (2003), states that change can occur in education by organising schools and pedagogy around a sense of purpose and meaning that makes a difference. This is central to a critical notion of citizenship and democratic public life. A well-known advocate of critical reflection, Paulo Freire (2000), calls it the pedagogy of freedom and social transformation that works in the interests of the working class and indigenous peoples and necessitates a critical consciousness. A critical decolonising consciousness is fundamental to transformation

### **1.3 The role of the educator and power dynamics**

Education is indeed another contested area as it is not neutral. Education embodies the struggle for meaning and for power. Max Weber defines power as the ability and chances of an actor to impose his or her will on another in a social relationship (Ng, 2003, p. 198). Educators have the power to construct and impose their viewpoints and definition of reality on their students. This power is based on positional authoritarian power and can be imposed through language, actions, attitudes and values. Cochran-Smith (1991) writes about teaching against the grain, and as an educator I need to have a critical awareness of the power systems that exist. Teaching against the grain requires an educator to recognise injustice, unequal distribution of power and inequality; understand marginalisation and exclusion; be prepared to take a risk; be prepared to interrogate personal privilege; take control of one's life and take responsibility for change; be prepared to work in messy and uncomfortable spaces; manage struggles with colleagues, students, oneself, and peers and understand that learning it is a lifelong pursuit (Cochran-Smith, 1991). The value of doing so is a project of hope towards a more socially just society and making the world a better place for the next generation.

In addition, educators have to recognise power and race are intertwined and the formal authoritarian power that is granted by HEIs ascribed to them by the role they play in the educational system (Ng, 2003, p. 197). Ng (2003) goes on to define race as different from the conventional view of race as being inherent and comprising cultural differences, but rather, sees race as a purely “imaginary social fabrication whereby people’s physical and phenotypical differences are made absolute differences” (p. 200). Therefore, the role of the

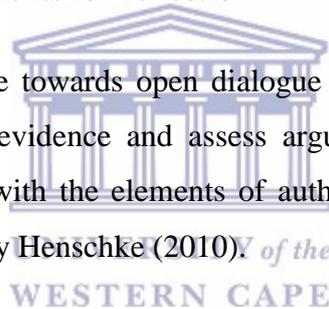
educator requires a nuanced understanding of the various social factors within the space that is inhabited by the students and themselves.

*... teachers have to understand and work both within and around the culture of teaching and the politics of schooling at their particular schools and within their larger school system and community. They cannot simply announce better ways of doing things, as outsiders are likely to do*

The above quote relates to community work as a primary intervention that is grounded within social work. Also, the use of PLA techniques, discussion forums, TEL and reflections by students provide an educator with a slice of the student's view which facilitates an exploration of real world questions that, "*transcend cultural attribution, institutional habit, and the alleged certainty of outside experts*" (Cochran-Smith cited in Ng, 2003, p. 206).

#### **1.4 Conditions and requirements for reflection**

The climate should be conducive towards open dialogue that is free from coercion. There should be the ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively from multiple perspectives. This is consistent with the elements of authentic learning (Herrington, et al., 2010) and qualitative outcomes by Henschke (2010).



Reflective practice does not separate theory from practice. There are links between values and actions, and locally- generated and owned knowledge. Other terms associated with reflective practice include critical thinking, critical self-awareness, critical inquiry and emancipatory reflection. Moreover, transformative learning is important because of the history of South Africa, where, due to apartheid, a large group of people were denied epistemological access that gives people power through forms of knowing. Since 1994 the African, Indian and Coloured population have been granted greater formal access into Higher Education spaces, but this has not resulted in academic success (Habib, 2016; Spaul, 2013). Massification has occurred by having greater formal access, but the drop-out rates and pass rates remain problematic (Van der Berg et al., 2011).

## 1.5 Critical reflection

Most of the work on reflection in professional disciplines draws on the work of Schön (1983), especially for professional practice, and downplays the role of critical theory. Presently, there is recognition of the spiritual and existential aspects of reflective practice that can have theological, therapeutic and political affordances (White, Fook, & Gardner, 2006). The use of reflection in teaching and learning offers vast possibilities and a variety of digital tools can also be used to promote reflection such as keeping a log of tasks and habits, including producing an electronic journal. Some of the models that are used to engage in reflection suggested by Ghaye and Lillyman (1997) include structured, hierarchical, iterative, synthetic and holistic models that offer ways to conduct reflection. Thus, an educator needs to understand which model is the best to use for their purpose, based on the discipline and the course being designed. Also, consideration should be given to the various tools that may be used for reflection such as the following suggested by White et al. (2006):

- The critical incident technique (Fook, White, & Gardner, 2006)
- Journaling (Bolton, 2001)
- On-line discussions (Whipp, 2003)
- Case studies, reflective or critical conversations (Ghaye & Lillyman, 1997)
- Poems (Bolton, 2001)
- Transcriptions of meetings (Fook et al., p. 15)

The use of pictures and photographs can also help us reflect. Some of the techniques of reflection are specific to a culture and there is need to understand these nuances when engaging in reflection. Other techniques include PLA, narrative research and discourse analysis which places emphasis on meaning making and central to critical reflection is reflexive ability.

Although reflection can reinforce current beliefs and practices (White et al., 2006), there is also a dark side of reflection due to the cultural and personal risks involved and not all people feel empowered by the process because it can allow sad and painful things to surface (White et al., 2006). Martha Nussbaum (1997) suggests that a reflective practitioner engages in a type of Socratic self-questioning and she advocates the value of literature and the art in

fostering “narrative imagination” (p. 34). She states that “books are not alive”, but in most education systems they hold great prestige and “they actually lull pupils into forgetfulness of the activity of mind that is the education’s real goal, teaching them to be passively reliant on the written word” (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 34). Thus, it is in the hands of a skilled educator to design courses so that reflection is used to facilitate learning.

Despite the various challenges around reflection, the ability to engage in reflection is essential in social work education given that having an understanding of affect and emotions is part of working with human beings (Bassot, 2013). However, reflection in course design should not be an afterthought that is tacked on to meet course requirements. Reflection that is tacked on at the end of a course is not integrated, and is not very effective (White et al., 2006). It is recommended that allowing students to see the various reflection processes created throughout the entire course and making explicit the value of reflection at the commencement of the course will facilitate better understanding by students of reflection. Furthermore, students should be able to make links between the use of reflection in the course and the benefits in relation to their future work as helping professionals. Moreover, students may gain an understanding of how their thoughts need to move from their head to the heads of others through a form of documentation or communication (White et al., 2006). In the next section, I engage in my own reflections about myself and the factors that have shaped my teaching practices.

## **1.6 On being a South African Indian**

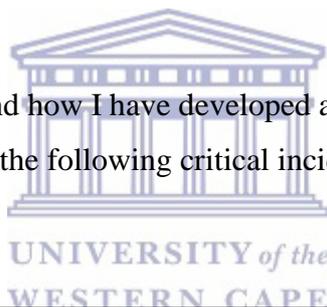
Historically I have been classified as Indian and in the 1860s. My forefathers left India on the SS Truro as indentured labourers on sugar plantations (Devan, 2012). While many Indians coming to South Africa were indentured labourers, there were some Indians who arrived from India who were free; this status allowed them to trade and work. On completion of their indenture the Indian labourers were entitled to land, but this right was later withdrawn to discourage settlement. Indians in South Africa have been called coolies and the Coolie Consolidation Act No 12 of 1872 made provision for the appointment of a Protector of Indian Immigrants and prohibited flogging for breaches of the Masters and Servants Act. Indians were only allowed to live in certain demarcated Coolie locations (Mistry, 1965). The registration of Servants Act no 2 of 1888 classified Indians as members of an "uncivilised race" and they were forced to carry a passbook. Being Indian in South Africa has been a

heavy mantle and often I am labelled and misunderstood simply because of my racial classification and skin colour. Indians are stereotyped as traders who may be rogues and cheats, who trick others in business.

On the other hand, there are aspects of my past that have contributed to me being identified as privileged and resilient by virtue of my race, educational level, and being born to parents who were educated and who were from a middle class socio-economic group. Being Indian in South Africa has afforded me certain benefits as my parents were able to move beyond the status of indentured labourers to own land and were employed as teachers. In developing reflexivity, I have had to probe my own identity and how it impacts on me as an educator, researcher and a member of the academy. Understanding myself better allows me to deepen my thoughts, grow professionally, makes me more critical and hopefully results in me being an authentic practitioner.

### 1.6.1 My Identity

Reflexivity is linked to identity and how I have developed and made my way in the world and developing my time line includes the following critical incidents in my life.



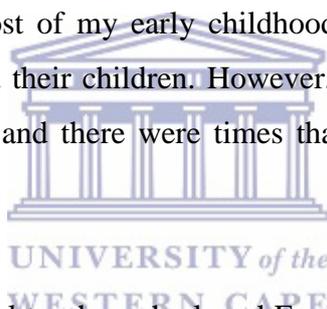
**Table 1.1**

Date	Incident	Notes
15/10/1966	Birth of Roshini Pillay	Eldest child to Saro and Money Pillay
5 April 1969	Sister, Thilo born	Married with two children lives in KZN and is employed in a state department as a medical doctor.
10 Dec 1974	Sister, Ravini born	Married with two children lives in Gauteng employed in parastatal as a Senior Commercialisation Manager.
10 May 1976	Baby brother, Magash born	Married with twin boys lives in Gauteng and employed in a private company as Managing Executive: Applications and Solutions.
29 March 1979	Father, Money dies	Car accident DOB- 29 Sept 1928

26 October 1981	Mother, Saro dies	Car accident in PMB –DOB 25 Jan 1933
Jan 1982	Began living with my maternal uncle, Athie in Isipingo Beach	I was responsible for our child-headed household since the age of 15 with my uncle's support.
01 Dec 1987	Matric	Isipingo High School
Dec 1988	Completed a social work degree	At the University of Durban Westville
21 Jan 1989	Married	Sivan Pillay, employed as a director in a private recruitment company
1 Feb 1989 – Dec 2000	First job	The Aryan Benevolent Home in Chatsworth KZN.
10 July 1991	Birth of my first child	Kuvanya, soon to be married employed as a chartered accountant in a private company.
31 October 1995	Birth of my second child	Kashmira, 3rd year student at Wits studying towards a MBCH
2000	Graduated with honours in Industrial Psychology	UNISA
01Jan 2000	Moved to Gauteng employed at Midrand Child Welfare	Manager
June 2000- Aug 2005	Employed at the Gauteng Department of Education	EAP Coordinator
Jan 2005	Employed at the Gauteng Department of Health	Deputy Director Health and Wellness
Jan 2007	Master's Degree in Employee Assistance Programmes	University of Pretoria

1 June 2009	Employed as a lecturer in social work	University of the Witwatersrand
1 June 2013	Registered for a PhD	University of University of the Western Cape
August 2014	Presented at an International conference in Melbourne Australia	Joint World Social Work Conference

I was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1966 as the eldest child to parents who regarded thoughts, words and teaching as important. My mother and father were teachers, although after the birth of her children, my mother was a stay at home mother doing part-time work when she saw fit. My father taught at the ML Sultan Technical College and was the main breadwinner. We lived in a cosy flat in Pietermaritzburg and had all our needs met. The flat had a fireplace to keep us warm in winter. Most of my early childhood memories are filled with happy memories and parents who loved their children. However, I did not see my parents display any affection toward each other and there were times that I witnessed acrimonious verbal interchanges between them.



My mother being a primary school teacher who loved English did spend some time trying to teach me at home and supervise my homework. These were never happy sessions with me often crying as I could not meet the standards set by her. Furthermore, my mother did have a caustic tongue and I have vivid memories of her saying to me “good riddance to bad rubbish” as I went off to school sobbing bitterly. But I loved her unconditionally and often saw myself as her protector in the verbal exchanges with my father who did enjoy alcohol and drank on a daily basis scotch and cane spirits. Many arguments between my parents arose after my father was inebriated. My sister Thilo was often compared to me as she was labelled the intelligent-smart one and these incidents could have contributed to my low self-esteem on occasions.

These life events could never have prepared me for the early death of my parents and the adoption of my role as the head of my family. The desire to take care of my siblings and for us to stay together was strong. My maternal uncle took us in and we lived in a large house that belonged to my grandparents in Isipingo Beach. Our uncle lived in another house on the same property so that he could keep a watchful eye on us. Since adolescence I was able to

care for my siblings and manage the household. I am proud of the people we have become. These events propelled me to study social work and later become a teacher, like my parents. My personal journey has contributed to some degree in me being the type of teacher I am for the following reasons:

- I can identify with students who see education as a way of obtaining independence
- I can especially identify with the girl-child wanting to have a career as I was never a stay at home mother
- I can understand how traumatic incidents in life shape who you are and become
- I can identify with the high value placed on family and care
- I can identify with the need to work hard to achieve academic success

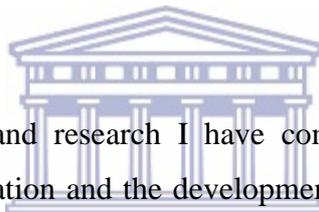
I cannot, however, personally understand the following circumstances that my students may have experienced:

- To be a seconded-language English speaker
- To be the first in my family to attend higher education
- To have experienced extreme poverty
- To have experienced academic exclusion
- To have experienced failure in academic courses
- To have experienced physical abuse

At a personal level I obtain great joy in assisting in small ways to make a difference in the lives of my students. I worked as a social worker for 20 years before joining the academy. My learning curve since joining the academy has been steep and there have been challenges in understanding the ropes of publishing and registering for a PhD. I was judged on the length of time I took to complete the Masters that I began in 2003, giving little consideration to my life circumstances. These were containing factors which resulted in me completing the Masters programme over three years. During 2005, I changed jobs from Assistant Director at the Gauteng Department of Education to Deputy Director at the Gauteng Department of Health in 2005. The change in jobs resulted in work priorities taking precedence over my studies. My job was very demanding as I was responsible for programme implementation and coordination of both the HIV/AIDS workplace programme and the EAP in the Gauteng Department of Health. At that phase in my life my children were young (aged twelve and seven) and my spouse had started a new job that demanded regular travel that

took him away from home for prolonged periods of up to three months. Moreover, we had relocated to Gauteng from KwaZulu Natal and had to develop new support structures. The above factors contributed to the delay in finishing my research component

Facets of my identity do influence the decisions I make regarding my teaching style, course design, implementation and evaluation and assessment. I understand that the act of researching one's own teaching practices allows for self-scrutiny, judgement, and peer evaluation by others. You shine the spotlight on yourself and in this way you become more vulnerable and maybe defensive about the actions you have taken to defend your position. Writing and reflecting were not easy for me but made me realise that there are certain core beliefs that I have developed during the course of my lifetime that affect me as an educator. These beliefs include the need to be ethical, to take a stand and defend what I believe in, take risks, strive to be student-centred, advocate for the rights of students and work within a social justice perspective.



Through my teaching, reading and research I have come to appreciate the elements of authentic learning. I see collaboration and the development of a community of practice as a good way of encouraging learning. Due to the apartheid era that I grew up in and the injustices I had seen, I am committed to the views enshrined in the Freedom Charter that says the doors of learning should be open to all (South African Congress, 1955). It is my belief that knowledge should be shared and I must collaborate with others. I am constantly learning and know that through learning I can update my knowledge areas, and engage in self-study

I have been teaching in higher education since June 2009 in the Department of Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand. Teaching has been a gratifying experience and I have been able explore various teaching methods and the use of TEL or blended learning in course design and implementation. I have been able to use various PLA techniques such as critical reflection, role-plays and experiential learning.

### **1.7 Why I have developed this course**

Based my values, academic interests and experience I found that elements of authentic learning are suitable for course design for meso practice. The course, Integrated Social Work Methods and Human Rights, is to facilitate the integration between various levels of

intervention in social work with human rights. Students are taught the processes of working with individuals, groups and communities. The course of meso practice forms one aspect of the theoretical component of the course. In addition, the students engage in another aspect called Field Instruction in Social Work Practice, where they practice skills and receive field instruction and, from the second semester, are placed at an agency where they are expected to conduct an educational group.

I commenced teaching meso practice in 2010 and as a novice to the world of academia began readings on pedagogy and was attracted to the work of (Collins et al., 1991) regarding situated learning and the work of Herrington et al. (2010) on authentic learning. This was reinforced when I was invited to be part of a group on Emerging Technologies in South Africa.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

In this section, I have tried to be honest and authentic in uncovering some of the reasons I chose to redesign the meso practice course that I teach. I wrote this section with affect, authenticity and emotions. I have shown how my educator identity contributed to choosing a type of pedagogy that supports active learning and an understanding of the real world conditions. I bring to teaching, my past, my knowledge and the love I have for the vocation of social work. I have found that education has been a good force in my life and would like share this with others. Therefore, the teaching methods used should be student-centred and include the complex and difficult aspect of affect. I am committed to the process of transformation of education within South Africa and hope that these reflections and this study show some of the messy real world issues that are present in course design within the South African HE context. I am grateful to be able to support the development of student social workers because by using different education practices “education can be the purveyor of critical hope” as it has been in my life and the life of my family (Bozalek, Carolissen & Leibowitz, 2014, p, 2).

## APPENDIX 2 - COURSE OUTLINE: MESO PRACTICE



**SOCIAL WORK**  
**THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)**



### **Social Work Methods and Practice (2015)**

#### **Meso Practice (Group work)**

**COURSE CODE:** SOCW 2006

**LECTURER:** Roshini Pillay

**TERM:** Quarter 1 (21 lectures)

**CONTACTS:** 011 7174486 &

[Roshini.Pillay@wits.ac.za](mailto:Roshini.Pillay@wits.ac.za)



**CONSULTATION TIMES:** Tuesdays 12H30 – 13H30

**Twitter :** WESTERN CAPE RP1005



#### **"Just Do You" India**

**Arie**

I heard a voice that  
told me I'm essential  
How all my fears are  
limiting my potential  
Said it's time to step  
into the light and  
Use every bit of the  
power I have inside

So what'chu waiting on  
Who You waiting for  
If You don't take a  
chance You'll never  
know what's in store  
Just Do You  
(Somebody's got to be  
a star)

## *Welcome to the course of working with groups*

### **1. LET US BEGIN THIS JOURNEY**

So what'Chu waiting on

Who You waiting for

If You don't take a chance You'll never know what's in store

In this course of 11 double lectures we will explore this 'incredible positive and affirming way of working with people' (Kurland, Salmon, Bitel, Goodman, Ludwig, Newmann, & Sullivan, 2004, p3) called meso practice or group work. This is an essential intervention for students of social work to master as meso practice is indeed a powerful and effective intervention that provides opportunities for mutual aid (Shulman, 2006). Whilst, group work or meso practice maybe regarded by some as declining or waning a South African author on meso practice describes groups as, "the space where people can meet, interact, connect to others, be empowered and healed and are becoming more utilized in various diverse communities and populations in South Africa" (Becker, 2005, p. 1).

### **2. MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY:**

And if you just be You

There is no way you can lose

I believe that learning is an on-going authentic learning that considers how meso world. Together we will learn about the required to conduct a group in the next block. I encourage communication and I invite your



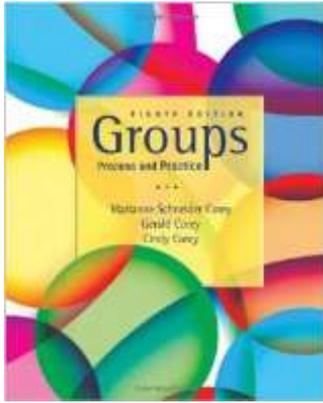
process and will use elements of practice occurs in the real skills, knowledge and values

input which is critical in this class. I will strive to ensure that the learning environment is open and transparent, horizontal rather than hierarchical and to be sensitive to diversity and dynamics in class. The meso practice course has both theoretical and applied (field instruction/ internship) components that students need to explore beyond this the education process and the classroom. I will use the Sakai learning management system as a tool for learning. I will attempt to assist you to develop skills required in the world of work. To this end I will build on the platform of shared-knowledge, experience, skills and attitudes encouraged through cooperation, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

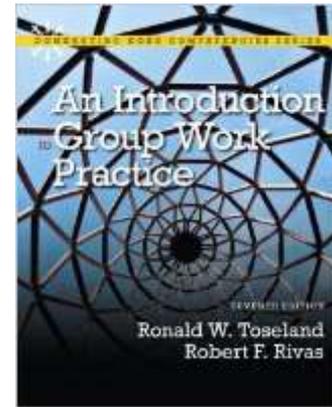
*Teaching methods:* In designing the course I stress the importance the application and integration of knowledge and skills acquired in meso practice. I encourage you to engage in reflection on the content and in process of this course. Methods used to encourage these outcomes will include active engagement in face-to-face and online discussion, short written exercises, extensive reading and role-play in classroom simulations

### **3. PRESCRIBED TEXT BOOKS**

If you create the game, then you create the rules



Corey, Corey and Corey



Toseland and Rivas

The writers of one of the prescribed textbooks for this course, Toseland and Rivas, notes that group work is a, “goal directed activity with small treatment and task groups aimed at meeting the socio-emotional needs and accomplishing tasks” (2009, p. 2). The tasks and activities in meso practice are directed both at individual members of a group and to the group as a whole within a system of service delivery. These definitions illustrate the value of the social work method.

The course provides an introduction to the theories, skills and concepts in meso practice. An outcome of the course is for the student to have expanded and developed knowledge and skills on how groups are initiated, implemented, evaluated and terminated. The roles of the social worker in meso practice will be explored comprehensively as well as the concepts of power and leadership in small groups. The course is closely aligned with the aim for study in social work, which is “to develop knowledge and competence in social work methods and practice, within a social justice value base” (SACCCSP, 2011, p3). Some aspects included in the course are: definitions of the social group work method; group work process; group dynamics; intervention skills; roles and expectations of group members; planning, recording; common problems in group work and termination. In this course student are expected to self-regulate their learning, reflect and work collaboratively in multiple spaces.

#### **4. COURSE STRUCTURE**

##### **4.1 Dates**

The course will be taught during a double slot on Mondays during the first and second teaching block [see table 1 and 2].

**Table 1: Breakdown of Learning Time**

<b>Type</b>	<b>No of hours</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
Face-to face contact with lecturer	21 hours	Attendance of lectures 2 per week
Tutorials	4 hour	1 group assignment and individual tasks
Assignment and Tasks	25 hours	
Self-study	30 hours	1 post on Sakai 1 reflection report
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80 hours</b>	
Methods of student assessment	Continuous assessment 50% Final Assessment 50%	

##### **4.2 Type and Principles of Learning**

This course is structured to provide a collaborative and interactive learning environment for students using participatory learning and action techniques, the Sakai Learning Management System and face-to-face interaction. There will be synergies created

between the field instruction course and this course. Students' experience and existing knowledge will be acknowledged and utilized where possible. The medium of teaching and learning will be lectures, class discussions, synchronous and asynchronous discussions and presentations. The course will make use of technology enhanced learning using the Sakai platform for discussion forums, YouTube videos and links to relevant sites. Students are requested to make use of the discussion forums and links to the internet. Discussion forum posts are expected to include insightful comments, personal views and references around issues that are relevant. It is recommended that when posting comments, consideration is given to two other posts made by other class members.

Students will be expected to:

- attend all lectures;
- be responsible for their own learning;
- read beyond the contents within the reading pack;
- engage in the discussion forums and online activities;
- participate fully in class through small group discussions and presentations;
- apply theoretical content presented to practice within a South African context;
- adhere to norms of punctuality
- show respect for classmates and educator;
- ensure that posts on social media platforms conform to the principles and ethics of social work;
- manage conflict constructively;
- demand work from group members;
- show creative and original engagement in tasks and activities;
- work collaboratively with group members' and
- consult with course teacher on a regular basis



#### **4.3 Assessment**

The course will be examined in June 2015 as part of the mid-year examination. See table 1 for more information.

#### 4.3.1 Course weighting

On-going assessment will comprise of engagement in the on-line discussion forums on Sakai which is part of the group assignment, class-role play, and a class test towards the end of the course.

The weighting of the assignment is 4.5% and the test is 4%. **The total weighting of the course is 8.5%.**

#### 4.3.2 Assignment: Evaluation of Small Group Experience Assignment

This is a group assignment. Group members need to jointly allocate tasks to members, and individual members need to sign to acknowledge receipt and understanding of the tasks. The task schedule needs to be included in the final submission as well as weekly progress reports.

Group members have to develop and sign a group contract to ensure compliance.

Furthermore, all group members have to be allocated as least one task that will comprise 50

% of their final mark allocated to them.

*Imagine that you and the members of your group are based in a Community Based Organisation (CBO) and you have uncovered a specific social problem that you would like to investigate and plan a meso practice intervention. In conducting this intervention, show why you chose this social condition and how it relates to the community. Discuss aspects of relevance on the discussion forum (DF) and explain to the management of the CBO, why people with this social condition can benefit from a meso practice intervention. Develop a PowerPoint showing the relevance of this project. Conduct the meso practice sessions around this social condition in the classroom ensuring that, different class members assume the role of the group leader during the different weeks.*

*Based on these sessions show your own reflection and the plans for the next sessions, explain the roles played by each of the members and the challenges that were encountered.*

*Allocate tasks to members; share resources on the LMS; conduct ice-breakers; look at developing a contract and rules of engagement.*

When completing the assignment use must be made of relevant theory and reflections on the small group experience to assess the group functioning based on the following aspects:

1. the social condition the group was set up around;
2. the group dynamics and collaboration of members in class;
3. the behavior of performing and non-performing members without using names;
4. the manner in which conflict was managed;
5. the use of activities and ice-breakers;
6. the use of reflective diary entries;
7. the use of on-line group discussions;
8. the challenges and successes experienced; and

9. the recommendations and learning for future students taking this course

Include as an annexure the following:

- Group attendance register with letters from members regarding absence
- The group contract, weekly evaluation reports and task schedule
- Ten discussion forums posts that are best represent the activity of the group
- A group assessment rating of individual members based on criteria developed by the group rating score 5- excellent -1 -poor
- PowerPoint slides of your group
- A photograph of the group poster
- An activity log and
- The contents of a bag of tools for meso practice
- Table of contents should be used
- Make use of headings and sub-headings
- River of Life
- PhotoVoice

The assignment should have an introduction, body and conclusion. The use an academic writing style in which reference is made to theory and real life examples to substantiate your points of view is essential. You will be allowed to submit one draft on 23 March 2014 for feedback. Feedback will be provided 20 April 2015

DATE DUE: 4 May 2015                      TIME: 12h00

LENGTH: 20 pages double spacing font size 12 Times New Roman (does not included the annexures); number your pages at bottom right hand corner, stable

GENERAL: APA referencing and cover page.

Marks: 100

Each person will receive an individual mark comprised of 50%- task conducted, 20% discussion forum posts submitted, 10% group project mark 10% reflection diary comments 10% poster and presentation mark

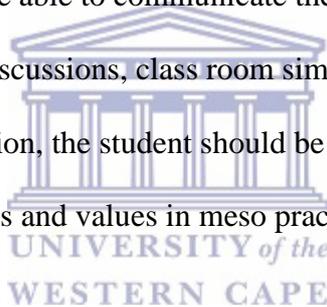
## **5 THEMES**

This course will comprise of 21 lectures that will be broken up into the following six areas:

- 1.1. Principles and purposes of meso practice
- 1.2. Programme planning
- 1.3. Skills and techniques of facilitation
- 1.4. Meso processes and dynamics
- 1.5. Group roles
- 1.6. Stages of meso practice development

## **6 COURSE AIM**

By the end of this course students should be able to make connections between ideas, content and values in meso practice and be able to communicate their understanding through engagement in class and online discussions, class room simulation activities, polls, written work and a presentation. In addition, the student should be developed an extended understanding of knowledge, skills and values in meso practice



### **6.1 Knowledge**



In terms of *knowledge*, the course aims to develop and extend the students understanding in order to:

- Describe the theory underpinning meso practice

- Demonstrate the skills to plan a group
- Demonstrate basic skills in group facilitation
- Recognise group processes and dynamics
- Understand the roles of the group worker
- Analyse the various phases in group development
- Produce a group assignment on an analysis of the small groups run during the course
- Understand the use of the self as an important instrument of intervention

## 6.2 Skills



In terms of *skills* the course aims to develop and extend the student's understanding in order to:

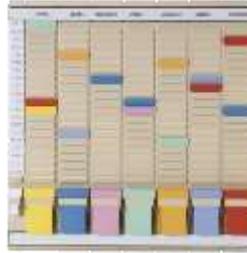
- Plan and start a promotive or preventative group.
- Assess both individual and group functioning
- Facilitate the identification of individual and group goals.
- Develop skills on the recruitment of group members
- Apply skills needed to contract with group members
- Plan and execute group activities based on the nature and stage of the group
- Work collaboratively and cooperatively in members in the course group
- Ability to write coherent, logical, grammatically correct and well considered reports/memos whether for internal or external use
- Recognise humans as bio-psycho-social (BPS) beings, as the biological, psychological and social (including the spiritual) dimensions of life are inter-connected and mutually reinforcing

## 6.3 Values



In terms of *values* the course aims to develop and extend the student understanding to:

- ✓ Display social work values and principles when conducting meso practice.
- ✓ Apply the principles of social justice
- ✓ Show respect for human diversity
- ✓ Show respecting for the rights of people to inclusion in decision-making and in the planning and use of services;
- ✓ Respect the right to self-determination (with due consideration to potential structural constraints) and confidentiality, within legislative constraints.
- ✓ Recognise the inter-relatedness between the moral impulse and codes of ethics;
- ✓ Demonstrate an understanding that every person has the ability to solve their problems, understand the mutual inter-dependence among human beings and other living entities
- ✓ Develop a commitment to inter-generational equity and continuity (third generation rights) as advocated by 'green' social work



By the end of this course, students will be expected to be able to:

- ✓ have the skills to conduct a promotive and preventative group
- ✓ have the knowledge to plan, implement, assess and evaluate the group dynamics
- ✓ be aware of the basic values that are required to conduct a promotive and preventative group
- ✓ to produce a group assignment on the class-room conducted during the course
- ✓ produce an assignment that will include:
  - ✓ conduct a critical assessment of the skills used
  - ✓ the integration of theory and practice
  - ✓ develop a number of reflections of the course learning's and group dynamics
  - ✓ conduct a critical assessment of the stages in a group
  - ✓ conduct a critical assessment of leadership and power with a group

## **7 THE COURSE MAP**

**Lecture 1 &2**

**Date: 16 Feb 2015**

Said it's time to step into the light and use every bit of the power I have  
inside

## 1. Introduction: Overview of the module- course outline

- i. Breaking up into class groups
- ii. Ice-breaker: The River of life -Participatory Learning Activities and reflection
  - a. Draw your own river of life showing how did you come to be a student at this university
  - b. Suggestions to include in your drawing are
    - i. -What are the things that have assisted you in your journey to being here
    - ii. -What are the things that have hindered the process
    - iii. -What are the important experiences that have assisted you in your journey to get here
- iii. Questionnaire – expectations of the course
- iv. History of group work
  - a. Global
  - b. South African
- v. Theoretical underpinnings of group work
  - a. Systems theory
  - b. Person-in the- environment
  - c. Learning theory



### Homework:

1. Complete your River of life
2. Take a picture and upload on the group discussion forum and add a 3-line reflection entry on this activity
3. Choose a name for your group
4. Choose a social condition
5. Develop a group leader roster
  - a. The task of the group leader is to conduct an ice –breaker and discuss the river-of-life activity
  - b. Keep a register
  - c. Develop a report on the meso practice session and post on Sakai

### Readings

*Self-study:*

*Each member to post one academic article relevant to the social condition chosen by the group*

*Text book readings:*

Toseland, R., & Rivas, R. (2009). *An Introduction to Group Work Practice*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. Chapter 2 pages 45-61.

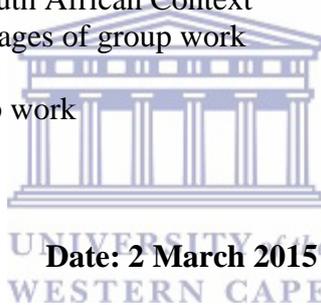
**Lecture 3-4**

**Date: 23 Feb 2015**

Every adventure needs somebody to live it

**Meso practice explored**

1. Ice breaker and discussion of the River of life drawings
2. Definition and terms
3. Purpose of group work
4. Group work within the South African Context
5. Advantages and disadvantages of group work
6. Principles of group work
7. Values and ethics in group work
8. Models of group work



**Lecture 5-6**

**Date: 2 March 2015**

**Types of groups**

- a. Task groups
  - b. Psycho-educational groups
  - c. Counselling groups
  - d. Psych-therapy
  - e. Brief groups (Corey & Corey , 2006, pp. 9-15)
- Phases in group work
  - Establishing the group purpose
  - Recruiting and screening members
  - Practical considerations
  - Contracting and orientation
  - Identifying individual and group goals
  - Skills and techniques of facilitation
  - Group Processes and Dynamics
  - Group Roles

**Home work**

Group leader same as in session one

Members – post on the roles you see members playing in the group

Read Corey, M., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2010). Groups: Process and Practice (8 ed.).

Belmont: Cengage Learning Forming a group pp.147-165

Initial Stage pp.167-211

**Lecture 7-8**

**Date: 9 March 2015**

Every mountain needs someone to climb it

### **Stages of Group Development**

- a. Models and Stages**
  - i. Tuckman Model
  - ii. Northen and Kurland Model
  - iii. Corey and Corey Model
- i. Forming a group**
  - a. What happens before groups begin?
  - b. Task and possible problems
  - c. Role of the facilitator
- ii. Initial stage**
  - a. Characteristics of this stage
  - b. Task and possible problems
  - c. Role of the facilitator
  - d. Skills required

### **Homework:**

Take the poll and seen how much of the information covered you have remembered.

Readings: Corey, M., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2010). Groups: Process and Practice (8 ed.). Belmont:

Cengage Learning-The transition stage pp. 215-264

The Working Stage –pp.265-300

**Lecture 9-10**

**Date: 16 March 2015**

**Every ocean needs someone to dive in**

**Transition Stage**

- **Ice breaker**
- **Transition Stage**
- Characteristics of this stage
- Task and possible problems
- Role of the facilitator
- Skills required
- Class test – Roles and planning a group

*Use every bit of power I have inside*

**Lecture 11-12**

**Date: 23 March 2015**

**Working Stage**

- Characteristics of this stage
- Task and possible problems
- Role of the facilitator
- Skills required

**Homework**

Readings pp.301-320 Corey, M., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2010). Groups: Process and Practice (8 ed.). Belmont: Cengage Learning

**Lecture 13-14**

**Date: 13 April 2015**

**Every dream needs someone to wish it**

**Termination /Final Stage**

**Ice breaker –PhotoVoice**

**Discussion on the pictures uploaded**

- e. Reasons for ending
- f. Tasks and possible problems
- g. Role of the facilitator
- h. Skills required
- i. Skills recommended by Schulman

**Lecture 15-16**

**Date: 20April 2015**

**Somebody's got to be a star**

**The class presentation**

**Lecture: 17-18**

**Date: 4 May 2015**

*Said it is time to step into the light*

**Feedback on presentations**

**Recap and summary**

**Questionnaire completion**

**TEST**

**Lecture : 19-20**

**Date : 11 May 2015**

**PhotoVoice exhibition**

**Lecture 21**

**Date18 May 2015**

**Closure**

**8 EXIT LEVEL OUTCOMES (ELO)**

**8.1 Category 2: Intervention: ELO 2 Assess client system's social functioning**

Associated Assessment Criteria	Teaching & Learning activities	Assessment tasks	Graduate Attributes	
			Critical Cross-field Outcomes	Purpose(Knowledge, Skills and Values)
<p>2.1 Assessments reflect the ability to undertake a comprehensive analysis of client system's needs and strengths.</p> <p>2.2 Analyses of client systems' needs and strengths reflect the application of appropriate theoretical frameworks.</p> <p>2.3 Assessments demonstrate the use of appropriate social work tools and data.</p> <p>2.4 Assessments clearly reflect the influence and impact of social circumstances and social systems on client systems' functioning.</p> <p>2.5 Assessments result in, as far as is reasonable and possible, mutually agreed upon goals.</p> <p>2.6 Assessment processes and conclusions are recorded clearly, systematically and accurately.</p>	<p>Reading Toseland and Rivas (2009, pp. 216-244) and Becker (2005) on assessment.</p> <p>Lectures and role play.</p> <p>Students demonstrate the use of socio-grams as tool in assessment.</p> <p>Online discussion forum posts</p> <p>Reflective diary entries that students share with each other</p>	<p>Class test, response to discussion groups and an assignment will to evaluate understanding regarding the assessment process during that various group stages.</p> <p>The ELOs will be assessed in the June and November exam</p>	<p>Collect, analyse, organize and critically evaluate information</p>	<p>The student should be able to demonstrate through their written work and verbal discussions in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a commitment to ethical practice in relation to clients, colleagues, practice settings, professional of social work and the broader community.</li> <li>• a commitment to culturally sensitive practice and respect for human diversity</li> </ul>

**8.2 Exit Level Outcomes: ELO 3: Plan and implement appropriate social work intervention**

*strategies and techniques at micro, meso and macro levels*

Associated Assessment Criteria	Teaching & Learning activities	Assessment tasks	Graduate Attributes	
			Critical Cross- field Outcomes	Purpose(Knowledge, Skills and Values)
<p>3.1 Intervention plans take into account social systems impacting on client systems' functioning.</p> <p>3.2 Intervention plans are based on assessment and the appropriate use of strategies and techniques to achieve identified goals.</p> <p>3.3 Intervention strategies, models and techniques are based on comprehensive assessment of client systems.</p> <p>3.4 Intervention strategies and techniques are purposefully aimed at the achievement of identified goals.</p> <p>3.5 Interventions reflect the appropriate application of a range of skills (Range of skills includes, for example communication, problem-solving, networking, negotiation, mediation, advocacy and</p>	<p>Reading Toseland and Rivas (2009) (pp. 251-377) and Corey and Corey (2006) on group process. (pp.103-287) Lectures and role play. Online discussion forum posts Reflective diary entries that students will share with each other</p>	<p>Class test and assignment regarding the intervention of the group worker during that various group stages. Group presentation</p> <p>The ELOs will be assessed in the June and November exam.</p>	<p>Identify and solve problems using critical and creative thinking. Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation and community. Collect, analyse, organize and critically evaluate information. Demonstrate ethical and professional behaviour.</p>	<p>The student should be able to demonstrate through their written work and verbal discussions in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a commitment to ethical practice in relation to clients, colleagues, practice settings, professional of social work and the broader community.</li> <li>• a commitment to culturally sensitive practice and respect for human diversity</li> </ul>

interviewing skills). 3.6 Intervention strategies and techniques are appropriately implemented in accordance with corresponding theoretical assumptions. 3.7. Interventions include the appropriate use of social work tools and data.				
--	--	--	--	--

**8.3 Exit Level Outcomes: ELO 7: Terminate social work intervention**

Associated Assessment Criteria	Teaching & Learning activities	Assessment tasks	Graduate Attributes	
			Critical Cross-field Outcomes	Purpose (Knowledge, Skills and Values)
7.1 Wherever feasible, termination of services is mutually agreed to by the relevant parties and occurs in accordance with social work principles. 7.2 Preparation of client systems for termination of services is timeous and realistic. 7.3 Termination is based, as far as is reasonable and possible, on the achievement of goals and the client systems' ability to function independently. 7.4 All administrative	Reading Toseland and Rivas (2009) (p.p. 377-422) and Corey & Corey (2006) on group process. (p. p267-285) Lectures and role play. Online discussion forum posts Reflective	Class test and assignment regarding the termination stage. Group presentation The ELOs will be assessed in the June exam	Identify and solve problems using critical and creative thinking. Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation and community. Collect, analyse, organize and critically evaluate information. Demonstrate ethical and professional	The student should be able to demonstrate through their written work and verbal discussions in class: -a commitment to ethical practice in relation to clients, colleagues, practice settings, professional of social work and the broader community. -a commitment to culturally sensitive practice and respect for human diversity

aspects of termination are completed in accordance with professional requirements.	diary entries that students will share with each other		behaviour.	
--	--	--	------------	--

## **9 TEACHING METHODS AND EXPECTATIONS**

- a. The medium of teaching and learning will be face to face lectures, technology enhanced learning using the Sakai learning management system, class discussions and role playing



- b. See section 2.2. This course is structured to provide a co-operative learning environment for students in which reflection, connections and construction of knowledge is encouraged.

## **10 COURSE STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE**

Table 2: Lecture dates

No.	DATE	TIME	VENUE	TOPIC	NOTES
1-2	06/02/15	10-15- 12-00		<i>Introduction</i>	
3-4	23/02/15	10-15- 12-00		<i>Programme Planning</i>	

No.	DATE	TIME	VENUE	TOPIC	NOTES
5-6	02/03/15	10-15- 12-00		<i>Skills and techniques of facilitation</i>	
7-8	09/03/15	10-15- 12-00		<i>Group Processes and Dynamics</i>	
9-10	16/03/15	10-15- 12-00		<i>Group roles and Stages (Pre-group)</i>	
11-12	23/03/15	10-15- 12-00		<i>Transition Stage 1<sup>st</sup> draft of assignment for feedback</i>	
13-14	13/04/15	10-15- 12-00		<i>Working Stage</i>	
15-16	20/04/15	10-15- 12-00		<i>Termination Stage</i>	
<b>17-18</b>	<b>04/05/15</b>	<b>10-15- 12-00</b>		<b>TEST</b>	
19-20	11/05/15	10-15- 12-00		<i>Presentations</i>	
21	18/05/15	10-15- 11-00		<i>Recap and exam prep</i>	

The course will be offered mainly during a double lecture slot on Mondays (10h15-12h00) in the first and second teaching block. Thus, it will run from the 14<sup>th</sup> of February to the 12<sup>th</sup> of May.

Tutorials on this course will be held on the dates discussed in class

## **11 ASSESSMENT**

The course will be examined in June 2015 as part of the Social Work Methods and Practice module (SOCW2004). Students will be required to write a test on **22/04/14**. The test, the group assignment and the discussion forum posts will make up **15% of** your year mark for the module. This course will also be examined in November as part of the Field Instruction in Social Work Practice II (SOCW 2001) exam.

## **12 CONCLUSION**

Consultation times can be arranged by appointment. You can also send your inquiries to my email [Roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za](mailto:Roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za)

### **1. PRESCRIBED BOOKS**

Becker, L. (2005). *Working with Groups*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Corey, M. S. & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and Practice*. (7<sup>th</sup> ed). United States of America: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Toseland, R.W., & Rivas, R.F. (2012). *An Introduction to Groupwork Practice*. (7<sup>th</sup> ed). Boston: Pearson Education.

### **2. RECOMMENDED READING**

Brandler, S. (1999). *Group Work: Skills and Strategies for Effective Interventions*. New York: The Hayworth Press, Inc.

Corey, M. S. & Corey, G. (1982). *Groups: Process and Practice*. New York: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Corey, M. S. & Corey, G. (2006). *Groups: Process and Practice*. United States of America: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Corey, M., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2010). *Groups: Process and Practice* (8 ed.). Belmont: Cengage

## Learning

Drumm, K. (2006). The Essential Power of Group Work. In A. Malekoff, R. Salmon, & D. M. Steinberg, *Making Joyful Noise: The Art, Science, and Soul of Group Work* (pp. 17-31). Binghamton: The Haworth Press, Inc

Kurland, R., Salmon, R., Bitel, M., Goodman, H., Ludwig, K., Newmann, E., & Sullivan, N. (2004). The survival of groupwork: a call to action. *Social work with Groups*, 27(1), 3-16.

Malekoff, A. S. (2006). *Making Joyful Noise*. New York: The Haworth Press, Inc.

Masson, R. L, Jacobs, E, Harvill, R.L & Schimmel, C.J. (2012) *Group Counselling: Interventions and Techniques* Canada Brooks Cole

Remocker, A. S. (1982). *Action Speaks Louder :A Handbook of Non-verbal Group Techiques*. New York: Churchill Livingstone.

Shulman, L. (2006). *The Skills of Helping: Individuals, Families, Groups, and Communities* (5 ed.). Belmont, USA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Steinberg, D. M. (2006). The Art, Science, Heart, and Ethics of Social Group Work: Lessons from a Great Teacher. In A. Malekoff, R. Salmon, & D. M. Steinberg, *Making Joyful Noise: The Art, Science, and Soul of Group Work* (pp. 33-45). Binghamton: The Haworth Press, Inc.

NB: The leader can never close the gap between him and the group. If he does, he is no longer what he must be. He must walk a tightrope between the consent he must win and the control he must exert.

Vince Lombardi

R. Pillay - January 2015

## ANNEXURES

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**ANNEXURE A - ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER ETHICS APPROVAL  
LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE  
RESEARCH OFFICE**



OFFICE OF THE DEAN  
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

03 June 2013

**To Whom It May Concern**

I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape has approved the methodology and ethics of the following research project by:  
Mrs R Pillay (Social Work)

Research Project:                      Crafting a meso practice course for  
undergraduate social work students: An  
education design-based research study.

Registration no:                          13/4/24

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia Josias".

*Ms Patricia Josias  
Research Ethics Committee Officer  
University of the Western Cape*

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa  
T: +27 21 959 2988/2948 . F: +27 21 959 3176  
E: pjosias@uwc.ac.za  
www.uwc.ac.za

A place of quality,  
a place to grow, from hope  
to action through knowledge

**ANNEXURE B - PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DEPT OF  
SOCIAL WORK, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND**



**SOCIAL WORK**  
**THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)**



Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4472 • Fax: 011 717 4473 • E-mail: socialwork.SHCD@wits.ac.za

10 July 2013

Mrs Roshini Pillay  
Department of Social Work  
University of the Witwatersrand

Dear Roshini

**Permission to conduct PhD research on meso practice in the Department of Social Work, University of the Witwatersrand**

Your letter of 10 July 2013 in respect of the above has reference.  
Please be advised that the Department of Social Work is happy to grant you permission to conduct your PhD research in the Department. I note that the title of your study is 'Crafting a meso practice course for undergraduate social work students: An education design-based study'. I wish you all the best with your study.

Sincerely,

Professor Edwell Kaseke  
Head of Department

**ANNEXURE C – PARTICIPANT’S INFORMATION SHEET: FOR  
LECTURERS AND FIELD INSTRUCTION SUPERVISORS**



**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

*Tel: +27 21-9592274, Fax: 27 21-9592271*

**Project Title: Crafting a meso practice course using elements of authentic learning for undergraduate social work students in South Africa**

**What is this study about?**

I am Roshini Pillay, a registered PhD student in Social Work at the University of the Western Cape. I hereby invite you to participate in this research project because you are employed at a lecturer in social work teaching meso practice to undergraduate student or supervise social work students in field instruction in the course SOCW 2005 Social Work Methods and Practice. The purpose of this research project is to develop guidelines on the teaching and learning of meso practice for undergraduate social work students.

**What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?**

You are asked to participate in the research data collection method of an individual interview. The information you share will be used to inform the collation of guidelines for an intervention on the teaching and learning of undergraduate social work students.

**Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all printed documents will be locked in a filing cabinet in the office of the researcher. The information will not be available to any person, other than the researcher, research supervisors, independent coder and statistician. Identification codes will be used instead of names on any of the data forms. All computer files related to this research project will be password-protected on the computer of the researcher. The online surveys, interviews

and reflections will be anonymous and will not contain any information that will personally identify you.

**What are the risks of this research?**

There are no risks associated with participating in this research project.

**What are the benefits of this research?**

The research is not designed to personally benefit the researcher, but to inform guidelines for teachers on teaching and learning of meso practice interventions to be integrated in the undergraduate social work curriculum at the University of the Witwatersrand. This can indirectly benefit future social work students in the teaching of meso practice.

**Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time

This research project will involve making audio recordings of the interview. We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all audio and videotapes will be kept on the computer of the researcher and one back-up set will be locked in a filing cabinet in the office of the researcher. The information will not be available to any person, other than the researcher, research supervisors, independent coder and statistician. All audio and videotapes related to this research project will be password-protected on the computer of the researcher. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

**What if I have questions?**

This research is being conducted by Roshini Pillay at the Department of Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand.

If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact:

Researcher: Roshini Pillay

University of the Witwatersrand

Telephone: (011) 717 4486

Email: [Roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za](mailto:Roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za)

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Research Supervisor: Prof V Bozalek

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

Telephone: (021) 9592274; Email: [vbozalek@uwc.ac.za](mailto:vbozalek@uwc.ac.za)

Or Professor D Wood

Extraordinary Professor: Faculty of Education

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

Email: [denise.wood@unisa.edu.au](mailto:denise.wood@unisa.edu.au)

This research was approved by the Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape.



## ANNEXURE D – PARTICIPANT’S INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS



### UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

*Tel: +27 21-9592274, Fax: 27 21-9592271*



**Project Title: Crafting a meso practice course using elements of authentic learning for undergraduate social work students in South Africa**

#### **What is this study about?**

I am Roshini Pillay, a registered PhD student in Social Work at the University of the Western Cape. I hereby invite you to participate in this research project because you are a registered student course SOCW 2005 social work methods and practice. The purpose of this research project is to develop guidelines on the teaching and learning of meso practice for undergraduate social work students.

#### **What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?**

You are asked to participate in the research data collection methods, such as a surveys, focus groups, individual interviews and online reflections to share your experiences to inform the collation of guidelines for an intervention on the teaching and learning of undergraduate social work students. You will sign permission to partake in each of the phases of the project on the consent form.

#### **Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all printed documents will be locked in a filing cabinet in the office of the

researcher. The information will not be available to any person, other than the researcher, research supervisors, independent coder and statistician. Identification codes will be used instead of names on any of the data forms. All computer files related to this research project will be password-protected on the computer of the researcher. The online surveys, interviews and reflections will be anonymous and will not contain any information that will personally identify you.

**What are the risks of this research?**

There are no risks associated with participating in this research project.

**What are the benefits of this research?**

The research is not designed to personally benefit the researcher, but to inform guidelines for teachers on teaching and learning of meso practice interventions to be integrated in the undergraduate social work curriculum at the University of the Witwatersrand. This can indirectly benefit future social work students in the teaching of meso practice.

**Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized and it will not affect your academic performance in any way.

This research project will involve making audio and video recordings of you during class sessions, focus group sessions and individual interviews. We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all audio and videotapes will be kept on the computer of the researcher and one back-up set will be locked in a filing cabinet in the office of the researcher. The information will not be available to any person, other than the researcher, research supervisors, independent coder and statistician. All audio and videotapes related to this research project will be password-protected on the computer of the researcher. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

**What if I have questions?**

This research is being conducted by Roshini Pillay at the Department of Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand.

If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact:

Researcher: Roshini Pillay

University of the Witwatersrand

Telephone: (011) 717 4486

Email: [Roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za](mailto:Roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za)

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Research Supervisor: Prof V Bozalek

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

Telephone: (021) 9592274; Email: [vbozalek@uwc.ac.za](mailto:vbozalek@uwc.ac.za)

Or Professor D Wood

Extraordinary Professor: Faculty of Education

University of the Western Cape

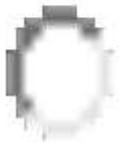
Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

Email: [denise.wood@unisa.edu.au](mailto:denise.wood@unisa.edu.au)



This research will be approved by the Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape.

**ANNEXURE E - WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR  
PARTICIPATION**



**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

*Tel: +27 21-9592274, Fax: 27 21-9592271*



**WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT**

**Project Title Crafting a meso practice course using elements of authentic learning for undergraduate social work students in South Africa**

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

The study has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I hereby voluntary agree to participate in the individual interviews in this research study. All my questions have been answered and sufficiently clarified. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study at any stage without giving any reason. I have been informed that the information gathered in this study will not be available to any person, other than the researcher, research supervisors, independent coder and statistician.

**Participants name :** .....

**Participants signature :** .....

**Date :** .....

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you may have experienced related to this study, please contact the researcher or research supervisor:

Researcher: Roshini Pillay

University of the Witwatersrand

Ph:011 7174486

Email: [roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za](mailto:roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za)

Research Supervisors:

Prof V Bozalek

Director of Teaching and Learning

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X16

Bellville, 7535

Email : [ybozalek@uwc.ac.za](mailto:ybozalek@uwc.ac.za)

Prof D Wood

Extraordinary Professor

University of Western Cape

Private Bag X16

Bellville, 7535

Email: [denise.wood@unisa.edu.au](mailto:denise.wood@unisa.edu.au)



**ANNEXURE F - WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT FOR AUDIO  
RECORDING**



**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-9592274, Fax: 27 21-9592271

**WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT**

**Project Title: Crafting a meso practice course using elements of authentic learning for undergraduate social work students in South Africa**

The study has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I hereby voluntary agree to participate in the recordings of the class sessions in this research study. All my questions have been answered and sufficiently clarified. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study at any stage without giving any reason. I have been informed that the information gathered in this study will not be available to any person, other than the researcher, research supervisors, independent coder and statistician.

**Participants name :** .....

**Participants signature :** .....

**Date :** .....

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you may have experienced related to this study, please contact the researcher or research supervisor:

Researcher: Roshini Pillay

University of the Witwatersrand

Telephone: (011) 717 4486

Email: [Roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za](mailto:Roshini.pillay@wits.ac.za)

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please

contact:

Research Supervisor: Prof V Bozalek

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

Telephone: (021) 9592274; Email: [ybozalek@uwc.ac.za](mailto:ybozalek@uwc.ac.za)

Or Professor D Wood

Extraordinary Professor: Faculty of Education

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535

Email: [denise.wood@unisa.edu.au](mailto:denise.wood@unisa.edu.au)

This research will be approved by the Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape.



**ANNEXURE G - SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR  
EDUCATORS OF MESO PRACTICE**



**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

*Tel: +27 21-9592274, Fax: 27 21-9592271*

**Project Title: Crafting a meso practice course using elements of  
authentic learning for undergraduate social work students in South Africa**

The following questions will be used to guide the semi –structured individual interviews conducted with teachers

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

a. Gender		b. Age		c. Race		d. Code:	
e. Years of teaching experience							
f. In which year/s is meso practice taught to undergraduate students?							
g. How many hours is the in-class course?							
h. How many hours are allocated for practical work in meso practice?							
i. During which year/s (and in which semester) of study do students conduct a group?							
j. Number of students in the meso practice class you teach							

1. Please explain your views on the teaching style adopted for the meso practice course? ( probe on teaching assumptions that underline teaching practice)
  - 1.1. What are some of the source material and books used for the course?
2. Describe the steps taken to design the meso practice course?
3. What are theoretical approaches used?
4. What are the learning objectives of the course?
5. Which exit level outcomes of the BSW degree are met by these learning objectives?
6. What are the attributes of a good meso practice lecturer?

7. What are some of the strengths of the methods used to teach meso practice to undergraduate students?
8. What are some of the limitations of the methods used to teach meso practice to undergraduate students?
9. What methods are used to provide opportunities for practice learning (integration with theory and practice)?
10. Please describe the requirements for the practice learning task?
11. What are the methods used to assess the course and the weightings thereof?
12. Have you used technology to enhance learning in the course?
13. If so, please explain how?
14. I would like you to step back from the current situation and assume that you have retired and were reflecting on the teaching of meso practice what would be your recommendations to a new lecturer teaching in this area of intervention in social work?
15. I will be careful to write up this interview in a manner that does not identify you. However, is there anything you have just told me which I should be particularly careful about? Is there anything I should check with you before I use it?



## ANNEXURE H - SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### FOR FIELD INSTRUCTION SUPERVISORS



## UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-9592274, Fax: 27 21-9592271

23 July 2013

**Project Title: Crafting a meso practice course for undergraduate social work students:  
An Education Design-Based Research study**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

a. Gender		b. Age		c. Race	
d. Code		e. Agency			
f. No. of years as a practicing social work:		g. No. of years as a supervisor			
h. No. of students supervised			i. No. of students currently supervising		

### Questions

1. What is the style you adopt when you supervise meso practice with the undergraduate social work students? (I will prompt regarding the teaching style adopted)
2. What are the benefits of field instruction supervision for undergraduate students in 2<sup>nd</sup> year in meso practice?
3. What are some of the limitations of field instruction of supervision of 2<sup>nd</sup> year social work students in meso practice?
4. What are the attributes of a good FI supervisor?
5. How does the setting where the student is placed affect learning?
6. How does one create linkages between theory and practice?
7. How does one create linkages between the university and the agency?
8. How can the university systems complement supervision in meso practice?
9. Describe some of the groups conducted by the students
10. What are some of the meso practice skills used by students?

11. What is your view on the exit level outcomes for meso practice within the BSW degree?
12. What meso practice skills do students need to know more about?
13. What is your opinion regarding the use of technology to enhance learning of meso intervention?
14. I would like you to step back from the current situation and assume that you have retired and were reflecting on the supervision of meso practice. What would be your recommendations to a new supervisor in this area of intervention in social work?
15. I will be careful to write up this interview in a manner that does not identify you. However, is there anything you have just told me which I should be particularly careful about? Is there anything I should check with you before I use it?



**ANNEXURE I – FOCUS GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY BINDING  
FORM**



**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

*Tel: +27 21-9592274, Fax: 27 21-9592271*

**Project Title: Crafting a meso practice course using elements of authentic learning for undergraduate social work students in South Africa**

**FOCUS GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY BINDING FORM**

**Project Title:** Investigating/ exploring the effectiveness of current approaches to the teaching and learning of meso practice for second year social work students: In a South African University

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way. I agree to be audio-taped during my participation in the study. I also agree not to disclose any information that was discussed during the group discussion.

**Participant's name**.....

**Participant's signature**.....

**Witness's name**.....

**Witness's signature**.....

**Date**.....



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

## ANNEXURE J – STUDENT SURVEY - SURVEYMONKEY

Exit this survey

### Roshini's Survey on Meso Practice:2015

I am interested in understanding your experiences of the Meso Practice course which you are enrolled as a student at the University of the Witwatersrand. Your responses to this questionnaire will provide insight into the effectiveness of the current design of the course and help me to improve the course for the benefit of future students.

I would therefore value your participation in this questionnaire

Regards

Roshini Pillay

Demographic Information

#### 1. Age

#### 2. What is your race?



#### 3. What is your first language?

#### 4. What is your gender?

#### \* 5. Which class group did you belong to?

#### 6. Which of the following devices do you use? You can select more than one.

- Laptop
- Cellphone with internet connection
- Cellphone without internet connection
- Tablet computer
- Desktop computer
- Printer

Other (please specify)

**7. How do you fund your studies?**

- Self Funded
- Parents and family
- Bank loan
- NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme)

**8. Explain in your own words what is meso practice?**

**9. Linking the content of the course to a social condition was useful**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**10. I can see a link between micro, meso and macro practice**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**11. The members in my group were diverse and shared different views on issues**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**12. The social condition my group worked on was complex**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**13. Write in the space provided some of the social work skills you learnt from the meso practice course**

**14. I felt comfortable to share my opinions in the classroom**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**15. I participated and shared my views in the online discussion forum**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**16. Working in groups was fun**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**17. I would have preferred to have worked on my own instead of in a group**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**18. The members in my group held regular out- of- class meetings**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**19. I got to know more about the members in my group**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**20. Members in the group supported each other**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**21. Watching others in the group perform different roles was helpful**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**22. There was a lot of conflict in my group**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**23. Write down your experiences of working in a group in the space provided**

**24. It was helpful to conduct the course over a 7 week period**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------	-------------------

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree     Not sure     Disagree     Strongly disagree

**25. I think I can use the skills I have learnt in the course when I work with clients**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree     Not sure     Disagree     Strongly disagree

**26. Did you find the course of sufficient length for you to learn about how to conduct a group in the next semester? Yes or no , please motivate your answer**

**27. I found drawing of my time-line and river of life allowed me to reflect on my past and my future**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree     Not sure     Disagree     Strongly disagree

**28. The photovoice project was informative**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree     Not sure     Disagree     Strongly disagree

**29. The ice-breakers were interesting**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree     Not sure     Disagree     Strongly disagree

**30. I learnt from the activities undertaken in the course**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly

Strongly agree     Agree     Not sure     Disagree     Strongly

**31. Describe the use of activitives during the course**

**32. I found the PowerPoint slides helpful for my learning**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree     Not sure     Disagree     Strongly disagree

**33. I learnt from watching the You-tube videos**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree             Not sure         Disagree         Strongly disagree

**34. I liked writing posts on the discussion forum**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree             Not sure         Disagree         Strongly disagree

**35. I enjoyed reading the discussion form posts**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree             Not sure         Disagree         Strongly disagree

**36. Reading the posts gave me different perspectives on the social condition**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree             Not sure         Disagree         Strongly disagree

**37. ) I had difficulty using Sakai as the system did not work**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree             Not sure         Disagree         Strongly disagree

**38. I have learnt how to better select information from the internet**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree             Not sure         Disagree         Strongly disagree

**39. h) Sakai offered me greater communication with my lecturer**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree             Not sure         Disagree         Strongly disagree

**40. Explain your experience of learning with technology in the text box below**

⏪
⏩

⏪
⏩

**41. The lecturer provided advice and guidance at different stages of the course**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree             Not sure         Disagree         Strongly disagree

**42. I found the tutorials beneficial to my understanding of the course**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree     Agree             Not sure         Disagree         Strongly disagree

**43. Indicate the type of assistance provided by the lecturer in the text box below**

⏪
⏩

⏪
⏩

**44. The feedback received from the group members on my contribution was helpful**

Strongly agree      Agree      Not sure      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**45. The process check-in forms gave me an opportunity to assess the functioning of the group**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**46. It was helpful that feedback was provided of a draft to improve the final assignment**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**47. I knew what was expected of my group to pass the assignment**

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/> Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree

**48. Did the assessments in the course provide you with the opportunity to show your learning?**

Yes or no, please motivate your answer



**49. Would you like more training on Sakai?**

If yes state type of training

**50. Would you like greater access to the internet?**

If yes, state where

**51. Would you like more computer work stations at university**

**52. You have been very helpful. Do you have any other thoughts or feelings you would like to share about the meso practice course?**

# ANNEXURE K - STUDENT FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE AT THE END OF THE COURSE

## UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

*Tel: +27 21-9592848, Fax: 27 21-9592701*

**Project Title: Crafting a meso practice course for undergraduate social work students:  
A Mixed Methods Study**

The purpose of this focus group is to understand your perceptions of the Meso Practice course you have undertaken. This interview will be audio recorded and you have the right to withdraw. Please answer these questions honestly based on your recall of the course. The questions asked will consider your experience, your opinions., your feelings, factual information and few background questions. You have been allocated fake nametags and I would like to begin by each person introducing himself or herself using their nom de plume and stating their age, sex and the group they belonged to

Note to focus group instructor only read the information in italics to the group members

Question	Type of Question				Rationale
	1 Exp	2 Opin	3 Feel	4 Demo	
<b>1. Background and TEL</b>					
1.1 <i>State your non de plume, age and gender</i>				X	Explanatory and introductory comments
1.2 <i>What were the strengths of the meso practice course?</i> 1.3 <i>What were the weaknesses of the meso practice course?</i>		X			Open-ended question to encourage the respondents to speak descriptively- this question assumes that the programme had strengths and weaknesses and may yield useful information

1.4 <i>What was your experience of leaning with technology?</i>	X				An experience question regarding the use of TEL
<b>2. Situated learning and authentic learning</b>					
2.1 CONTEXT: <i>The course was linked to a social condition that occurs in South African, what did you think about using a social condition to learn about meso practice</i>		X			An opinion question regarding the use of a real world context
2.2 ACTIVITY: <i>You were asked to consider the social condition from various points of view including as a social worker and a client- How did you feel about this task?</i>		X			An opinion question regarding the activities the students engaged in
2.3 ACTIVITY: <i>What was your experience of being a group leader?</i>	X				An experience question about real world roles.
2.4 MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES: <i>What did you think about the tasks you had to conduct such as research, presentation and planning to implement the assignment</i>			X		A feeling question regarding the use of multiple perspectives
2.5 EXPERT PERFORMANCES: <i>Comment on the use of multi-media videos in the course</i>		x			An opinion question about expert performances
2.6 COLLABORATION: <i>How did paying the roles of group members and doing the ice-breakers help your understanding of the course content</i>		X			An opinion question about real world activities and collaboration
Question	Type of Question				Rationale
	1 Exp	2 Opin	3 Feel	4 Demo	
2.7 COLLABORATION: <i>What did you feel about working in a group?</i>			X		A feeling question regarding collaboration on the task
2.8 AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT: <i>What was your experience of the presentation of the project</i>	X				An experience question regarding the task of presentation
2.9 COACHING AND SCAFFOLDING: <i>What do you think about the role played by the lecturer in the course?</i>		X			Seeking the opinion of the student regarding the role played by the teacher
<b>3. Closing Comments</b>					
3.1 <i>You have been very helpful, do you have any thoughts of what can be done to improve the course</i>					Closing remarks and thanks

This focus group schedule was adapted from the document created by Herrington's 1997 PhD study.

# APPENDIX L - STUDENT FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE POST

## CONDUCTING A GROUP IN 2016



### UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

*Tel: +27 21-9592848, Fax: 27 21-9592701*

#### Focus Group Questions:

Second year student 2015

Subject: Meso Practice Post Placement at schools

Date :23 November 2015

#### Purpose:

The study aims to contribute to knowledge and understanding of social work education and practice with undergraduate students who are studying meso practice.

Questions are designed to explore the participant's opinions on matters relating to the meso practice which includes the theory course, the course on preparing for practice and the placement at the accredited Field Instruction Centre. The purpose of this focus group is to consider your experiences of conducting meso practice at a secondary school in 2015 and using the Ke Moja programme. The information obtained will allow for research to be conducted on the use of schools and the Ke Moja Programme for field instruction in future training of social work students.

Please can you complete the consent form for audio taping of this group.

All members are requested to wear a name badge with a non de plume and should you wish to refer to a member of the group during the session you may refer to them by their non de plume.

Let us begin

### **Question 1**

Share your understanding of conducting preventative or promoative groups in a school setting?

### **Question 2**

What where the constraints and affordances of **the Meso Practice Theory** course for conducting the groups at schools

- a) Let us begin with the affordances (the aspects that were useful/ helpful)
- b) Now tell me about the constraints (the aspects that were unhelpful)

### **Question 3**

Next based on the course **Preparing for Practice**, tell me what about this course was

- a) Helpful to you when you conducted the groups
- b) What was unhelpful

### **Question 4**

This question focuses on the KeMoja Training that was conducted with you, again tell me about the useful and unhelpful aspects about this training

- a) What was helpful?
- b) What was unhelpful?

### **Question 5**

Share with the group about the positives and negatives of conducting meso practice in a school setting

- a) What were the positive aspects?
- b) What were the negative aspects?

### **Question 6**

Imagine that you are over 30 years old and working at the Social Work Department in a South African University and are responsible for the placement of second year social work students at Field Instruction Centres, share your advice of setting up this programme?

What would be the aspects you would include?

What would be the aspects you will remove?

What would be your advice to students?

What would be your advice to Field Instruction supervisors?

What would be your advice to teachers on the course?

Would you like to add anything more?

**Thank you for your participation in this focus group and happy holidays ☺**

## ANNEXURE M - STRUCTURED REFLECTION FORM DEVELOPED

BY ANN EDWARDS

### TEMPLATE FOR REFLECTIONS

For students/participants

Reflection Number:

Name:	Date:
 <p><b>ACTIVITY:</b> Very briefly describe one activity in the last week where you felt effective as a learner.</p>	
<p><b>ACTIONS:</b> What did you do during the activity i.e. what actions did you take? (e.g. explained how I did xxx to two other students, recognised the connection between x and y, etc.) You can mention as many actions as you like</p>	

<p><b>AIMS:</b> What did you bring to the activity? (e.g. I 've known about xxx for a long time, I prepared by doing zzz, the topic is important and interests me because...etc.) You can mention as many points as you like.</p>	
<p><b>CONTEXT:</b> What was it about the session that meant you could draw on what you brought to the activity?</p>	

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WESTERN CAPE

**ANNEXURE N - SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR  
STUDENTS**



**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

*Tel: +27 21-9592274, Fax: 27 21-9592271*

**Project Title: Crafting a meso practice course using elements of authentic learning for undergraduate social work students in South Africa**

Questions adapted from Herrington (1997)

In this interview the course refers to the SOCW2005 Meso Practice course conducted in 2015



Question	Type of Question				Rationale
	Exp	Opin	Feel	Dem	
<b>Section A: Background and Meso practice course experience</b>					
The purpose of this interview to explore your experiences of the course as a person who has enrolled for the course this year. The interview will be audio taped and you have the right to withdraw any point or refuse to answer any questions.					Explanatory and introductory comments
Ask demographic information: Pseudonym, age, class group and gender					Brief demographic data Close-ended question asking factual data
What did you think about the course?					Open-ended question to encourage participants to describe the course
How do you feel about using face-to face lectures and Sakai?					Background question about the use of blended learning
<b>Section B: Effectiveness of the course</b>					
What were the strengths of the course?					Presumption question as it assumes the course had strengths and weaknesses
What were the weaknesses of the					

course?					
How effective did you think the course was?					Opinion question
If you meet a student who is going to take the course what advice would you give to the student?					Dream question
<b>Section C: Effect of authentic learning elements</b>					
<i>Authentic Context</i>					
The course used a social condition such as TB, age disparate relationships and financial exclusion that the groups chose which was linked to meso practice. <i>Did the social condition reflect a type of issue a social worker may encounter in real life?</i>					Open-ended question of authentic context
<i>Authentic Activity</i>					
Was the assignment simple or complex? <i>Why was this so?</i>					Open-ended question on the activity
Describe how did your group when about completing the assignment					Open-ended question on how the complex task was broken up
Did you find that the time allocated to complete the assignment? Too long, too short etc.					Question seeks opinion on whether sustained thinking was possible within the allocated time
How did you feel like taking on the role of a group worker when doing the activities?					Feeling question to elicit an emotional response to the activity.
<i>Multiple perspectives</i>					
The assignment required you to examine different views of the social condition? What resources did you consult to find information?					An open-ended question asking for a view on the whether the task allowed for multiple perspective
Where you able to identify the theory that was linked to the social condition your group worked on?					
<i>Expert Performances</i>					
Do you think the videos and you-tube resources placed on Sakai allowed you to see other groups in action and learn from them?					Open-ended question on the value placed on learning from experts
Who assisted you in your work on this course?					
<i>Collaboration</i>					
During the course you had to work in groups? How did you feel about this arrangement?					A feeling question on how the participant felt about being part of a team
Describe whether your group engaged in joint problem solving or individual work?					Experience question on the roles played for task completion

What are the advantages of working in a group? What are the disadvantages of working in a group?					
<i>Reflection</i>					
How did the course allow you to make use of reflection?					A presumption question that obtains information of how students make use of reflection skills
<i>Articulation</i>					
How did you feel about the presentation of the findings of the assignment in class?					A feeling question on the use of articulation
Indicate any opportunities provided for you to speak and write to class members and the public					An opinion question on the use of articulation
<i>Coaching and scaffolding</i>					
What kind of assistance did your lecturer and tutor provide?					An experience question to review the actions of the teacher
How effective was the assistance provided by your lecturer and tutor?					An opinion question on the usefulness of the support provided.
<i>Authentic Assessment</i>					
What were the various aspects that were considered in the assessment of the final assignment?					
<i>Closing comments</i>					
You have been very helpful. Do you have any other thoughts and feeling about the course?					Last open-ended question to obtain further information
Thank you					Closing remarks Is there anything of a sensitive nature that you have said in the interview that you would like removed from the transcript.

Adapted from Herrington (1997)

## References

Herrington, J. (1997). *Authentic learning in interactive multimedia environments*. (PhD), Edith Cowan University, Australia.

**ANNEXURE O - SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR  
FI SUPERVISORS POST COURSE**



**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

*Tel: +27 21-9592848, Fax: 27 21-9592701*

**Annexure O: Interview Schedule for supervisors**

**Demographic information**

Name of supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: Male          Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

What number of years are you in practice after completion of the BSW degree?

\_\_\_\_\_

What number of years you have conducted student supervision for Wits? \_\_\_\_\_

How many second year students have you supervised in 2015? \_\_\_\_\_

What method(s) of supervision did you use?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Question 1**

Please share your experiences of supervising second year social work students in 2015?

**Question 2**

In your view, what are the positive aspects of using a school as a placement option for field instruction placement for second year social work students?

**Question 3**

What are the limitations of using a school for student placement for field instruction?

#### Question 4

In 2015 students were asked to use the Ke Moja programme to conduct their meso practice, what are your views on this programme for meso practice?

#### Question 5

Describe the preparedness of students to conduct meso practice?

Prompts:

5.1 Tell me about the various skills the students used?

5.2 What is your assessment of the student's ability to integrate theory with practice?

5.3 What is your assessment of the student's ability to write reports on meso practice?

5.4 Describe the professional practice of students and their ability to ascribe to the code of ethics in social work?

#### Question 6

What are your recommendations for future courses on meso practice?

#### Question 7

What motivates you to conduct student social work supervision?

#### Question 8

With reference to supervisors' support by the university, what are your experiences?

Thank you for your contribution to social work education and for the information you have shared in this interview.

Is there any information that should be removed from the transcript of this interview?



## ANNEXURE P: RUBRIC FOR PRESENTATION

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge: \_\_\_\_\_

Area	1- Poor	2 Satisfactory	3 Good	4 Excellent
<b>Content</b>	Group oversimplifies topic or fails to present major points. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social condition</li> <li>• Role of the social worker</li> <li>• Group Dynamics</li> <li>• Stages of the group</li> </ul>	Group presents major points, but fails to support them with convincing arguments, ideas and data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social condition</li> <li>• Role of the social worker</li> <li>• Group Dynamics</li> <li>• Stages of the group</li> </ul>	Group presents major points and partially supports them with convincing arguments, ideas and data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social condition</li> <li>• Role of the social worker</li> <li>• Group Dynamics</li> <li>• Stages of the group</li> </ul>	Group makes major points and fully supports them with convincing arguments, ideas and data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social condition</li> <li>• Role of the social worker</li> <li>• Group Dynamics</li> <li>• Stages of the group</li> </ul>
<b>Organisation</b>	Audience cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence of information.	Audience has difficulty following presentation because of poor flow	Group presents information in logical sequence which audience can follow.	Group presents information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow.
<b>Text</b>	Most slides present multiple ideas and too many words.	Most slides present one idea but too many words.	Most slides present one idea and a few supporting facts	All slides present one idea and a few supporting facts.
<b>Font</b>	Font on all slides is too small to be read at a distance.	Font on most slides is too small to be read at a distance.	Font on most slides is large enough to be read at a distance.	Font on all slides is large enough to be read at a distance.
<b>Poster images and Layout</b>	Images are too large/small in size, or of poor quality (fuzzy), and inappropriate	Poster is effective but lacks clarity.	Poster is powerful, and of high-quality image which helps audience understand the content. Layout uses most space appropriately.	Poster is very powerful, high-quality significant and thoughtful images used which helps audience understand the content. Layout is visually pleasing.
<b>Presentation Skills</b>	Group just reads from slides	Group reads and adds a few comments	Groups presents and is able to elaborate comfortably	Group used text in slides as prompts for original narration
<b>Photovoice</b>	Poor quality pictures	Pictures were satisfactory	Good quality pictures that tell a story	Excellent pictures that leave an impression
<b>TOTAL :28</b>				

Names of groups: Rates Meso Pros, Tshandko, Ubuuntu-The Black Snow, Juice, The Girl Gang, Catalysts of Change, Social Stars, All Blacks

Developed by R Pillay adapted from <http://library.fayschool.org/Pages/powerpointrubric.pdf>

## ANNEXURE Q - RUBRIC FOR MESO PRACTICE GROUP

### ASSIGNMENT 2015

**Name of group:**

**Names of Group Members**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_



**Presentation: 5/**

**Individual Work: 50**

**Photo voice: 5 /**

**Group Assignment: 20/**

Criteria & Mark allocation		Inadequate( 0)	Satisfactory (1)	Very Good (2)
Organisation	1.Content	The content is logical but there is lack of coherence of ideas	Content is coherent, logical but certain information is not included	Content is critical with good logic and coherence Leads the reader to the conclusion

Criteria & Mark allocation		Inadequate( 0)	Satisfactory (1)	Very Good (2)
	2.Layout and structure	Adequate with some attention to detail Documents missing	Satisfactory All documents included except 2 are included	Good presentation of the assignment with fine attention to detail
Content	3. Social Condition	A surface view with little evidence to support claims	A deeper understanding of the social condition evident and making links with: -South African context -social work -meso practice	A critical understanding of the social condition evident making links with: -South African context -social work -meso practice -future trends -best practices
	4.Ice-breakers	Outlines ice-breakers used	Shows understanding of	Shows links between ice-

Criteria & Mark allocation		Inadequate( 0)	Satisfactory (1)	Very Good (2)
			ice-breaker used	breakers and the social condition and the stage of the group
	5.Use of Reflection	Understands the use of reflection and the use of the diary	Has complete understanding of why reflection is a skill in social work and shows at least five examples of the use of reflection	Shows critical understanding of reflection used by all members in the group. Show why reflection is important in meso practice
	6.Discussion on group dynamics	Main points are mentioned but a lack of detail and hardly any linkage with the development of the group through the stages	Points presented with some detail and linked with the development of the group through the stages	Points presented with critical detail and linked with the development of the group through the stages and provided

Criteria & Mark allocation		Inadequate( 0)	Satisfactory (1)	Very Good (2)
				suggestions for improvement
	7.Conflict Management	Shows understanding of how conflict was managed in the group	Shows deep understanding and provides relevant examples of how conflict was addressed in the group. Shows understanding of the impact of the members on the group function	Shows the use of empathy, care and deeper understanding of the management of conflict in the group – Shows understanding of the contribution of functional and dysfunctional members
Style	8.APA style	Some errors regarding format noted Makes use of out-dated irrelevant resources	Makes uses of the correct format Makes use of relevant and recent resources Has more than	Makes uses of the correct format Makes use of relevant and recent resources Has more than

Criteria & Mark allocation		Inadequate( 0)	Satisfactory (1)	Very Good (2)
		Has less than 15 resources	20 resources	30 resources
	9.Recommendations	Satisfactory recommendations provided	Good practical recommendations provided	Deep, thoughtful and implementable recommendations
Technology Enhanced Learning TEL	10. Discussion Forum	<p>Is able to show use of the discussion forum by group members</p> <p>Is able to show the discussion forum post</p>	<p>Able to show how TEL extended learning Shows debates and communication at a high level on the forum</p>	<p>Show how TEL extended learning Show the link between TEL and understand of the social condition and meso practice Shows how information can be extended to the general community</p>
Assignment	20			

Criteria & Mark allocation		Inadequate( 0)	Satisfactory (1)	Very Good (2)
total				
General	Presentation Mark (5)			
	PhotoVoice Mark (5)			

### Checklist of annexures



	Present	Not Present	Comments
Group attendance register			
Letter of absence			
Group contract			
10 DF posts			
Individual ratings			
Photograph of group poster			
PowerPoint slides			
Activity Log			

	Present	Not Present	Comments
Reflective diary entries			

### Comments

I would provide feedback regarding the content of the work, structure and nature of the work submitted.



**ANNEXURE R- ETHICAL PERMISSION FROM THE UNIVERSITY  
OF THE WITWATERSRAND NON-MEDICAL COMMITTEE**



Research Office

**HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)**  
R14/10 Pillay

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H15/02/39**

**PROJECT TITLE**

Participatory parity and transformative pedagogies for  
for qualitative outcomes in higher education

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

Ms R Pillay

**SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT**

Human & Community Development/Psychology

**DATE CONSIDERED**

20 February 2015

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

Approved unconditionally

**EXPIRY DATE**

12 March 2017

**DATE** 13 March 2015

**CHAIRPERSON**

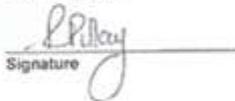
  
(Professor T Milani)

cc: Supervisor: Professor V Bozalek, et al

**DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)**

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

  
Signature

16 / 03 / 2015  
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES