CONCEPTUALIZATION AND TEACHING OF ACADEMIC LITERACY IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A CASE OF STUDENT - TEACHERS AT TWO KWAZULU NATAL UNIVERSITIES

By

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DECLARATION

Student number: 32424698

I, Nontobeko Prudence Khumalo declare that **Conceptualization and teaching of academic literacy in higher education institutions: A case of student teachers at two KwaZulu Natal universities** is my original work and has never been submitted to any University. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

13 March 2020

Signature Date

ABSTRACT

The study sought to understand how higher education institutions conceptualize and teach academic literacy at the two regional universities in KwaZulu Natal. That was done by determining the extent to which academic literacy curriculum provides for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers. It was done to determine the role it plays in student's learning, in terms of the topics that are incorporated in the academic literacy curriculum and by establishing how student teachers, view the academic literacy module in terms of its benefits to them. This study is underpinned by both the sociocultural and sociocognitive theories. A qualitative research approach and a case study research design were adopted by the study. Participants were three lecturers teaching academic literacy in Institutions understudy and eleven, fourth-year student - teachers who were registered for the academic literacy module in their first year of study. Data collection instruments used were, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis in the form of module outlines. The findings from the lecturers' point of view, show that their teaching qualification and teaching experience assist them when teaching academic literacy module. The findings further revealed that both lecturers and students view academic literacy as the core of the module. The study also highlighted that students should be actively involved during the teaching and learning process and that feedback plays an important role in students' learning. From the students' perspective, the findings revealed that the students improved on their understanding of academic requirements and in their academic writing. The students also viewed the module as a leveller because irrespective of their background they were also of the view that academic literacy should be viewed as a way of life. The study also highlighted that the usage of English as a medium of instruction to students whose mother tongue is not English is a challenge and so is the gap between the secondary schooling system and the Institutions of higher learning. The recommendations of the study based on the research findings are that the generic form in which the module is currently offered, does benefit them and it should be continued. However, there is a need to consider discipline-specific interventions where students are exposed to their disciplinary discourses. The study also proposed the model to improve academic literacy in Higher Education.

KEYWORDS

Literacy, academic discourse, academic literacy, student teachers, module /course

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Research in academic literacy was developed in recognition of a growing mismatch between students' needs and experiences and the academic institutions' curricula. The academic literacies researchers have highlighted the conceptualization of literacy practices from a social constructivist view, which is associated with the education domain (Kaufhold, 2017). As such, its research agenda has predominantly and is still focused on Higher Education Institutions (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Factors such as different backgrounds, especially with regards to language between students and staff have an impact on students' ability to survive in their academic journey (Kaufhold, 2017). Furthermore, Wingate, (2018: 350) is of the view that the students need to attain a range of abilities especially as they begin their new academic discipline. The author further highlights that the development of academic literacy is crucial in a second language (L2) setting because when the L2 students meet difficulties those "tend to be attributed to a lack of competence in English." While other authors such as Coffin and Donohue (2012), focus on student writing when referring to Academic Literacies research agenda, Wingate, (2018:350) on the other hand is of the view that academic writing is just one of the components of academic literacy and that the term also encompasses "presenting, debating and creating knowledge through both speaking and writing".

The current study also takes a view that writing is not the only problem that students entering Higher Education Institutions for the first time are faced with, reading is also a problem. In the current study, both reading and writing practices are examined as they form the content of the academic literacy modules under study.

This study was conducted to understand how higher education institutions conceptualize and teach academic literacy at the two regional universities in KwaZulu Natal, namely the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) and the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN), which are classified as comprehensive and traditional universities respectively in a South African context.

The choice of these two Institutions of Higher Education is of strategic importance as they represent different kinds of Institutions of Higher Education in the South African Education landscape.

This study examined the extent to which academic literacy curriculum provides for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in student's learning. It also aimed at shedding some light on tertiary educators' understandings of their own academic literacy teaching practices, the choice of topics they put as part of the content, and on how they view different approaches used in offering Academic literacy. It also hopes to highlight the need to transform academic literacy practices.

1.2 Background to the study

There is an increase in the number of students participating in higher education and concerns have been raised which include the students' levels of academic preparedness. These students have different linguistic, social, and cultural diversity (Kaufhold, 2017, Lillis & Scott, 2007). In the South African context, the factors such as the "history of the racially-based and unequal schooling system of the apartheid era" have amplified the problem (Sebolai & le Roux, 2017). A common problem that most South African Higher Education Institutions are currently experiencing is that many students who enter higher education unable to read and write at the level expected at University (Bharuthram, 2012). Further; these students that access the university domain for the first time, have been identified through findings from other studies to also possess gaps and contradictions to what universities offer (Paxton & Frith, 2014). They further argue that students in their first year have to take on "new identities as scientific writers and acquire new practices which initially seem strange and somewhat uncomfortable".

The Council of Higher Education (CHE) report (2013), states that only about one in four students in contact Institutions of Higher Learning in South Africa graduates in regulation time. CHE (2013) states that access; success, and completion rates continue to be racially skewed, with white completion rates being on average 50% higher than African rates.

These challenges necessitated Universities to come up with different strategies in order to deal with students' academic challenges. According to Cliff (2015), there is a growing acceptance amongst the Institutions of Higher Learning that there is a need for them to address under-preparedness rather than passing the blame and placing the responsibility on the secondary schooling system. One of the reasons is that learning in higher education involves adapting to new ways of knowing which involves new ways of understanding, interpreting, and organizing knowledge, which cannot be put squarely on the shoulders of the secondary schooling system. The other reason is that the tasks that are done at a University level are intellectually challenging, thus need students who are equipped with the necessary skills to deal with tasks they do on daily basis (Deveraux & Wilson, 2008). Therefore, the teaching of academic literacy can be one of the ways to address the issue of under-preparedness, also taking into consideration that when all students arrive at university, they come with somewhat different sociocultural experiences of literacy (Deveraux & Wilson, 2008). As a module, Academic Literacy in different Institutions has been introduced as one of the modules that help particularly first-year students with practices such as reading and writing especially within disciplines. That is taken as a central process through which students learn new courses and develop their knowledge about new areas of study (Lea & Street, 2006).

Therefore, the module of academic literacy has gained popularity as one of the solutions to deal with under-prepared students that come into the Institutions of learning for the first time. It should be noted that the module has been given different names, and its definition has evolved over time and different names are used to label the course (Afful, 2007) and that might denote different approaches in delivering it. The author further extends his argument by stating that the differences in labels (names given to the course), also implicate differences in the curriculum, pedagogy, or even philosophical orientations. Just like with different labels used to name academic literacy, different institutions use different standardized tests to check the levels of academic literacy from students especially for the first years, Sebolai (2014) concludes. As much as there are differences in the labels given to the course and the tests used to check the levels of academic literacy from students, different institutions seem to agree on the purpose of the academic literacy course. The purpose is to help students cope with the demands of academic education (Sebolai and Huff, 2015). It is

also seen as a module that is meant to serve students who are at risk of not reaching their academic goals or maintaining their academic grades, thus it is taken as an intervention programme (Ludidi, 2015). In addition, Mhlongo (2014), argues that academic literacy programmes have been developed, implemented, and intensified so that they can be used to identify students at risk of failure and support such students in their academic journey. From the above, it can be deduced that the purpose of the module is to assist students to cope in their academic journey, to identify students at risk, and to provide necessary intervention strategies.

Different authors define the term academic literacy differently, for instance, Boughey (2000) suggests that, academic literacy, "…. involves knowing how to speak and act in academic discourses and that people will acquire such literacy when they participate with others within the discourse. While, van Dyk and Weideman (2004), defines academic literacy as the ability to use language to meet the demands of tertiary education. Jacobs (2006), defines academic literacy as that which refers to the fluent control and mastery of the discipline-specific norms, values, and conventions for reading and writing as a means of exploring and constructing knowledge in higher education.

Later, Paxton and Frith (2014), see academic literacy as a field of research, which seeks to understand language and literacy as social practices within higher education. The above definitions highlight the different meanings that different authors attach to the term, while to others it signals knowledge and skills, for others, the focus is on language and others posit that it can only be achieved in discipline-specific context. Hence, Lillis and Scott (2007) highlight that academic literacy is often adopted and co-opted with a range of meanings which are sometimes confusing, contradictory, and sometimes strategic and are used in many settings. Consequently, McWilliams and Allan (2014), argue that the concept of academic literacy is far from straightforward.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that there is no universal definition of the term academic literacy. One of the above definitions highlights that it is involved in speaking and acting within the discourse, and it cannot be seen in isolation from the use of English as a medium of instruction to students whose mother tongue is not

English. That has a negative impact on students from an environment where English is only used in class and not in their immediate environment.

However, Lillis and Scott (2007), cautions that academic literacy has a specific epistemology, that of literacy as social practice, and a specific ideological stance, that of transformation and the emphasis being on addressing social relations inequalities. Additionally, it is viewed by Saltmarsh and Saltmarsh (2008), as a social practice through which identities and social relations organized around tertiary learning are produced and negotiated. While Fouché (2009), perceive academic literacy as a "specialized form of reading, writing, and thinking done in the 'academy'.

The function of the module is to ensure a smooth transition from high school to university and the module has to play a preparatory, facilitative, and catalytic role for the students to benefit (Afful, 2007). Hence, it is commonly taught during the student's first year or at an entry-level either as a core/compulsory module or as of intervention programme, for those who are lacking in knowledge and skills that are needed to make them succeed at a University level.

Different Institutions use different approaches to implement academic literacy module**.** Some institutions, like in the United Kingdom (UK) prefer collaboration between English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instructors and subject lecturers, (Wingate & Tribble, 2012). McWilliams and Allan (2014), argue for a collaborative approach given the importance of academic-literacy development as a criterion for achievement at the tertiary level. The authors further argued that all students are likely to benefit from having a literacy component embedded within their discipline-specific courses, especially in their first year of study. They argue that collaboration between discipline lecturers and literacy specialists enriches student learning and fosters the belief that learning development has relevance for all stages of the student's journey, not only at the entry-level. Hence, Universities like Free State, adopted a collaborative approach, which is between the academic literacy specialists and content-area faculty members mainly from the Humanities (van Wyk, 2014).

The other approach is the skill-based approach, which focuses more on generic reading and writing skills. This approach is often blamed for using decontextualized

academic texts that have little relevance to content areas, which students are studying in their degree programme. The skills-based approach is however seen by Afful (2007), as the approach that conjures reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Nevertheless, he suggests that an integrative and holistic approach involving these four skills will be useful to students rather than an isolationist approach. He further cautions that it is not practicable to give all four skills equal attention. The same approach was used at the Central University of Technology wherein the course was introduced mainly to 'teach generic academic reading and writing in English to promote student success (Sebolai, 2014). Finally, McWilliams and Allan (2014), argue for four reasons that provide the basis for a generic approach to academic literacy provision. The first reason relates to the generalizability of core skills; the second, to the lack of subject knowledge by writing specialists; the third, to the importance of getting the basics right first; and finally, to the cost-effectiveness of a general approach to teaching academic writing. In the context of the prelude given above, this study is intended to contribute and further the research agenda on academic literacy, taking into account students diversities (Lillis and Scott, 2007), throughput rates (CHE, 2013), students' under-preparedness for university study (Cliff, 2015), poor or low reading and writing levels of students (Bharuthram, 2012).

1.3 The problem statement

Research has indicated that the schooling system does not adequately prepare students for higher education (Sebolai & le Roux, 2017; Chokwe, 2013). As a result, there have been ongoing concerns from academics all over the world about the low levels of academic literacy skills of the first-year students at the Universities (Deveraux & Wilson, 2008). Research by van Dyk, Zybrands, Cillei, and Cootze (2010) indicates that first-year students in particular struggle to survive academically.

The reasons include the fact that students are inadequately equipped to engage successfully in the academic discourse, through reading, writing, listening, or speaking in the language of teaching and learning. Hence, the study aims to understand how higher education institutions conceptualize and teach academic literacy at the three regional universities in KwaZulu Natal. For instance, in UNIZULU where the researcher is based, the result of the academic literacy module shows that it is one of the modules

that first-year students find challenging as it deals with academic writing, the genre that students have never been exposed to in their secondary schooling. In other instances, you find that final year students are still registered for it. Part of the problem is that the literacies that students bring with them from other environments are mostly less valued in their new academic environment (Kaufhold, 2017). Consequently, there has been a high dropout rate indicated by research in some higher education institutions, as students cannot cope with the literacy demands placed upon them. Accordingly, a number of South African Universities have put measures in place in the form of academic literacy modules and other developmental modules to support the first-year students so that they can succeed in their academic journey (Sebolai & le Roux, 2017, Butler, 2013).

1.4. Research questions

Based on the aim, which is stated in the foregoing discussion, this study poses the following research questions:

Main Research Question

What are the views of both lecturers and students when it comes to conceptualisation and implementation of academic literacy module?

Sub-research Questions

1.4.1 To what extent does the academic literacy curriculum provide for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in students' learning?

1.4.2 How do lecturers choose topics that are incorporated in the academic literacy curriculum and the rationale thereof?

1.4.3 How do lecturers conceptualize and teach academic literacy to student teachers?

1.4.4 What are the opinions of lecturers regarding different approaches used in offering Academic literacy?

1.4.5 How do student teachers view the academic literacy module in terms of its benefits to them?

1.5 The aims of the study

The study sought to understand how higher education institutions conceptualize and teach academic literacy at the two regional universities in KwaZulu Natal

Objectives

- To determine the extent to which academic literacy curriculum provides for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in student's learning.
- To establish how lecturers, choose topics that are incorporated in the academic literacy curriculum and the rationale thereof.
- To determine how lecturers, conceptualize and teach academic literacy to student teachers
- To solicit the opinions of lecturers regarding different approaches used in offering Academic literacy.
- To establish how student teachers, view the academic literacy module in terms of its benefits to them.

1.6 Significance of the study

This research might extend existing knowledge in the offering of academic literacy modules in the three Institutions of Higher learning in the KZN province. The results of this study might help in shaping not only a theory but also practice, educational interventions and the academic literacy curriculum.

The results may help in expanding the theoretical framework of the study. I hope that the results might contribute to the solution of educational problems especially concerning curriculum and, it might also contribute in terms of the methods that are used in offering the academic literacy module. The study might further be useful to lecturers and students as it might contribute insights into those aspects of academic literacy in which students require support from lecturers. Additionally, the study might also be important since its results will be used to harness or sharpen the practices of academic literacy practitioners and other stakeholders with some guidelines on academic literacy curriculum and its teaching.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

The limitation of the study is that the study only focused on the academic literacy for student teachers at the two Institutions of Higher learning in one province, which is Kwa Zulu Natal.

The student sample selected may not have been a large sample especially in Institution 2, so some rich information might have been missed. The fact that the researcher is involved in the teaching of academic literacy in one of the institutions, might have contributed to the limitations of the study (see chapter 3).

1.8. Definitions of terms

Literacy: is not a single set of generic reading and writing skills, and it can mean different things to different people at different times (Kiili, Mäkinen & Coiro, 2013).
Academic discourse: is a new way of thinking about knowledge and the world that students should acquire (Fouché, 2009).
Academic literacy: is the ability to use language to meet the demands of tertiary education (van Dyk and Weideman, 2004).
Student teachers: Students who are registered for the Bachelor of Education programme which is a teaching qualification.
Module/ course: These terms are used interchangeably in this thesis; they mean the academic literacy module that is taught as a subject in different Institutions.

1.9. Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

This chapter outlines the background to the research. The aim and objectives of the study are carefully explained. It also highlights the course of the research and the justification for choosing the qualitative research method as well as an overview of the research design and provides the methodology. This chapter serves as an overview of the path that the research study follows.

Chapter 2: A literature review

This chapter represents the review of literature related to the study. It also supports the theoretical arguments for the field of study from various sources.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and design

This chapter describes the approach and research methods that the researcher uses. The approach used is qualitative, interpretivism paradigm and case study research design. Methods are outlined and approaches are explored. Ethical issues, sampling and data collection techniques are discussed in this chapter. The instruments used in data collection and data analysis methods are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Data presentation

In this chapter, data are presented from the semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with lecturers, and focus group interviews, which were conducted with students.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

The chapter consists of findings, discussion thereof especially in relation to the literature reviewed, and that of the empirical study based on the research questions. It also interprets the main research findings.

Chapter 6: Discussion of findings, implications of the study, future research, and conclusions.

This chapter presents a discussion of findings, implications of the study, future research, and conclusions. It also spells out the limitations of the study.

1.10. Summary

In this chapter, the researcher provided an overview and the outline of the study. The chapter traced the history of academic literacy research, highlighted some challenges faced by Higher Education Institutions both locally and internationally in terms of under-preparedness of students they get from high school. Topics pertaining to the problem statement, research questions, aims, and the significance of the study were discussed. It emerged in this chapter that different people attach different meanings to academic literacy hence; it is implemented differently in different Institutions. The following chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature reviewed on this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the overview of the current study. This chapter reviews literature within the framework of academic literacy in higher education and, more specifically, on its role in helping student teachers succeed in their academic studies. The chapter also discusses the history of academic literacy, different approaches used in delivering academic literacy and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as one of the dominant approaches together with Academic Literacies to academic writing in higher education. Approaches in developing academic literacy in South Africa and the ones used for its teaching are also discussed.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

A wide range of theories has influenced research on literacy, among those are sociocultural and sociocognitive theories. The current study has used both of these theories. Hodges, Feng, Kuo, and McTigue (2016), are of the view that as much as the term literacy encompasses both reading writing and their connection, however, they argue that these are separate concepts and they should be treated as such by different theories. They further argue that literacy is a complicated phenomenon and thus cannot find its expression on one theory. There are many literacy theories and perspectives that impact and structure the teaching of academic reading and writing. Among many theories that underpin both reading and writing are sociocultural and sociocognitive theories. The choice for these theories is based on the fact that they came as primary theories in the research conducted by Hodges.et.al (2016), whereby they wanted to find out the theories that were mostly used by researchers who were researching on both reading and writing and the connection between the two. The authors further argue that these theories rely on “social interaction of teaching and learning” and that these social interactions are valued and could take many forms. These forms include but are not limited to group discussion, modelling which could be done by a teacher or a peer and feedback given to students on their assessment activities. These interactions help the students to build their knowledge while getting assistance from their teachers, peers, facilitators with the aim of achieving the learning goals.

This is true especially as writing is seen as a social construct (Street, 2003). It is because of the above reasons that both sociocultural and socio-cognitive theories are adopted as the theories underpinning the current study since a combination of them seems to align closely with the academic literacy interventions offered in the three Institutions understudy.

The history of the sociocultural theory can be traced back to the union of both the social constructivist approach, which was pioneered by Vygotsky (1980) and activity theory by Leontiev (1981). It was also seen as a shift from viewing reading and writing as cognitive activities only (Shannon, 1989). Conversely, the sociocultural term refers to "a group of perspectives that includes sociolinguistics, pragmatism, and second-generation cognitive science and that commonly manifest themes distilled from Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory" (Unrau & Alvermann, (2013:67). The authors further posit that the central beliefs held by sociocultural such as Street, Gee, and Vygotsky is that the mind develops from social interaction with other people (minds), tools and symbol systems (languages). As much as sociocultural theory is taken as the major framework for writing research, however, it views both writing and reading as approaches of social collaboration and cognitive processing (Prior, 2006). The two skills, which are reading and writing are not only perceived as collaborations among students and teachers, but they are also viewed as tools for learning in content areas. Both theories include "social interactions within contexts" (Hodges.et.al, 2016:3), however, it should be noted that sociocognitive theory is not only the extension of sociocultural theory; it has its distinctive prominence on the readers and writers themselves. The difference between sociocultural and sociocognitive theories is that while the former focuses on the procedure of social interaction and that students learn better from the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), which could be a teacher or the other student and the influence of society and culture in literacy. The sociocognitive theory on the other hand emphasizes students' role in terms of their "judgement and modifications for their improvement during this social process" (Hodges.et.al, 2016:3), which calls for self-monitoring and self-regulation. Therefore, socio-cognitive theory views a student as someone who has to be actively involved in her or his learning.
Motivation was found to be a secondary theory, used by some of the researchers in the study conducted by Hodges.et.al, (2016), nevertheless, it was revealed that

motivation was just a by-product of social interaction as nobody considered motivation when designing tasks. Consequently, Hodges.et.al, (2016) conclude that reading and writing activities should include aspects such as cognitive, motivational and social influences. Different Universities focus on different academic literacy skills some focus on reading, others on writing and there are some which focus on both or more skills. For instance, the study conducted by Khumalo and Maphalala (2018) revealed that at UNIZULU the academic literacy module offered to all the first-year students who were registered for their Bachelor of Education, catered for both reading and writing skills. Similarly, the study conducted by Fouche (2010) at UNISA, focused specifically on the additional reading and writing assistance in the form of workshops offered to foundation course students studying science related subjects, and the programme is called the Science Foundation Programme (SFP). However, some Institutions focus more on writing. In the study conducted by Olivier (2016) at the NWU, Potchefstroom Campus, the writing programme was the central focus in the course irrespective of the fact that the course under study (AGLA 111) had three components, which are computer and information skills, reading and an academic literacy lecture programme. In another study conducted by Merisi (2014) at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, the focus was on writing, specifically on how writing was being taught in the ALUGS module. However, research by Hodges.et.al, (2016) and Unrau and Alvermann, (2013) confirms that there are many theories guiding reading research than those that guide writing research, especially within the education area since in their view many studies focus was more on reading than writing. Consequently, there are limited theories that explain both reading and writing, in conjunction, irrespective of the fact that both reading and writing are two skills that need to be learned. These two can be used interchangeably in the sense that writing can be used as a tool to read and vice versa (Hodges.et.al, 2016:9).

Prior (2006), declares that it is the sociocultural theory that is dominating theory when it comes to writing. Writing is the social construct governed by societal and cultural rules while at the same time it is an individual activity. The author further posits that any activity either writing or reading is situated in what he terms “concrete interactions” p.55. He further argues that writing is part of mediated activities, which involve externalization, co-action and internalization.

The role of the teachers in sociocultural theory is that of co-authors as they are supposed to guide the students throughout the writing process. Some of the roles they play is that of setting deadlines during the writing process, deciding on the topic and offering certain words and phrases, in an endeavour to assist the students to produce an academically sound piece of writing. Socio-cultural theory favours face-to-face writing and it views writing as a mode of social action and as a social practice. It also emphasizes the point that writing in tertiary or in post-secondary schooling involves writing within the discipline and profession; hence, there is a need to teach writing within the discipline. The sociocognitive theory also involves a multifaceted meaning negotiation process with texts that, are influenced by a variety of social and cultural factors, such as the students' social background (upbringing) and culture (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013). Moreover, the authors suggest that in order to marry the cognitive processes and socio and cultural influences to both reading and writing, a system of cultural modelling that draws on students' mental models of language needs to be developed to support the students.

In summary, both the sociocultural and socio-cognitive theories are relevant for this study. The socio-cultural theory is relevant because of its emphasis on social interaction, which could be between students themselves or between lecturers and students in an effort to help the students in achieving their learning outcomes. Students work together in pairs or groups when doing academic literacy tasks whether reading or writing tasks, thus supporting one another. The lecturers and tutors are also expected to play an important role during the scaffolding process. Conversely, the sociocognitive theories are relevant since they acknowledge that there are various cognitive processes that students go through when reading, and when producing written text and that should be considered by the lecturers.

Both theories were also found to have played a significant role in guiding the researchers who were interested in researching both reading and writing as part of academic literacy. Therefore, both theories underpin the current study as they focus on the importance that is played by reading and writing skills in the academic context.

2.3 History and the need for academic literacy

Academic literacies originated in England during the 1990's and it is mainly about literacies in higher education. It is a practitioner-led research that comes out of studies in language, literacy and ethnography and as a result has no particular disciplinary home. In the UK it came as a result of widening participation /admission of previously excluded groups which resulted in large classes of the diverse student body (Russell, Lea, Parker, Street & Donahue, 2009). The aim of widening participation was to reform higher education in the UK and make it more open to members of the population who were previously excluded. Thus, to deal with diversity in the student body 'study skills' and "learning support centres" were created to help students with one on one or small group support. This was done because lecturers were not able to provide needed support because of a large number of students. However, the academic literacy practitioners were frustrated with the problem faced by student writers and they "find themselves at the interface between theory and practice" (Russell et al, 2009: 398). In trying to deal with the problem, they opted for looking at writing "as meaning-making and social practice' (Russell et al, 2009: 404). The intervention had good intentions; however, there were problems that came with it. One of the main challenges is that it focused more on supporting students as they were the ones who needed support in terms of writing and ignored teachers who were the ones who were supposed to help students understand the Institutional requirements of writing. Academic literacy was introduced in many Universities, local and abroad, particularly in South Africa as a response to problems of students entering the Universities with low levels of academic literacy skills (Bharuthram, 2012, Wingate & Tribble, 2012). Research suggests that the secondary schooling system does not prepare students adequately to deal with the University content (Fouché, 2009; Fouché, van Wyk & Butler, 2016).

Coupled with that is that the genres used in secondary school are different from those used in tertiary institutions. The case in point is that of creative writing which is studied in high school and is not done in tertiary institutions, thus leaving students underprepared for University academic journey (Fouché 2010). Moreover, the study conducted by Boughey (2000), confirms that the writing valued in schools is different from the ones valued in a University. In her research wherein first-year students were participants, they confirmed that in high schools they only wrote what they were told by the teachers, and consequently, they had no understanding that writing is a process that is supposed to generate new knowledge. This results in many students gaining

access to higher education without having sufficiently developed some crucial learning abilities, more specifically academic literacy abilities necessary for successful tertiary studies. Accordingly, when they are in a University, students are unable to search, paraphrase information on their own and acknowledge sources as they relied on their teachers during the secondary school years. It is clear that there is "an articulation gap" problem, which is the mismatch between the exit level of the secondary schooling system and higher education entry level (Jonker, 2016). The other problem especially in the South African context, is that most students who enter a University learn through English medium which is not their first language and that makes them not proficient sufficiently (van Schalkwyk, 2008).

When students are registered in Universities, they are faced with many challenges academically, which include what is called "institutional discourses" which entails what is said and done in Institutions spaces such as lecture halls, tutorial rooms, residences, and the choice of textbooks (Clarence & McKenna, 2017:18). Furthermore, the academic text that the students have to deal with, is in a foreign language for some or the majority of them. Boughey and McKenna (2016) support the latter point when they state that the higher education context is seen as both alien and alienating to the first-year students. Primary discourses of the students developed from their families and communities are not closely aligned to the academic discourses. That is an additional challenge that makes the acquisition of academic discourses very difficult (Clarence, 2017; Boughey and McKenna, 2016) and thus students are unable to cope with the intensity and requirements of academic work (Clarence, 2017). Students also struggle to negotiate the voices in both spoken and written text. The reason is that the text that students interact with has many voices, "multi-voiced text" which includes the author's voice and the voices of other authorities cited by the author (Boughey, 2000), and what aggravates the matter is that the text is different from discipline to discipline.

Furthermore, students encounter a particular text type for the first time, that they have not encountered before, as a result, they struggle to identify specific features and underpinning values (Clarence, 2017). In South African universities, like in many other international universities in an endeavour to deal with students' under preparedness, specialised support programmes were developed while other existing programmes were strengthened (van Schalkwyk, 2008; Mhlongo 2014). The programmes target

first-year students because under preparedness manifests itself in the first year and that is shown by students who demonstrate inappropriate reading strategies, ignoring diagrams or sketches, and being unable to relate what they have read in the world around (van Schalkwyk, 2008).

The issue of under preparedness is not uniquely South African. For instance, in New Zealand the issue of students who do not have a smooth transition from secondary school to Universities is still considered “problematic” and in an effort to address the gap, academic literacy is used as a solution (Emerson, Kilpin & Feekery, 2015). Similarly, in the United Kingdom the initiatives of adopting a social practice model of writing, are mostly initiated by educational development units and supported by some form of the student learning centre. The former initiatives are meant to support staff concerning issues of teaching and learning that include student writing, while the latter focuses mainly on students (Russels, et al, 2009). Just like in the South African context, there are problems associated with these interventions such as people working in the educational development units who are hourly paid and their work is considered as low in status compared with that of lecturers.

The above paints a picture of the origins of academic literacy and the mismatch between the exit level of secondary schooling and the entry requirements of Universities. The efforts and strides made by Universities in trying to solve the problems were also highlighted.

2.4. Academic literacy as a concept

There is no universally accepted definition of academic literacy (Butler 2013:75) as it means different things to different people. According to van Schalwyk, (2008), the other challenge with this term is that it is a two- worded name “academic literacy”. However, the author further elaborates that there are elements that stand out once the term is de-constructed. The first adjective, academic relates to education, especially at a university level. Secondly, the concept of literacy has to do with the “student’s capacity to use written language to perform those functions required by the culture in ways and at a level judged to be acceptable by the reader” (van Schalkwyk, 2008). However, the definition of the term literacy by van Schalkwyk (2008) has its limitations

as it only talks to writing and is silent with other types of literacies that students deal within the academy. Having unpacked the term and looked at the limitation of the definition of literacy by Schalwyk, different definitions would be looked into which come from different authors. In her definition of academic literacy, Boughey (2000), firstly, defined the term literacy as a concept that involves “knowing how to speak and act in the academic discourse. In this definition, the emphasis is on communication, which is covered in the “speaking” and “act” which signals that there is certain behaviour that is expected in the academic setting of which the newcomers who are first-year students, in this case, have to learn. There is interaction, which has to take place between the members of the discourse and the newcomers because behaviour is best learnt by interacting with members of the discourse. In his definition of academic literacy, Weideman (2003) defines it as “accessing, processing and producing of information”. It can be deduced that the focus of this definition is on the kind of activities that students are expected to be engaged in at the tertiary level.

Fouché (2010) is of the view that academic literacies comprise of many skills are not limited to reading, writing and speaking. She further contends that there are other important literacies required for students to prosper in their academic journeys such as computer literacy, numerical literacy and information literacy. However, (Gee, 1990 in McKenna, 2010) cautions that academic literacy has not only to do with “ways of using language but also the beliefs, attitudes and values of the group,” hence, it is important for lecturers to consider the background and experiences of their students. McKenna (2010), is of the view that the term ‘academic literacy’ is often appropriated and colonized in South African curricula as the ‘politically correct’ term for classes, whereby literacy is still taught as a set of neutral skills, where such classes focus on generic technical skills and not at all on discipline-specific literacies and underpinning value systems.

From this definition, it is clear that the author is for discipline-specific literacies as against teaching generic skills /standalone modules that do not support the use of language in the discipline. This is supported by the study conducted by Van Dyk and Coetzee-Van Rooy (2012), who concurs that in instances where academic literacy is part of the mainstream programme, students become motivated and they take it seriously. McKenna (2010: 10), concurs that that for one to make meaning of whatever

content one is faced with, one has to have few things in place and those are “background knowledge, values and attitudes”, as “the interpretation of the text is context-dependent”, which highlights the issue of a language is a social construct.

Van Dyk and van der Poel (2013), define academic literacy as the knowledge and skills required to communicate effectively and efficiently in different academic communities and achieve well defined academic goals. In unpacking this definition Nozinika and van Dyk (2015), identified three social dimensions (exchange information), cognitive (understand, organise and reason about information) as well as linguistic (language) dimension. Later on, in 2014, McKenna viewed academic literacy as comprising the norms and values of higher education as manifested in discipline-specific practices. The focus on this definition is on discipline-specific practices as against the generic offering of academic literacy.

From the definitions, it is clear that academic literacy means different things to different people. However, in the current study, academic literacy will be about the aspects that are related to language and its use, specifically reading and writing.

Having ascertained how different authors view academic literacy, the discussion will now focus on the Academic Literacies Framework.

2.5 The Academic Literacies Framework

The Academic Literacies framework is based on theories of reading, writing and literacy as social practices (Lea & Street,2006). It developed out of New Literacy Studies which has its roots in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology**.** The point of departure for the framework is that literacy is not a unitary concept, but it is socially embedded and operates differently in different contexts. This was of the findings of a study conducted by Lea and Street, (1998), in two universities in Southern England where students’ writings were examined.

The findings strengthened the fact that the issue of students ‘problems when it comes to writing, was at the “level of epistemology, authority and contestation over knowledge” (Russell et al, 2009: 340). The findings refute the thinking that teaching students skills of reading and writing can help since that cannot close the gap identified which pertains to the fact that lecturers and students sometimes are from different worlds and therefore have different understanding of the academic writing practices.

The authors thus proposed academic literacies approach which focused on the close analysis of institutional practices, power relations and identities, of both students and staff as well as an emphasis on open communication, when it comes to differences in the understanding and interpretation of written assignments. It is in this framework where literacy is conceptualised at the level of epistemology, which means what counts as knowledge in each discipline and most importantly who has authority over it. According to Lea and Street (2006), there are three theoretical models for academic literacy in higher education; those are Study Skills, Academic Socialisation, and Academic Literacies model. It is important to note that these models build on one another, for instance, the academic socialization build on the study skills model and the academic literacies framework or model has features of both the study skills and academic socialisation models (Hunt & Baker, 2014). Granville and Dison (2005), argue that these models are not “mutually exclusive”, in the sense that each model cannot replace the insights provided by the other. These three models will be discussed below:

2.5.1 The study skills model

The first model which is the 'study skills' model “sees writing and literacy as primarily an individual and cognitive skill” (Lea & Street 2006:368), and its focus is on what each individual can do cognitively, especially in terms of reading and writing. Consequently, it focuses on teaching students’ formal features of the language such as sentence structure, creating a paragraph and punctuation, with the assumption that once these skills have been learnt, they will be easily applied across different contexts (Sheridan, 2011). It is assumed that teaching students surface features of text such grammar and syntax rules and also paying attention to punctuation marks and spelling amongst other things, will ensure that students are deemed competent in academic literacy (Russell,et.al. 2009).

The study skills model is informed by autonomous and additive theories of learning such as behaviourism (Lea & Street, 2006), which are known to promote memorization (Tan, 2011), and as a result, it is based on the transmission of knowledge. In the South African context, the focus of this model was on disadvantaged black students who mainly came from poor secondary schooling and these students were deemed to be lacking different types of skills, such as learning and language skills and the ability to

think critically. As a result, students were taught amongst other things, “how to write argumentative essays, how to reference their sources accurately, and some also taught requisite skills like note-taking in lectures, mind-mapping or essay planning, and basic grammar and comprehension” (Dison & Clarence, 2017:6). This model privileges the language that is used as a medium of instruction, which is an additional language to most black students, and as such is a barrier to students’ success (Jacobs, 2013).

There were different criticisms levelled against the model, firstly, it was blamed for having a minimum impact in developing discipline-specific academic literacy as it focused on generic grammar skills (Hallett, 2013). It was further criticised for assuming that skills can be transferred from one environment to another, thus misleading one to believe that language can be perceived as a set of discrete skills” (Butler; 2007) as cited by Mhlongo, (2014). Boughey and McKenna, (2015), maintain that this model places the responsibility for becoming appropriately literate primarily on the shoulders of students which many of them find challenging. Furthermore, the modules or courses, which address the features of this model, are found to be difficult by students, partly due to the fact that it creates a pseudo-discourse, (Gee, 1996) which mostly has nothing or little to do with students" disciplinary discourses (Merisi, 2014). As a result, it requires a little from lecturers in terms of reflection and for the institution to critically reflect on its systems (Jacobs, 2013). The study skills model fails to look at the role played by the system of Higher education (McIntosh, 2016), which is “to look at the broader issues of learning and social context” (Lea & Street, 1998: 159). However, contrary to the above criticism, the findings by Van Schalkwyk (2008), reveal that the “academic support interventions, which are in line with skills approach, are still prevalent in higher education today.

The reasons could be that, firstly, there is a practical difficulty of implementing the “discipline-specific interventions” (Butler, 2013:83). Secondly, it could be that students were never taught these surface features in schools and seeing that gap, lecturers teach them with the hope that students can benefit in terms of creating and negotiating meaning and understanding of their work (Jonker, 2016). Furthermore, the author points out that lecturers who are still teaching according to this approach might be trying to level the playing field, especially for students who come from educationally

disadvantaged schools, who faced problems of not being taught in their mother-tongue and who were also taught by teachers who they were not proficient in English.

Moreover, the students also benefit in terms of expressing themselves better, as they interact with their peers and lecturers in their respective lecture halls. Therefore, one can conclude that the model does have a space in the Higher Education Institutions, especially when students are introduced to new vocabulary in their different fields.

2.5.2 The academic socialization model

The second model is called academic socialization. It is seen as the improvement of the first model, as it recognizes that subject area and disciplines use different genres and discourses to construct knowledge (Lea & Street, 2006). It is described by Hunt and Baker (2014), as a model where students, as novices in the discipline are schooled into disciplinary practices which mainly include writing by experts, and thus students become encultured into different disciplinary literacy practices (Jacobs, 2013). This model is associated with theories of constructivism and social learning, which put the learner at the centre of the teaching and learning process (Mpofu & Maphalala, 2018). It also considers the culture that the learner brings into higher education. Sheridan (2011), observes that in this model students are expected to be encultured into their chosen discipline, in both spoken and written discourses.

This model is seen as more encompassing than the first one, as it did not only cater to underprepared students, but it also extended its scope to all new students, with an understanding that students entering a university for the first time, are likely to feel alienated by the University environment, irrespective of their home or school background (Dison & Clarence, 2017). The focus is no longer on an individual student, rather it is on the given task with its complexities and opaqueness and the learning in higher education which recognizes the social and cultural aspect of literacy thus Boughey (2010:10) termed this phase a “social turn”. The criticism levelled against this model is that it does not cater to the knowledge and experience that students bring, which might be used successfully in their new environment (Lea & Street, 1998).

The authors further argue that the model assumes that the academy represents a relatively homogeneous culture into which students have to fit and learn its norms and practices. By doing so, the model fails to acknowledge the fact that Universities are made up of different kinds of communities (Lea, 2004), with specific and different discourses and conventions that are not neutral creations (Yosso, 2005). However, Sheridan (2011:131) cautions that; “the process of transition to academic literacy takes time and requires reinforcement.” Therefore, lecturers should give students enough opportunities to deal with the content they are expected to handle, which also supports the view that students come with knowledge and experience which need to be acknowledged and used by the Universities. It has also been projected as a “narrative of a narrow, prescriptive initiation into literacy conventions’’ as it focuses on writing in particular genres and disciplines, thus falling short of considering the issues of identity and power, as they manifest themselves in different disciplines (Wingate &Tribble, 2012).

Just, like the study skills model the academic socialization model is still prominent in amongst other things, curriculum development, teaching practices, writing centre practices and research in higher education (Lea & Street, 2006).

2.5.3 The academic literacies model

The third perspective is termed the academic literacies model. According to this model, institutions are viewed as “sites of discourse and power” (Lea & Street, 1998:159). The distinct feature of this model is that it makes provision for multiple and plural literacies, thus against the idea that there is a standard academic literacy type that all students must follow. In this model the student is able to “switch practices between one setting and another, to deploy a repertoire of linguistic practices appropriate to each setting, and to handle the social meanings and identities that each evokes” (Lea& Street 1998:159). The student is allowed as is able to use his or her experience, depending on the context or discipline in which he/ she finds him/herself. It also tends to focus more on practice than on text (Lillies & Scott, 2007).

The model has also been described as a critical research frame, as it took a critical stance towards the existing problem of students’ writing (Lillies, 2003). As much as the academic socialisation approach also focuses on the relationship between

epistemology and acts of writing in subject areas and discipline, however, this model takes a step further by also focusing on the general requirements of the institution, differences in faculty requirements and also individual student requirements (Lea & Street, 2006).

It also looks at the relationship between the academic and non - academic institutions in terms of literacy, and on how students are prepared to serve in those Institutions by focusing on what students need to learn and do. It also acknowledges the critical role that lectures and tutors play, and thus focuses on staff development, as staff has to be prepared on how to help students to be able to deal with institutional requirements. It is influenced by social critical linguistics, which amongst other things, foregrounds power, identity and agency in the role of language in the learning process (Lea & Street, 2006). This model is in line with Lillis' and Scott's, (2007) views, who argue that academic writing is a social practice constituted by prevailing ideologies rather than a transparent generic skill. It focuses on unpacking micro-social practices such as the gap that exists between the lecturer and student in terms of academic literacies (Sheridan, 2011), and also in terms of requirements necessary in a particular writing task (Rosales, Moloney, Badenhorst, Dyer and Murray, 2012).

According to Dison and Clarence (2017), at the centre of this model, is the "ideology of transformation" (Lillis & Scott, 2007), in the sense that lecturers have to understand why they do certain things. For instance, lecturers have to reflect on their teaching and ask themselves questions, and seriously consider the social context in which they are working. It also caters for different interpretations of genres and its understanding, as it caters for differences in understanding and the uniqueness of each participant (Russell, et. al, 2009). It also highlights the issue of feedback and views it as a high-stakes practice, knowing that it has a central role to play in students' learning (Coffin & Donohue, 2012). Jacobs (2006), supports the idea that students need to be taught explicitly how these discourses might be contested so that they can participate meaningfully in their academic life.

According to Coffin and Donohue (2012:65), the academic literacies framework has progressed as a reaction to the issues of literacies, because of the expanded higher education system. The authors further argue that the approach not only focuses on

the individual but also on the “complex and abstract phenomena, which views literacy as a social phenomenon.

Its strength is that it is more concerned with the alignment of what students bring to the cultural literacy events and home practices with the academic norms and conventions, especially in relation to meaning-making, power, identity and authority (Lea & Street, 2010:390). Therefore, the role of the teacher is viewed as that of being “explicit in showing students how they can shift in genre and mode” (Lea & Street 2010:370), thus offering possibilities of transformation (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Lecturers or tutors need to find out what students bring with them, in terms of their knowledge and experiences and take that as building blocks in addressing features of academic literacy. This model acknowledges that acquiring academic literacy is a process that is not isolated from a particular context. Consequently, it is more concerned with what it means to students to be academic writers in different sites and contexts. It also takes into consideration the issue of disciplinarity by acknowledging that disciplines are not homogeneous but they differ in terms of content, departments and Institutions.

The criticism levelled against the academic literacies approach is the practical dilemma that the implicit approach is too vague, as students are supposed to observe and model. On the other hand, the explicit approach is too prescriptive as it narrowly focuses on the specific disciplines. Still the lecturers/tutors are not clear as to what to do to help students (Lillis, Harrington & Mitchell, 2015). The model has also focused more on theory and research, thus leaving a gap when it comes to practice such as developing academic literacies pedagogy (Lillis, 2006).

It has also been blamed for paying little attention to “traditional or home students” as it focused more on non-traditional students. The focus on the latter could be partly attributed to the fact that the issue of identity is more significant to them than the former group of students (Wingate &Tribble, 2012).

This study privileges the academic literacies approach, for a few reasons. Firstly, it is built on the insights of the other two models, and as such considers that there are components of those models that are still relevant when it comes to students’ writing in Higher Education Institutions. Secondly, this approach is concerned with students,

and considers what they bring as valid tools for meaning-making and calls on the alignment between what students bring, and what the lecturers expect from students and as such it is socially, culturally, and historically situated.

Thirdly, this approach is still relevant in the South African context, in which the issues of identity, power and inequalities are still prevailing. To look at the advantages of the academic literacies model, the current study will focus on two programmes in the United Kingdom where the model was used as a design frame by Lea and Street (2010). Firstly, it was used in the widening participation programme, which aimed to develop the use of academic English in the higher education context and focused on the students who were still in High school and who came from linguistic minorities communities. The content of the programme included genre switching and the aim was to make explicit to students that, each genre is unique and has distinctive features characterised by different representation and has different elements and qualities. Consequently, students were taught that they needed to be aware of the different requirements as they moved between genres. The outcome of the programme was that, it helped students in developing knowledge that was for them to succeed in Universities.

Students were also taken as collaborators in the development of academic literacies needed in Higher education in the United Kingdom. That was evident as their experience and knowledge were taken into consideration during the programme. Secondly, the academic literacies model was used in the Law programme in an Open University. Unlike in the widening programme, the law programme focused on “meaning-making and identity in academic writing” (Street, 2010:373), and it targeted both students and staff. The students were provided supported learning, wherein they had an opportunity to get either on-line or face-to-face support from tutors. The teachers on the other side were challenged to “look at distance learning course material through a different lens”, the one that focuses and prioritises meaning-making and identity. The programme was delivered in a workshop format, and one of the achieved outcomes of the workshop was that it allowed academics to examine their literacy practices and the implication it might have for their writing identities as material writers. In both of the above programmes the academic literacies model was successfully used as a design frame (Lea & Street, 2010).

There are many studies that have been conducted internationally and locally that have implemented the Academic Literacies model in their teaching. Dunne 2009 in Sheridan (2011), conducted a study in Ireland, a country just like other countries that attract international students who are interested in studying abroad. The author in the study defines international students as students whose home country is not Ireland, but who study in Ireland especially in their HEIs. Most of the students in Ireland originate from USA, China, France, UK, Germany, Spain, Malaysia, India and Canada. There are two disciplines that attract most of the international students in Ireland which are Humanities, which attracts 30% of the students and business-related subjects, which attract 28%. Consequently, these two disciplines need large support when it comes to academic literacies. The purpose of the study was to find out how academic staff and international students negotiate academic literacy practices, especially considering that academic staff may also have received no training in developing their academic literacy. Three themes that emerged from the study were academic, social and emotional aspects of international student transformation to a new environment.

The findings revealed that lecturers expected students to be able to write essays and do oral presentations. Both written and spoken discourses were considered to be of utmost importance by Ireland. Students commended lecturers for their approachability and helpfulness in helping them to be aware of academic discourse practices.

The interesting finding is that the study revealed a mismatch between what the staff expected and what the student possessed. For instance, some modules demanded that students should write long essays, only to find that in the students' countries of origin the emphasis was not on writing but was on something else. One of the students who was interviewed revealed that she/he was not confident in writing academically as she did not possess a range of expression, and felt that she /he lacked that skill and needed help. After the discussion of the above three models, their implication in student writing and their relevance in HEIs, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) forms the topic of the next section.

2.6 English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

Granville and Dison (2005), contends that the three models discussed above have laid a foundation and shaped the South African English for Academic Purposes (EAP) thinking. EAP is considered as one of the dominant approaches, together with Academic Literacies to academic writing in higher education (Wingate & Tribble, 2012). The authors further argue for "the constructive sharing of best practice" from the two approaches, as they have much to offer, but have not been able to make a necessary impact. EAP has its roots in the genre and social constructivist theory, and it is privileged over the academic literacies model because the former provides the writing pedagogies, which come from not only practitioner experiences, but also research into different disciplines. That shows that its research has always been linked to pedagogy and text. Thus, it is viewed as having a better impact on students' academic literacies.

However, the authors note that the academic literacies theorists have overlooked the prominent input made by EAP and discharge it on the basis that, at the centre of its pedagogic and research interest, are overseas and foreign students who use English as a foreign language.

Furthermore, Wingate and Tribble (2012:487) further observe that all the categories of the EAP are put under the "academic socialisation model" by academic literacies theorists, thus, failing to make a differentiation between "genre-informed approaches and others flavours of EAP."

The authors are of the view that some of the criticism towards the academic socialisation model levelled by Lea and Street (1989), "seems to refer to EAP practices" (p. 488), which might have been already in existence when Lea and Street published their seminal work in (1989). The central focus of EAP is on text, both in its research and pedagogy. The rationale behind that is, firstly, that most of the summative assessments in Higher Education Institutions are done through the written text. As a result, the written text needs to be privileged above other kinds of texts that students come across in Universities. In addition to that, research has shown that some of the students have a problem in the "production of texts in unfamiliar genres," and they need to be taken through instruction to the process of text production (Wingate & Tribble, 2012). The authors suggested three kinds of collaborations in which subject

lecturers can work with EAP instructors in order to cater for a discipline-specific integrated writing instruction. In the first type, the role of the lecturer is to provide the material and subject-specific text to the EAP instructor, who uses such material to teach writing to students. In the second type, both the EAP instructor and subject lecturer are actively involved in planning the writing activities together. In the third collaboration, they both carry out team teaching (Wingate & Tribble, 2012). The authors further insist that the three approaches stated above have the potential to offer pedagogical solutions that combine both EAP and Academic Literacies principles.

The reasons given for the success of the above approaches is that they are not only reserved for a certain group of students but for all students as all new students that arrive at the University are new in terms of writing in their disciplines with which they are unfamiliar. Secondly, the approaches are context-specific in the sense that writing is done within the discipline, and students' awareness is raised in terms of discipline requirements. These practices are also considered transformative (Lillis & Scott, 2007), in the sense that there is an integration of writing and learning of the subject, by so doing, it will be easy for lecturers to consider the tools that students bring with them to the University. In the South African context, the above collaborations are relevant, as some of the Institutions have had their fair share of the collaborations in which an effort was made to combine language and content in academic literacy interventions (Jacobs, 2013; Butler, 2013; Van der Poel & Van Dyk, 2014).

2.7 Assessment in academic literacies

Maphalala, (2016), views assessment as a continuous and a planned process and is an integral part of teaching and learning, which includes a series of steps. Again, Meyer, Lombard, Warnich, and Wolhuter (2010:34) posit that assessment refers to the measurement of something where information that will be used, is gathered for a specific purpose. Assessment is not only about the assessment of learning, but it is also an assessment for learning (Young & Avery, 2006). It is not only about what students have learnt is also about checking their understanding during the learning process. There should also be transparency in the assessment process, and students should be supported throughout the process.

There are two kinds of assessments, which are formative and summative. The formative assessment takes place during the learning process (Haines, 2004). The purpose of formative assessment is to motivate students, help them to improve their learning, continuously instead of waiting for the summative assessment, which determines whether students fail or succeed (Luckett & Sutherland 2000, Haines, 2004). It is conducted to check students' understanding of the lesson, to monitor their progress and to provide immediate feedback to close the gaps. Summative assessment refers to an assessment that is conducted at the end of a learning experience. It usually consists of an examination at the end of the year. It should be noted that the assessment conducted in Higher education, is commonly summative (Topping, Smith, Swanson & Elliot, 2000:150). It is important that different assessment strategies be adopted, as students are unique and operate at different levels of performance and that provides equal opportunities for students to show their achievements (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017).

There are two processes in which students can engage in the formative assessment, and that is, through peer assessment and self-assessment (Adams & Mabusela, 2017).

According to Andrade and Du (2007:160), "self-assessment is a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly." Self-assessment empowers the student with assessment skills and allows them to reflect on their progress and make necessary adjustments, like improving one's performance. However, it should be noted that this method has its shortcomings, like the fact that it is not easy for the students to assess themselves and they need to be guided throughout the process so that their results become valid and reliable.

Peer assessment involves students' assessing one another, but students need to be equipped with knowledge and skills so that they can use it effectively. As a result, students need to be exposed to the rubric and be taken through its usage before they are allowed to use it. Usage of rubrics is important so that students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them for transparency as one of the principles of

assessment (Biggs, 1999)., By doing that, you prepare students for assessment, so that they know what is expected of them. The principles of assessment, such as validity, reliability, flexibility, transparency, fairness and authenticity (Maphalala, 2016), are considered. At UNIZULU, assessment in the academic literacy module is transparent in the sense that, students have a say concerning the assessment dates and that motivates them to be actively engaged in their learning.

According to Luckett and Sutherland (2000), the kind of assessment to which learners are subjected depends on whether learners take deep or surface approach to learning. The choice of the assessment methods depends on the kind of outcome one needs to achieve; hence, lecturers need to understand the outcomes that they want to achieve. The lecturers in Higher Education Institutions face the challenge of modifying and aligning their assessment practices to the modern way of doing things (Adams & Mabusela, 2017). The authors are of the view that student-centered assessment practices form part of the modern assessment, as it encourages students to learn from assessment experiences thus, becoming independent learners.

Feedback is, an important component in the process of teaching and learning, as a result, students need to be provided with feedback especially during class discussion and group presentations. One of the challenges facing lecturers is large classes, which makes it impossible to give one on one feedback. However, that problem can be solved by addressing students as a class, by focusing on problem areas, especially after marking their first test or assignment and this is an effective strategy. The feedback will help students to reflect on what has been done throughout the year, and it allows students to think about the future, especially how they will continue to build on the abilities, knowledge and skills they attained during the year.

In the following paragraphs, assessment is discussed in relation to the academic literacy module. In the other universities like Stellenbosch (Jonker, 2016), early assessments are some of the strategies used by the university in an endeavour to monitor students' academic progress. These take a form of an assignment and an unannounced class test each of which contributes 50% towards the students' final mark. These assessments are usually conducted within the first and fourth week of the first term to arrange the interventions on time. In the same study lecturers mentioned that the main aim of assessment in the module was that students had to learn 'to

analyse' rather than 'to describe', and also to apply the learnt theory into the real world (Jonker, 2016).

The study conducted by Fouche (2009), revealed that assessment is an important component in the teaching of academic literacy. From the findings, it was suggested that the number of formative assessments and workshops should be increased so that it can help in the improvement of the intervention programme. The author recommends that pre-assessment and summative assessment activities should be included in the intervention programme. The advantage of a formative assessment is that; it helps students by providing them with the standard by which they can measure their improvement throughout the year. Formative assessment can take many forms, which can be short tests or essays.

Fouche (2009) is of the view that three academic literacy tests should be scheduled after three, six and nine months of the intervention, to check students' progress. In order to improve students' writing abilities, she recommended that the existing pre-and post-tests should be supplemented with a writing activity.

The importance of the summative assessment is also highlighted in the findings. Feedback workshops on the summative assessment are recommended. In the study conducted by Mhlongo (2014), both forms of assessments, which are formative and summative, were conducted to assess the academic literacy modules which are AGLE 111 and AGLE 121 modules. The assessment must be conducted in line with the outcomes of the programme, the two Institutions under study used both formative and summative assessments.

2.8. Academic literacy in South Africa

Researchers such as Boughey and McKenna (2016), attribute the development of the field of Academic development to responding to the language issue. In most South African institutions, English is used as a language of learning and teaching, thus referred to as a" default language of learning" (Van Schalkwyk, 2008), as it is used even by those students whose mother tongue is not English (Mhlongo,2014). As much as Fouché (2009: 23), calls it a misconception that" only students who speak English

as an additional language, struggle with the academic literacy demands of higher education," however, the researcher of the current study is of the view that there is an added burden with those students, as some of them come from disadvantaged schools, in which they were taught by teachers who, they were not efficient in the language of learning and teaching**.**

It is also worth noting that in the study conducted by Nizonkiza and van Dyk (2015), whose aim was to explore the extent to which vocabulary size matters in academic literacy, all their participants, 345 of them were second-language speakers of English. All students who were part of the study were registered for both academic literacy modules, which means that they were high-risk students, because the first-semester module was only done by high-risk students as per TALL results.

The students were introduced to academic reading, writing, study skills, listening, and note-taking skills in that module. It should be noted that there are authors such as Boughey (2000), and Boughey and McKenna (2016), who are against what is termed language problem. They are of the view that it leads towards the thinking among practitioners in Higher Education, that providing remedial instruction in the English language will solve the problems of under-preparedness and of students failing to deal with the demands of Higher education. Furthermore, the authors posit that it is that kind of thinking or approach, which leads to lecturers thinking that, there is nothing that can be done to help the students. Clarence (2017), is of the view that labelling students who enter University as having "language problems' is not only a partial but also a reductionist description of what students deal with. Their problems are more than language, they are also social, cultural and economic. The author further contends that in fact, the students have to deal with "several languages, as each discipline has its language, different from the other one. In dealing with language problems, there are many language courses offered by Tertiary Institutions to students to equip them with skills, which are supposedly going to help them during their academic journey. However, those language courses focused mainly on the surface level of language, which does not help the students to deal with the academic text they encounter at the University (Clarence, 2010). Some language courses are compulsory, while others are only for students who are considered to have serious "language problems".

South Africa has also been proved to be affected by low levels of reading, and that was evident in the *PIRLS LITERACY* Report of 2017 wherein South Africa was placed last of all 50 countries which participated in PIRLS 2016, and what it meant was that South Africa maybe six years behind the top-performing countries" (p 11). The report also revealed that "there was no change (no statistical difference) overall in the score between PIRLS 2011 and PIRLS 2016." The implication is that the standard of reading has not improved in South Africa, and that has a repercussion effect on students entering Institutions of Higher learning.

When it comes to achievement by province, Kwa Zulu Natal was number six in the nine provinces that participated in PIRLS, which also is an increased responsibility in the Province's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), as they have to deal with students who are "underprepared" (Cliff 2015).

McKenna (2010), cautions that the Higher Institutions themselves need to look at their practices which include, teaching, learning and assessment, specifically at how these practices are privileging and disadvantaging other groups of students. In the same vein Boughey (2010), calls for internal focus i.e. to look more within the system in the way in which teaching and assessment being done in the Institutions of Higher Learning. Consequently, Boughey and McKenna (2016), view that the academy fails to acknowledge the shifts expected of some of their students, especially those whose primary discourse is not related to the academic discourse.

Different authors have different views on how students can achieve academic success. For instance, McKenna (2010:8), is of the view that cracking the code is an "essential criterion of success within higher education." In her view, students should understand the requirements in their different disciplines for them to succeed in their academic journey. She is also of the view that the literacy practices that students bring with them from school and home environment to the University, determine their success. On the other hand, Paxton and Frith (2014), is of the view that students' prior practices need to be considered "as legitimate tools for meaning-making. However, the authors caution that there need to be some commonalities between what students bring with them, with literacy practices of students' chosen discipline" as that will act as building blocks into students' understanding of their disciplinary requirements. Consequently, the authors also assert that lecturers' understanding of how students construct their

knowledge and acknowledging students' prior practices help during the teaching process of university literacy practices.

McKenna (2010), suggests that in order to close the gap between the literacies that students come with and the expectations of HEIs, the staff has to unpack and make explicit the academic literacies to students. By so doing, a shift is made in students' mind between school and University literacy practices and that brings about changes in students' identities (Paxton & Frith, 2014).

Having discussed academic literacy in South Africa, we now turn our attention to how academic literacy has been addressed in the South African context. Students who enter high education in South Africa are congratulated and praised (McKenna, 2010), as having achieved much, especially if that student is black as the participation of black students is low (Scott, Yeld and Hendry, (2001) as cited by McKenna, (2010). The author further highlights the fact that these students bring with them a range of literacies that have helped them to reach University. Hence, their primary discourses should be taken into consideration, especially in their first year, so that they do not feel lost and hopeless as they still need to acquire Universities' strange customs and norms. Thesen (2015:423), is of the view that the distinctive attribute of academic literacy in the South African context, is that it "involves systemic policy work", which calls for the interactions and collaborations happening in the Institutions of High Learning. These collaborations shape the policy in the field of academic literacies such as providing "flexible routes through the degree process". The case in point is that, in other Institutions, students are first exposed to extended or foundation programmes, thus extending their completion year by one. Instead of doing 4 years, they do 5 years. Foundation programmes are a very important component in the improvement of meaningful curricula, especially at the foundation level as the programmes are expected "to unpack and make explicit" the target academic literacies to students (McKenna, 2010).

Different tests are used to assess students' academic literacy proficiency. The most common types in the South African context are the Test of Academic Literacy Levels (TALL) (van Dyk, 2015) and the literacy section of the National Benchmarking Test (NBT) (Yield, 2010). These tests are used as access tests because the school marks

cannot be relied on solely in order to identify students who are at risk (Myburgh –Smith & Weideman, 2017). TALL is considered as a theoretically sound test construct, as it considers some of the key aspects of literacy and it closely mirrors students' capacity to construe academic discourse (Van Dyk, 2015). It has also been verified to be a reliable test, as it has shown a reliability measure of 0.94 across several versions of the test between 2004 and 2010 (Van Dyk, 2015). It is also regarded as a valid instrument both in terms of internal and external validity (Van Der Walt & Steyn 2007; Van Dyk 2015). It also has a broad distribution of marks, which makes it easy to divide students in terms of their abilities (Van Rooy and Coetzee-Van Rooy 2015).

The test is processed in a short period, as it is a 60- minutes test (Van Dyk, 2015). It has some limitations; one of them being the fact that by virtue of the student passing it, especially as a generic test, it does not mean that they will cope with the demands of their content subjects (Fouché, et.al., 2016). In order to deal with that limitation, the authors recommended that each kind of intervention should have its instrument which is closely related to it. For instance, in the generic interventions; a generic academic literacy test can be used, whereas in the subject-specific and collaborative interventions; subject-specific extended writing assignment can be used, which can be assessed by means of the rubric. Moreover, for limited-purpose interventions, which include writing centres and reading interventions; recommended instruments include students' questionnaires and other additional instruments (Fouché, et.al. 2016). According to Cliff (2015), the NBT is designed to assess the ability of first-year students to cope with the typical language-of-instruction, academic reading and reasoning demand they will face on entry to higher education.The other tests used to assess the ability of first-year students are; the Test of Academic literacy for Post Graduate Students (TASLPS) (Butler, 2009), the Placement Test in English for Educational Purposes (PTEEP) (Cliff and Hanslo 2009), and the English Literacy Skills Assessment for Higher Education and Training (ESLA-Plus) (Van Dyk and Weideman 2004). The above tests according to Fouché, et.al (2016:133), are reliable and valid and can be used as both pre- and post-interventions. The authors however caution that the tests are "particularly appropriate for testing reading abilities," which means that other literacy abilities are not appropriately catered for in these tests. There are advantages that are associated with the usage of these tests, it is easy to mark large quantities of tests, as they have fixed and uniform procedures which ensure validity

and also, they have “undergone rigorous developmental cycles” (Fouché, et.al. 2016:114).

2.9. Approaches to developing academic literacy in South Africa

In a South African context, there are three models or stages that characterise the history of Academic Development and those are; the Academic Support (AS), Academic Development (AD) and Higher Education Development (HED) stages/models (Myers & Picard, 2007).

It should be noted that there are no distinct differences between the models as they overlap and sometimes co-exist. The discussions of these models are important as it gives an understanding of how the South African HEIs deal with the issue of under-preparedness and diversity of students. The models are not representative of all the approaches of academic literacy used in South African Universities, as different Universities have unique demands and so they treat them as such.

2.9.1 The Academic Support (AS) model

The above model started in the late 1970s, as there was a small group of black students who were admitted to historically White Universities, whose medium of instruction was English. As a result, the Academic Support (AS) initiatives were aimed at addressing the individuals with problems, such as the insufficient English language, which was preventing them from succeeding in their studies (Volbrecht & Boughey, 2004:59). The “problems” were addressed by having special support classes in English, which had nothing to do with the modules or the disciplines the students were doing or were part of. However, it should be noted that during this phase the universities were also experimenting with “innovative practices” in an effort to help students to succeed in their academic journey (Slemming, 2017). As much as it is clear that competence in the language is not about acquiring listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, however, in many of the South African HEIs the skills-based approach is still prevalent (Boughey, 2013; Weideman 2013). The reason for that might be that there is no Institutional support that allows for the integration of academic literacy into mainstream programmes (Jonker, 2016).

2.9.2 Academic Development (AD) model

In the 1990s there was a shift in the thinking that portrayed the "black student," especially the ones in White Universities as having a problem of being underprepared to an explanation that looked at the historical –structural context (Tollefson, 2015). The focus shifted from an individual who needs to be fixed/corrected to meet the demands of an Institution to that of developing the capacity to meet the needs of a diverse study body. The HEIs needed to develop their capacity, hence the name change from Academic Support (AS) to Academic Development (AD).

The problems students encountered were no longer labelled as "language problems" but the focus was rather on the use of academic language in a specific discipline context (Boughey, 2013). This phase was characterised by an infused approach in which there were collaborations between academic development professionals and discipline lecturers, working on amongst other things, curriculum design, teaching, and curriculum management. This approach resulted in augmented courses, wherein a regular course is augmented by teaching that is intended to develop literacy and conceptual understanding. To cater for this augmentation, there was an increase by a minimum of 50% in terms of time allocation, and this model was deemed to be better than the "stand-alone" courses (Boughey, 2013). During this period, Universities were trying to align their initiatives with the "broader political and socio-cultural transformation process, which was taking place in South Africa" (Slemming 2017:29). However, it should be noted that the successes of the augmented courses rely significantly on the cooperation between the academic development practitioners and disciplinary lecturers. It also relies on the influence the former has in the different levels of the Institutions, which include the Department, Faculty, and Senate levels.

2.9.3 Higher Education Development (HED) model

The Higher Education Development (HED) model represents the shift from the academic development model to a model that expects the Institutions to have a closer look at their policy and practice. The Institutions had to find ways in which they could meet the diverse needs of students. Institutions had to look closer to their practices such as teaching and assessment practices, especially focusing on the latter in terms

of validity, transparency and whether it developed and evaluated learning effectively (Myers & Picard, 2007). The institutions must ensure that all students irrespective of their background are catered for in terms of learning and growth and that in turn, students themselves prioritise their learning (Leibowitz, 2009). This phase aims at improving, not only quality but also efficiency in Higher Education. At the centre of this approach is the issue of adjunct approaches versus collaborative approaches (Butler, 2013; Carstens, 2013; Jacobs, 2013; Van de Poel & Van Dyk, 2015), which is mainly looking at whether academic literacy should be taught as a stand-alone, that is outside the mainstream programme or be integrated into the mainstream programme. After the summary of three stages that characterise the history of Academic Development in South African, the discussion will now focus on the approaches in the teaching and learning of academic literacy.

2.10. Approaches in the teaching and learning of academic literacy

Different authors categorise academic literacy interventions differently, for instance, Carstens (2013:119), categorises it on a continuum from 'most collaborative/most integrated,' through 'intermediate,' to 'least collaborative/most autonomous' positions. Alternatively, Van de Poel and Van Dyk (2013), distinguish it into three distinct constructs, which are 'generic academic literacy courses,' 'subject-specific academic literacy courses,' and 'academic literacy taught in symbiosis with subject-specific content.' There have been studies that have been conducted to look closer at the effectiveness of these different approaches/ interventions. Carstens (2009), conducted one such study, and the results revealed that subject-specific academic literacy approaches are more effective than the generic ones. One of the reasons for success is the fact that students showed improved motivation since what they learnt had a direct bearing on their increased understanding of their subject content.

As much as the generic ones were not as effective as the subject-specific ones, but it emerged that, it was still better than no intervention at all. Carstens (2009) cautioned that it might be unrealistic that all the HEIs could be expected to offer the subject-specific interventions as that required a lot of resources. The author suggested different alternatives for subject-specific teaching of academic writing, such as team-teaching that is done through collaboration between academic literacy practitioners or

lecturers with content lecturers or adjunct-teaching context, or a combination of subject-specific and generic designs in the same course.

Butler (2013) is of the view that the Academic Literacy interventions in South Africa could be broadly divided into two categories, those that have generic characteristics and those that have a more discipline-specific focus. As much as there are Institutions that still offer generic academic literacy courses, there is, however, growth in the discipline-specific interventions.

Butler (2013:80) further ascertains that there are many benefits of discipline-specific interventions, and below are some of the benefits.

- Materials can be authentic and involve real academic activities and tasks in which the specific discourse community engages;
- Materials are relevant (and interesting) to learners in themselves, and therefore contribute to student motivation;
- Genres appropriate to specific disciplines can be taught;
- Exploring a closer collaboration between disciplinary (content) experts and AL practitioners towards the situatedness of AL practices is beneficial in unlocking discipline-specific AL practices for students – therefore, making the often tacit academic literacy conventions used in academic disciplines visible to content lecturers and students should be beneficial in the acquisition of such practices;
- Making use of respondents from specific disciplines to comment on student writing in a writer-respondent intervention may improve student writing

As much as there are many benefits associated with the discipline-specific interventions, there are, however, criticisms levelled against these interventions. One of which is the fact that it proves practically difficult to successfully implement these interventions in Universities. Firstly, because of the increasing number of students registering in Tertiary Institutions as against the limited number of academic literacy practitioners available to service the students (Butler, 2013). Secondly, is “the degree of specificity of the interventions” p82. The issue is how specific those interventions are or have to be in order for them to make an impact on students’ learning.

Thirdly, the academic literacy practitioners are not experts in the discipline and they may need to spend more time familiarizing themselves with the discipline. However, the good relationship between academics in different disciplines can have a positive impact on the success of the interventions. The other point that Butler (2013) highlighted is that of the main challenges faced by academic literacy practitioners, especially those who would like to improve their practice. The challenge is that the research that is done focuses more on theoretical justifications of the academic literacy interventions and thus they are more descriptive. However, Fouche, et.al. (2016), identified other interventions over and above the generic and subject-specific interventions, the collaborative interventions and the limited purpose interventions which are, writing centres and reading interventions.

2.10.1. The transformative approaches of academic literacy

According to Tuck (2015:195), what sets the transformative approach apart from the other approaches is its “interest in eliciting the (often undervalued) perspectives of student writers and valuing the resources they bring to meaning-making in the academy”. This approach is transformative in the sense that it acknowledges that students bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience when they come to the University. This approach is further viewed by Tuck (2015), as a place where there are dialogue and mutual exchange between students and their teachers, signalling a transformation in the relationship between the two. In this approach, the teacher is not always in a position of being an expert but can learn from his or her students.

Paxton and Frith (2014), contends that the transformative dimension includes two key elements, firstly, it rejects a deficit position on students and the semiotic and linguistic resources they draw on and enact in higher education; and secondly, it commits to an understanding and uncovering existing and prior practices that may enhance or present barriers to learning and teaching (p.156). Thesen (2015), argues that at the heart of the transformative practice is “a process of engagement” which, amongst other things, asks questions about the sense of belonging. The author further observes that transformation entails understanding students, in terms of their commitment, hopes for the future, fears, and attachment. In order to achieve transformation in academic literacy, there is a need for constant meetings, preferably face –to-face between the students and the teachers, and it needs “space, time and energy” as it is a process and needs engagement from all parties involved (Tuck, 2015:200).

The approach aims at finding “potentially transformative ways to work with students on writing in the disciplines”. It is also about commitment to help students with their writing and negotiations between the teacher and the students (Tuck, 2015:201). The author further argues that transformative pedagogic design around student writing can only show where “the lived experience of teaching and learning, from both student and tutor perspectives”, not be only one-sided. Transformative pedagogy is also about critiquing and contesting literacy practices of disciplines (Jacobs, 2015).

Mc Kenna (2004), is of the view that understanding practices or identities student brings to the University will help lecturers, to choose whether to discard their practices as they are irrelevant to what students bring or to continue and value those practices and “overtly induct students into them.” She further calls for analysis of the “expected student practices,” with a purpose to create a conducive environment for students to be able to participate fully in the academic discourse.

2.10.2 Collaborative approach

Jacobs, (2015:132), argues for collaborative pedagogy, which she describes as a collaboration, in which both academic literacy lecturers and disciplinary lecturers work together in “new ways of teaching disciplinary literacy practices.”

According to Rosales, Moloney, Badenhorst, Dyer, and Murray (2012), collaborative pedagogy entails, firstly “unpacking the literacy practices of the discipline of study for students, so that they can understand what is expected of them. Secondly, it involves developing joint classroom activities in an endeavour to make disciplinary literacy practices explicit to students. It calls for the partnership between the academic literacy lecturers and disciplinary lecturers. The partnership is characterised by planning the lesson jointly, developing the teaching materials, the actual practice of team teaching, and then co-researching their practice, so that the findings of the researchers’ recommendations can be implemented.

One of the advantages of the collaborative approach is that it brings people from different backgrounds together, thus bringing different expertise and experiences to help students. In the collaborative approach, there are those who are called the “insiders,” who are disciplinary lecturers and “outsiders,” the academic literacy lecturers who come with knowledge of teaching and learning of literacies, and the two complement each other. The relationship is also characterised by interrogation and negotiation between parties involved, which results in shared meaning-making, and the insights from such interrogation then need to be translated into explicit pedagogy (Rosales, et.al. 2012). However, for a collaborative approach to be successful, Universities need to “create the discursive spaces” where discussions will take place across the departments and disciplines (Jacobs, 2015:140).

In an effort to apply a collaborative approach in an action research format at the University of Cape Town (UCT), Praxton and Frith (2015), established working relations with three stakeholders, or specialists who were the academic literacy, numeracy studies, and the science specialists. The students, who were part of the project, were mostly speaking English as an additional language.

The characteristics of these students were very similar to students who were involved in the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) project (Granville & Dison, 2005). At Wits, the collaboration was between subject specialists, and teaching and learning specialists, to integrate language and learning skills into the content areas. This suggests that many students who speak English as an additional language, many of whom, are blacks, have different primary discourses, which are not close to the academic discourses required of them in Universities (Mhlongo, 2014).

The focal point of the UCT project was to help students write a scientific report as part of their formative assessment, thus exposing them to a "diverse range of modes integrating verbal, graphic, pictorial and mathematical representations, in order to make meaning in the natural sciences" (Praxton & Frith, 2015: 156). It is noteworthy that the collaborative approach took an action research spiral, which involves Plan; Act, Observe and Reflect. The project managed to help students "uncover prior practices and assumptions" by building on what students know, and then address those in the teaching of concepts and university literacy practices (Praxton & Frith, 2015: 157). All the parties involved benefitted from the project, especially the insiders who were science and maths specialists gained a lot, in the sense that they became aware of the importance of teaching science concepts in their modules.

The collaboration pedagogy has also been put into practice in the Queen Mary University of London, but unlike the one at the University of Western Cape, the latter started because of the concerns of the staff and external examiners. that there was a discrepancy in what students, who were doing Medicine and Sport Science could articulate orally and in their writing. The discrepancy was usually noted in the research project that students were expected to execute as part of their programme. The collaboration was between the research supervisor (RS), who was a disciplinary staff and staff member from a staff-facing curriculum and the writing development initiative (a writing tutor).

The format of writing workshops helped students to comprehend the shift in terms of writing for their medicine discipline into writing for research publication.

These workshops were characterised by dialogues, discussions and reflections, not only with students who were prompted by free writing activities but also between staff members as they had to get a common understanding of what was required and expected from students. The kind of dialogue among all participants transformed the teaching space and that led to a shift in the thinking of both tutors, RS and students. This was in line with Lillis' and Scott's (2007:24) call for "the explicit transformational interest," which is at the core of the academic literacies approach.

Through those workshops, all parties benefitted. Firstly, students showed multiple identities as required by the programme such as that of being students, writers and researchers. Secondly, the RS managed to make tacit knowledge explicit, not only to students, but to himself as well, and lastly, the writing tutor benefitted by learning so much about the discipline. The approaches used in these workshops were in line with the academic socialisation approach, in the sense that students were encouraged to reflect on their writing, and also to be aware of the shifts between the genres of writing for two different social practices. In this case, writing for assessment and writing for publication.

The above cases highlight the principle of co-teaching as an important element in the academic literacies approach, as students are exposed to the arena of knowledge-making and meaning-making. The students also become more cognisant of how their discipline works and how they could carve their names in their disciplines.

2.11. Academic Literacy as a social practice

Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000:8), are of the view that literacy is a set of social practices, and they have put forward six declarations to expand on this viewpoint:

1. Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts;
2. There are different literacies associated with different domains of life;
3. Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others;
4. Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices;

5. Literacy is historically situated; and,
6. Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense-making.

From the above declarations, it can be deduced that, firstly, academic literacy is a social practice in which writing is regarded as an important component in students' academic literacy development, and also in the shaping of students' cognitive processes (Paxton & Frith 2014).

The issue of multiple literacies is also emphasised in the above declarations, meaning that, there are different literacies that students have to deal with in their different disciplines. Furthermore, it is clear from the above declarations that, literacy is rooted in the issues of identity and power (Lea & Street 2006), whereby other literacies are privileged over the others. More than that, literacy practices are labelled to be socially, culturally and historically situated. That means, all those facets shape student understanding of literacy. Hence, there is a talk about a plurality of literacies, as that concedes the fact that there are differences even in reading and writing practices, depending on the purpose for which it is done (Ivanic et al., 2009).

Furthermore, Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000), are of the view that academic literacies involve, not only the observable units of literacy which include written texts, but also the unobservable units, which have to do with what people do with literacy. As a result, the authors use "literacy practices" and "literacy events" terms to further demonstrate the above assertion. According to Gee (2005), the achievement of both the observable and unobservable units is of utmost importance, as the two have to be integrated, especially in the acquisition of the former, as it has to do with discourse academic literacy in the context of HEIs. Reverting to the two terms that were introduced above, which are literacy practice" and "literacy events, they are used by Barton, et al, (2000) in the following manner. Firstly, the term "literacy practice" is used to refer to ways in which people use written language in their everyday lives, which are informed by their social, cultural and historical background, so it is about what people do with literacy.

According to Street (1993), literacy practices are not observable units of behaviour, as they involve amongst other things, values, attitudes and feelings. Furthermore, Barton, et al., (2000), view these unobservable units of behaviour as both processes and practices, determined by the individualistic meaning that they are within each individual and are generalistic. Barton, et al., (2000), view literacy as social processes that connect people with one another thus, literacy practice is believed to be in the relationship between people within groups and communities, and it is not only found within individuals.

Therefore, academic literacy can best be acquired when there is the interaction among the community members who are discipline practitioners or lecturers and students in the HEIs context. There are many studies, which have been conducted, both locally and internationally which have researched the impact of academic literacy module in either addressing students' language challenges or addressing the issue of epistemological access to students (Merisi, 2014). Different HEIs give the module, which is supposed to facilitate academic literacy, skills different names. At the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), it is called Academic Literacy for Teachers (ELLL) (Khumalo & Maphalala, 2018), at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal (UKZN), it is called Academic Literacy for Undergraduate Students (ALUGUS) (Merisi, 2014). In Walter Sisulu (WSU), it is known as the academic literacy module (Ludidi 2014). In NorthWest University, the Vaal Triangle Campus (VTC), the one that is taught during the first semester, is called "Basic Skills in Academic Literacy." It is only done by the students who are considered to be at risk' as per their TALL results, and the one which is done in the second semester, is called Advanced Skills in Academic Literacy" and it is done by all the students irrespective of their results (Mhlongo, 2014). Researchers like Afful, (2007) and Merisi (2014), are of the view that the differences in names given to modules have an effect on how the module is taught.

In 2018, Khumalo and Maphalala conducted a study at UNIZULU, which aimed at getting the views of student teachers about the role played by the academic literacy curriculum in helping them to acquire academic literacy skills. The study revealed that students were positive about the module as it helped them to develop their academic literacy abilities, especially writing.

Students were of the view that the writing section helped them, especially when it to the writing of the assignments, since that was new to them, especially the requirements for writing an academic assignment, such as the importance of citation and referencing. The module also equipped students with grammatical competence with which many of them struggled. According to them, grammar was not given much attention to schools. The other aspect that stood out for students, was that of communication, especially the topic in the module that dealt with the purposes and effects of communication. It equipped them with communication skills that are needed from them as future teachers.

In the study conducted by Merisi (2014) at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal (UKZN), the name of the module is called “Academic Literacy for Undergraduate Students” (ALUGS, 2014 edition). The focus of the module is on students’ language challenges, thus focusing more on grammar, essay structure, sentence construction and other superficial features of language (all those belong under the Study skills approach. The reason given for focusing on language skills is that most of the students in the Institution under study are second-language speakers of English. These students share similar characteristics to those of UNIZULU students (Khumalo & Maphalala, 2018).

The main aim of the study by Merisi (2014), was to explore the pedagogy used in teaching writing, and the rationale beyond that choice. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with two lecturers, two tutors and three students, who were actively involved in the teaching and learning of the ALUGS module. The observation was done to seven tutorials and one lecturer. During the interviews, it was clear that all the participants viewed academic writing as a social practice. When it came to students’ perception on whether the module was helping them to develop their literacy or not, the students responded that they enjoyed the module as it taught them how to write academically which was what most of the students struggle with when they joined the University. The reason for the appreciation of the module is that for most students writing is the heart of the teaching-learning activities at the HEIs since students are expected to write at a certain level. However, from the findings it became clear that students were not happy that the module was not helping them in their respective disciplines; as a result, they felt like they did not need the module.

In essence, though the students agreed that the module taught them writing and they did not highlight any other literacy practice, such as reading. It looks like the module privileges writing at the expense of other literacy skills. From the interviews, it seems as if the module is aligned to the study skills approach, an approach that is demonised for deficit or remedial view about the teaching of writing.
When it comes to students' perceptions of their tutors and lecturers it seems like all the student participants perceived them as competent. However, the study revealed that tutors gave different instructions to students in the tutorials and lectures.

The differences in instructions might give a negative impact on students' assessments, as students are taught differently but are expected to write one assessment. Conversely, the tutors of the module found that the students were underprepared for academic writing, and also found them to be lacking in certain skills, such as critical thinking, critical reading, and critical writing skill, and that to most students English as a second language. Most of the lecturers perceived the module as that which was meant to equip students with the skills necessary for coping with the demands of academic life. In their teaching of writing, lecturers privileged the scaffolding approach. During the observation, the lecturer that was observed used the traditional lecture method in the sense that it was the lecturer that dominated the discussion and students were only allowed to contribute when they were responding to some tasks in their course packs. The lecturer relied on power - point presentation used in class, with students sitting still and just listening.

Pineteh (2014), conducted a study at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), with an aim to understand the academic writing challenges faced by undergraduate students in this Institution. Just like in (UNIZULU), at CPUT academic writing and other literacy practices are done through courses or modules that are compulsory for students. In the CPUT context, those modules are called Communication Skills and Academic Literacy. The author further argues that the location of these modules in the mainstream curricular suggests that the Institutions recognise the significant role played by literacy practices in the "cognitive development of students" (p. 14). In order to get an in-depth understanding of the students' challenges, one on one interviews were conducted with students.

Reflections were also facilitated with the other group of students and interviews were conducted with four communication lecturers from different departments. During the interviews and reflections, students were amongst other things, asked about their writing experiences, their strengths and weaknesses, their interactions with Communication lecturers, their thinking around other topics taught in the module and how they could improve their writing skills. The interviews with lecturers focused on their experiences as academic writing instructors, the challenges faced by students and implications thereof, particularly in their academic development.

The findings from the students' side indicate that their schooling experience, caused by poor and under-resourced school, and their literacy background, caused by the fact that they are second or even third language speakers of English, have an impact on their academic performance. The other challenges according to students' responses are, the lack of emotional readiness and intellectual maturity, which prevent students from taking control of their learning process. From the responses of lecturers, it is clear that some of them have a problem with students' writing, as there is no coherence and cohesion in students' assignments, and they grapple with issues of grammar, tenses and spelling. The other problem which was highlighted in the findings was, that students are used to "a writing genre of social media and they find it difficult to switch from informal social media writing style to a more formal writing style, and students supported this finding by also saying that they find it difficult to shift between these two genres. The lecturers also highlighted that they do not think that students are ready for University life, as they think and act as if they are in a high school.

The lecturers expected students to possess critical and analytical skills, and to understand that writing is a process and not a product. Students need to pay attention to writing stages, such as drafting, revising and redrafting. Pineteh (2014), proposes some strategies that could help students deal with their academic writing challenges. One of the proposed solutions is that the modules which were meant to equip students with literacy practices must be redesigned and be responsive to generic and discipline-specific needs of undergraduate students (p.9). Collaboration between the communication lecturers and disciplinary lecturers is another strategy that can work, and minimise the blame of communication lecturers by disciplinary specialists for the weak academic writing skills of students.

Spaces for intensive academic reading and writing should be created where students are allowed to experiment with different writing challenges. The author further suggests that writing centres need to be marketed and be visible on all campuses. Students should also be oriented so that they are allowed to take ownership of their learning process and should understand the role played by academic writing in students' success.

2.12. Higher Education Terrain

Higher education terrain in South Africa has been through different changes. In the past, it used to be divided along with the racial and linguistic basis (Mhlongo, 2014). In the South African context, the changes were aimed at achieving two things, which are "massification and mergers" (Jansen, 2008:5, in Mhlongo, 2014). Massification, amongst other things, aims to "open the doors of learning for all," regardless of race, creed, class, sexual orientation, or religion (Department of Education, 1997a:34). After much consultation and discussion, the Higher Education Act was promulgated in 1997 and one of its aims was to:

- *To establish a single co-ordinated higher education system which promotes co-operative governance and provides for programme-based higher education*;

The mergers were part of the transformation imperative (Clarence 2014), and the mergers intended to physically bring together historically black and white universities, which was a change at a macro level (van Schalkwyk; 2008). That also reduced the number of higher education institutions from 36 to 22 (Mhlongo 2014). Due to the changes that took place during the mergers, South Africa is known as the "strongest and most diverse" Higher Education Sector on the African Continent (Higher Education in Context nd: 14). However, it should be noted that in 2014, the number of Universities increased again from 22 to 25. Universities were broadly divided into three types, and that is, traditional universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology (UoTs). However, the envisaged single co-ordinated system was not without problems. Firstly, it created conflict between blacks and whites and the case in point being the "Reinzt incident".

Secondly, it brought a diversity of students. In trying to deal with the policy of access, other Universities screened their prospective students through the usage of access tests, such as NBT (Myburgh –Smith & Weideman, 2017), to put more effort into supporting struggling students (Mhlongo; 2014).

The government played; an active role in democratising the education system, and that was done through different paths. One was the promotion of racial and gender equality, focusing on the development of skills that were responsive to the needs of the new South Africa, making sure that social changes promised by the new political dispensation were implemented (Pineteh, 2014).

There was pressure on South African universities to first transform, as the country was still going through a transformation and to perform taking into consideration the diverse student body that the Institutions were attracting. This was done particularly, when it came to students' literacy practices, such as academic writing (Pineteh, 2014). The DHET (2015), shows that the participation rate or the enrolment rate has increased from 1994, and the system is on track to achieve the target and the time frame set out in the National Plan for Higher Education (Education Department, 2001). At both the undergraduate level and at the postgraduate level, numbers are increasing and are in line with the National Development Plan on Higher Education. However, it should be noted that the staff members have not increased to carry the new load that is ever increasing. Therefore, in addressing the issue of expansion in Higher Education, the academic development movement was formed with the task of improving the quality of teaching and learning (Slemming, 2017).

At the centre of teaching and learning in Higher Education Institutions is student learning and development (Clarence, 2014). Consequently, many universities needed to transform, in order to redress the inequalities of the past (Clarence, 2014), and transformation meant different things to different South African Institutions of Higher Education. For instance, in white universities like the University of Cape Town, lecturers had to know and be interested in what students brought with them to the Institutions of Higher Learning. This was to assist by, amongst other things, uncovering not only prior conceptions but also practices that might prevent students from further learning (Paxton & Frith, 2014).

Academic literacies work is at the centre of the field of Higher education studies as studies taking place in this domain, are sometimes called academic development research (Boughey 2010; McKenna 2012), or educational development (Shay, 2012) and as such lack the disciplinary identity (Tight, 2014). The other problem is that people who have been involved in the teaching of academic literacies in Higher Education are not familiar with theories that shape the teaching of academic literacies (Clarence 2014).

The reason for that is that, some of the lecturers teaching in the foundation programmes or academic literacy practitioners are not experienced, thus are not proficient in "applied academic literacy or higher education discourses" which are central or important in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Institutions of Higher Education (Boughey, 2010:3).

2.12.1 Writing centres as components of the field of Higher Education Studies

In the South African context, writing centres are used as the space for the development of students' academic literacies, especially reading and writing skills and are seen as being part or the field of higher education studies. They are seen as an alternative to the traditional lecture (Slemming, 2014), and they are organs of academic development (Clarence 2014). The author further ascertains that the first writing centres were established in 1994. As the country was ushering in new dawn there was a need for a shift from the way things were done in Higher Education Institutions.

They were also there to help the students who were coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, who found themselves admitted in previously White Institutions of Learning. The number has since increased, which shows the potential value they have in the academic development work. They were established within the developmental education framework, which is described as a learning process (Slemming, 2014), and they need not be confused with the academic skills which come from a deficiency position of looking at students from a language problem, and thus not embracing the cultural and social capital they come with.

They also privilege individualised instruction where by the students one on one get writing consultations and stand a better chance of gaining from that interaction since

they do not compete for the tutor's attention (Slemming 2014). The other model that is used in Institutions is whereby lecturers have a working relationship with writing centres and give writing centre practitioners time slots within the lecture time for academic literacy sessions. When the writing tutors work within the Academic Literacies framework, the tutors, practitioners and consultants understand that their job is not to correct students or instruct students. They focus on creating a conversation with students on how they understood the tasks they are responding to, and how they clarify meaning and make sense to their writing, and students lead that conversation (Clarence, 2014).

Due to the massification process, there are now large classes and the individual support is not guaranteed. (Clarence, 2014). In writing centres, students learn amongst other things, "to practice active listening, critical reading, critical thinking and logical argumentation in their writing" (Clarence, 2014:69), so that they are able to generate knowledge, either a scientific or academic one. Writing is an important activity in academia, it is a common denominator in different academic fields (Clarence, 2014). Writing centres are spaces where students can learn and experiment. As a result, they are less structured than units or departments which are expected to hold students to certain standards (Bridgewater, 2014).

At CPUT, a writing centre was established "as a support structure designed to provide formative feedback to students' draft assignments before final submission" (Esambe and Mkonto, 2014:114) and that is in line with the view of seeing writing centres as operating on the margins or the periphery of the of higher education (Archer & Richards 2011). The fact that some writing centres operate outside the faculties, create the impression that the staff within the writing centre is working not with the lecturers in the discipline and the writing centre only offers generic skills that cannot be applied to all disciplines (Clarence, 2012).

Some writing centres, such as the Stellenbosch Writing Lab, use the Socratic method of learning, which entails the "space for the negotiation of meaning" (Daniels, Richards & Lackay, 2014) between the students and writing centre specialist, as they discuss how the idea can be expressed in the best way.

At the University of Stellenbosch, the writing centre pedagogy, that is used is dialogical as it is more democratic than the one that takes place in the lecturer hall because the power relations between the student and consultant is more relaxed. The main aim is to negotiate to mean and agree on the best way to express the idea (Daniels et.al. 2014). The relationship between writing centre specialists and faculty members should be that of peers wherein they work together to do amongst other things, develop pedagogical outcomes, and collaborate through feedback sessions given to students. Collaboration means that lecturers explain to the Writing Lab specialists, what they expect from the students and what they need to be addressed during consultation sessions between students and writing centre specialists (Daniels, et.al., 2014).

The process involves healthy discussions between the two groups who discuss what is feasible and not in a given time frame or period and context. It also involves post-consultation discussion, reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the collaboration (Daniels,et.al., 2014). In the Faculty of Engineering, all first-year engineering students register for the compulsory module called Professional Communication, which aims to “induct these students to the specific literacy practices” which are aligned to their discipline which is engineering with a purpose to help them in their profession (Daniels, et.al., 2014). The module acts as a transitional module, as it occupies the space between the discipline and academic literacies unit. In its design, it takes the expertise from the disciplinary experts, academic literacy practitioners and the Writing Lab. The collaboration also comes in as a form of partnership where the writing centre specialist works only with the students from a certain field. Students are not moved from their space as the Writing lab practitioners go to their classes to foster a sense of identity and make them comfortable in their space. According to Esambe and Mkonto (2014:113), the focus on vocational Institutions such as the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), is geared toward developing professional and workplace competencies than institutional literacy practices. The study employed an action research methodology. The PhotoVoice (PV) was the method used to collect data, whereby lecturers, academic literacy practitioners and students work together with an intention to focus on learning. The study aimed to explore the role of the writing centre in supporting students, as well as lecturers in their subject-specific disciplines, especially in the disciplines of Dental Sciences in the Health and Wellness Faculty, and Human Resource Management in the Faculty of Business and Management

Sciences. The role of the writing centre in the Institution is to teach writing and other academic literacy skills to all undergraduate students. The challenge with this approach is that the staff members in the writing centre are not disciplined specialists. Hence, the suggestion by Fouché (2005) and Archer (2010) that the writing centre employs disciplinary experts to teach writing within the discipline. For the dental Science students, both students and lecturers were asked to present narratives, which explained specifically their experiences of academic writing within their disciplines, and with AL issues in general.

In Institutions where academic literacy is offered outside the discipline, the writing centre officials act not only as mediators but also as facilitators between students and the lecturers. Google docs were used as a platform where students' assignments were uploaded and both lecturers and writing centre officials got an opportunity to comment on the document. Some of the lecturers had a positive experience with the involvement in the project, while others struggled to use technology. As for the students, they benefitted from the step-by-step support they got from the lecturers, however, those living off-campus had resource problems as they couldn't access google docs at their places of residence. For the Human Resource Management students, the assignment required them to apply the concept they have studied in a real workplace context (case study). The collaboration between lecturers and students in this assignment involved, firstly, techniques they need in order to approach companies, designing data collection instruments and lastly, it was to provide language and editing assistance to the students' projects.

Team teaching between the subject specialists in the disciplines and writing centre practitioners, give opportunities for academic literacy to be taught within the context of the course, especially because Writing centres are immersing themselves to the Academic Literacies approach whereby writing within the discipline is valued. The UoTs have added challenges in the sense that they do not have expertise within their campuses and thus have to look at the neighbouring Universities for such skills.

At the University of Johannesburg (UJ), the development of academic literacies and students' learning in general, is offered through the Academic Development Centre. There is a UJ Writing Centre (UJWrC), which assists students across the nine faculties relating to any aspect of their academic work (Clarence, 2014). Postgraduate

consultants, who are peer-writing consultants act as More Knowledgeable others (MKOs) and are employed from various faculties. Their aim is to work with students in amongst other things, “generate knowledge, acquire understanding, and convey meaning” (Clarence, 2014:68). The peer writing consultants bring with them various skills from their different disciplines, which makes the writing centre a site of interdisciplinarity.

Clarence (2014), is of the view that students are attracted to the writing centre because “it is informal, non-judgemental, non-grading, friendly”, as their work is not formally assessed, and are free to explore ideas and thus develop as writers. To guide the writing activities in the Writing centre, the Zone of Proximal Development was used as a framework. According to Clarence (2014:9), “writing centres enable student writers to practice active listening, critical reading, critical thinking and logical argumentation in their writing, thus helping them to internalise these key processes that generate academic or scientific knowledge”. It is clear that the skills practised in the writing centre are the same skills covered in the teaching of academic literacy, especially considering the topics covered in the module done at UNIZULU (Khumalo and Maphalala, 2018) and at UKZN (Merisi, 2014).

In UJ, the language and writing competencies are dealt with in the writing centre in which students are active participants, whereby they are the ones who amongst other things, answer questions, think critically and write notes in an endeavour for them to be holistically developed. The approach used in UJWrC is called the “Whole Language” approach which entails developing” language-related skills in the context of specific writing tasks” (Clarence, 2014: 73). The student cantered approach is also used in which the focus is on the student, based on his or her needs.

2.13. Epistemological access and student success

One of the issues that are closely related to academic literacy and academic development is the issue of epistemological access against formal access in the Institutions of Higher Learning. Morrow (2015), makes a distinction between the two,

and he is of the view that epistemological access necessitates an understanding of epistemic values of the university, while formal access has to do with satisfying the entry and admission requirements needed as part of an Institution of higher learning. He defines epistemic values as “those values that guide scientific inquiry to discover the truth about some matter, irrespective of whether that truth is convenient or inconvenient, supports or does not support any particular predilections or sectional interests.”

Morrow (2015) also highlights the fact that it should not be confused with curriculum content, as it is content-neutral. It is, therefore, important for insiders to understand that they must teach explicitly the conventions of their discipline, particularly to new students. Lange (2012) maintains that the greatest challenge in the South African Universities is with epistemological access and addressing these challenges requires amongst other things, the appreciation of research in teaching and learning, the supply of relevant and needed resources and an innovative approach to teaching and learning. There is research that has been conducted on teaching and learning theories that have the potential to promote epistemological access in Institutions of Higher Learning. One of such theories is genre theory, and it is applicable in the context of this study as its foundation is that, different fields or disciplines use different genres that somehow remain stable for knowledge construction.

It focuses on teaching students basic building blocks of their discipline so that they become members of the discipline and in turn be able to reproduce the discourse. This is one of the reasons for the academic socialization model, which focuses on inducting new students into their disciplinary discourses.

However, the theory has been criticized for describing various genres that are necessary for learning, thus limiting students to actively engage with the discipline to come up with new genres and thus coming up with new ways of meaning-making, for which the academic literacies approach advocates. As a result, the genre-based interventions are criticized for identifying learners’ writing problems as textual, thus failing to look at the students’ literacy practices informed by their social and cultural context.

The other theory that has the potential of promoting epistemological access is called the constructivism theory wherein learning is taken as a way of interacting with the world (Biggs, 2012). Furthermore, the author identifies the student-focused teaching as against the lecturer- focused teaching as a better way of “effecting conceptual change in students’ understanding of the world;” thus enabling the student to be actively engaged in the learning process, thus creating their knowledge. At the heart of this theory is the fact that activities done in class should enable the students to have a deep understanding of concepts and principles.

The above discussion is in line with the discussion by Callagham (2008) whereby it was conceded that the three levels of thinking about teaching proposed by Biggs in 1999 are more relevant, as it offers more scope for those teaching at Higher Institutions. At level one, the teacher focuses on ‘what the student is’; it focuses on student differences in terms of their abilities of either being ‘good’ and ‘poor’ student, which is shaped by prior experiences that can be enablers or disablers in coping with the learning environment. The role of the teacher at this level is that of transmitting information, and the students have to absorb it.

At level 2, the focus shifts from the student to ‘what the teacher does’, in terms of information delivery, and not necessarily on what students are learning. At level 3, teaching is more interactive as it supports learning and focuses on both the student and the teacher; the level is characterised by the teacher using different teaching methods in an effort to facilitate understanding in the student. The role of the teacher is to construct learning through constructive alignment (Sardareh & Saad 2012).

While on the first two levels the teacher is focused mainly on one thing, for instance in level one, his or her focus is on the student, and on level two the focus is on what he or she does. Level three is mainly about the interaction between the teacher and the learner. The thinking behind these levels is that the teacher progresses through them and so, it is not possible for the teachers to function on different levels at the same time.

There are varieties of ways in which the teaching and learning of academic literacy take place with the purpose of promoting epistemological access in higher education.

In some South African universities, academic literacy is offered as part of foundation programmes which are also known as extended curriculum) or Extended Degree Programmes (EDPs) (Ndebele, 2013). They are defined by Jonker (2016) as support subjects that provide academic support, in addition to the mainstream subjects which can be two or more modules. The main aim of the foundation programmes is to provide disadvantaged students with the means to stay in their chosen university course and to stand a good chance of graduating within the given time (Department of Education, 2006), and also as a way of dealing with issues of equity and student success (Boughey, 2007, Ndebele, 2013).

The EDPs were also meant to offer support to students with educational backlogs, especially those who come from historically disadvantaged schools which are characterised by the fact that they are under-resourced, coupled by the fact that the schools are part of disadvantaged communities (Jonker, 2016). The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) subsidized these programmes with an aim of helping Institutions to achieve their aims, which included increasing access and improving student success.

There has been a problem with students not graduating in their given time, which prompted the government to come up with interventions such as the ones above with an intention to help disadvantaged students, and the majority of those students are black. According to Paxton and Frith (2014), the aim of foundation courses and extended curricular programmes is to "focus on preparing students for epistemological access, which can be done through constructivist approach in teaching and also by making explicit the 'rules and conventions' of what counts as knowledge in the various subjects (Boughey 2002, Clarence 2010).

Furthermore, Granville and Dison (2005) are of the view that foundation programmes, particularly in Wits, were meant to provide redress for students and to give them additional learning support as they are mainly from disadvantaged school backgrounds. In the South African Higher Education context, 'marginalized' groups would include those who are disadvantaged by the school education available, which impedes the students from pursuing their University studies. Myburgh–Smith and

Weideman (2017), are of the view that language ability is recognised as one of the difficulties that prevent success in Institutions of higher learning.

The earlier models for foundation programmes focused on teaching students' skills, which included reading and writing. However, the focus has shifted by making the ways in which subject knowledge is constructed and produced, and more transparent, which helps students to have a better understanding of what is expected of them (Boughey, 2009; McKenna, 2003, Garraway 2010). The foundational programmes also experienced problems and one of those is with regard to its offering or teaching. The case in point is that the staff involved in academic development are usually asked to "improve" student language, ignoring that language is both a social and cultural constructed phenomenon, and as a result, it has values, beliefs and attitude, which can change at any given time (Clarence, 2010). The other challenge is that most of the staff members are novices in the subjects they are employed to teach, and as such, they may not be equipped to design curricula or teach in ways that epistemologically empower students (McKenna, 2010). In solving the literacy challenges that students face Clarence (2010), is of the view that the academic development staff needs to work alongside the disciplinary specialists.

It is worth noting that the extended programmes are institutionally based, as a result, they are not done uniformly across the Institutions. Therefore, each institution does it differently, depending on its context, the aim of the programmes and the issues that the particular Institution wants to address. At the University of Stellenbosch, EDP started in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in 2008. It aimed to provide extensive academic support to educationally and historically disadvantaged students.

In their context, those students were blacks and coloureds because of the kind of schooling system they went through, however, it should be noted that the EDP support is not offered along the racial lines. Extended in this instance means students do their first year over a period of two years. In the first year, the students take only two modules from their subjects plus three compulsory EDP subjects, which are 'Texts in the Humanities', 'Information Skills', and 'Introduction to the Humanities'. In the second year, the students take the remaining subjects from their majors and the second part of Introduction to the Humanities. It is the 'Texts in the Humanities' module, which

focuses on reading and writing skills, critical thinking skills, rhetorical structure, coherence, cohesion, text-linguistic characteristics and argumentation (Jonker. 2016).

The module has three periods per week of which two focus on the subject-specific content and the other one focuses on language support that is specifically aimed at the particular subject-field. The students are also provided with technical terminology support, which is compiled by the language support lecturers with the help of the specialists. The modules are offered mainly in English and Afrikaans to offer students sufficient academic support in academic development.

While in the South African context there are foundation programmes, in Australia they are called alternative pathways into Higher Education and one of such pathways is called “University-based enabling education” (Hunt & Baker 2014:2). Just like in South African, the Australian’s programme also focuses on marginalised group of students in an attempt “to address social justice” and innate matters in the academy. However, unlike the South African foundation's programmes where they are situated within the Universities and contribute to a student’s success (in terms of years). In Australia, the programmes are outside the University years, in the sense that students have to complete the course before they can apply and compete for a place in New South Wales universities through the Universities Admission Centre. The methods used in the programme are both lecture and tutorial format. The former mainly entails discussion of the content, writing practices and group activities, while the latter involves student activities, practices and discussions.

The programme comprises of four assessment tasks, which include students writing an academic paragraph, an essay, an in-class test and end of a semester exam. It is worth noting that after each assessment activity, students are not only give feedback but also feed forward to build on the next assessment tasks, thus not treating assessment tasks as stand-alone. Feedback plays an important part in this programme as students get two forms, which are the personalised written assignment and class feedback, which is general and done in class. The class discussion feedback helps students to realise that they are not the only ones dealing with problems, other student are as well (Hunt & Baker, 2014). The strength of the programme is that it introduces students to literacies such as reading and writing which will be expected of

them in Institutions of Higher Learning, thus having them better prepared for their academic journey.

2.14 Reading and writing as components of academic literacy

There are different views on the importance of reading and writing in the academic journey of students. According to Haste (2003:9 in Merisi, 2014), “no one can write from nowhere”. The two skills are of critical importance in the academic success of students and both of them will be discussed at length below.

The importance of writing for shaping students’ cognitive processes is now well established after extensive research in this area over the last four decades (Paxton & Frith, 2014). (Lea & Street, 2006) are of the view that difficulties that many students encounter as they shift into higher education, involve writing in academic discourse. They further argue that some students from linguistic minority community backgrounds may experience more difficulties than other students. Moreover, (van Dyk et al., 2009), are of the view that the academic writing ability of students is of utmost importance, as students are largely evaluated on their written work, as a result, an ability to write well plays an important role in a student’s overall success in his or her academic work.

However, Fouché (2009) is of the view that reading seems to be the ability that has the greatest direct influence on students" success in other subjects and it is the most important ability identified by both students and researchers. Moreover, the texts that they meet at the university are far more demanding, embedded and extensive than those they have met before.

According to Boughey and Niven (2012), students are expected to read in very particular ways in the academy, ways with which many students may be entirely unfamiliar. Deveraux and Wilson, (2008) are of the idea that reading tends to be disregarded, as there appears to be an assumption that students can already ‘‘read’’ when they arrive at university. For instance, “while many students may have the ability to decode texts easily, they are not able to understand what they have decoded, which means that they lack comprehension skill” (Bharuthram, 2012).

The above assertation is supported by Sebolai (2014) in that second speakers of the English language are to be helped to learn to “to talk to the text and talk and write about them”. Furthermore, in Tertiary institutions students are expected to play different roles when reading. Students need “to decode the form of text; to participate in making meaning from the text; to understand how texts are constructed in ways which seek to communicate, persuade and entertain; and to be able to use text critically for their purposes” (Devaraux & Wilson 2008:125).

Klapwijk, (2015) regards reading as a complex, multifaceted process and its aim is to comprehend what is being read. Rubin (1982:8 in Hamra and Syatriana 2010), define reading as “the bringing and the getting of meaning from the printed page”. In order to do that, readers who are students in this instance have to get meaning by bringing in their background, experiences, into the text, as reading requires interpretation and thinking.

Another concept that comes into play when it comes to reading is that of comprehension. The two are interrelated because the goal of reading is to comprehend the meaning. As a result, good readers have to be able to learn to interpret word meanings based on the context.

Comprehension is defined by Klapwijk, (2015:1), as “a strategic process in which readers use cues from the text in conjunction with their existing knowledge to make predictions, monitor the predictions and construct meaning from the text”. He further ascertains that reading strategy instruction has been an education focus in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand for up to 30 years. He is of the idea that teacher-training institutions do not seem to incorporate actively comprehension instruction into their curriculum. Baruthram (2012:*212)* posits that one of the ways to deal with poor reading levels experienced in both secondary schooling and higher education institutions is to “the teaching of reading across the curriculum in higher education”.

The use of comprehension (reading) strategies for improving comprehension has been on the rise in terms of research (Klapwijk, 2015:1). The author further defines reading strategies as “the actions skilled readers perform to ensure that they understand what they read” (p.1). The secondary schooling system is blamed for not having teachers who are adequately trained to use comprehension instruction in teaching reading. The

author proposes a comprehension framework that can be used by all teachers in all subjects and classes. This is in addition to other frameworks that are in the literature, to name but a few, its Guthrie's Concept – oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) (2003), in which the role of the teacher is that of modelling, scaffolding and guided practice (p. 113).

In the CORI framework, the learners are expected to be able to search for new information, summarise and organise information. The other framework is by Hedgcock and Ferris (2009), which focuses on Intensive Reading according to which, the reading process is divided into three phases. It is the Pre-reading phase, During-reading phase and the Post-reading phase. Each phase includes different activities, for instance, the activities in the first phase include making predictions, surveying the text and asking questions. These activities are done before lessons to activate the students' schemas and win their attention. During-reading activities include a "quick read-through of the entire text to develop a sense of its main point(s) and to confirm initial predictions made during pre-reading phase" (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009:172).

Post-reading activities include summarising and responding to questions asked, and learners are expected to think critically. The knowledge of different frameworks is essential since no single framework can cater for every reading need that each student has. The framework by the author does not replace other frameworks, but it adds to the body of knowledge that is out there and also looks specifically at the South African context. There are mainly two reasons why this framework is particularly discussed here. Firstly, it provides unique features of the South African context and secondly, it was applied to student- teachers who were doing their third and fourth year in their B. Ed degree. The current study also looks at the role of academic literacy in helping a student –teachers to survive academically hence, it is a suitable framework for the study. The framework is called EMC framework and "the acronym is derived from the first letter of the name of each phase: Establish, Maintain and Consolidate meaning-making processes" (Klapwijk, 2015:4).

The framework is divided into three phases: establishing meaning-making (Before Reading); maintaining meaning-making processes (During Reading), and consolidating meaning-making (After Reading). These stages should not be treated

sequentially. The framework is unique as it focuses on the teacher by looking at his or her ability to teach comprehension using different strategies, and not focusing on the learner. It also acknowledges the importance of multilingualism and translanguaging taking into consideration that most schools in the South African context, use English as a language of instruction to learners whose mother tongue is not English. It can also be used across all subjects, as it equips the content teachers with skills necessary to be able to improve learners' communication abilities.

Just like all other frameworks, this framework has its aims. Firstly, it encourages the teacher to interact with the text before reading it, that is, during the "before" phase. Secondly, it leads to the continuous development of vocabulary; thirdly it promotes the culture of reading in schools, and lastly, it improves reading motivation with the assumption that as learners comprehend more, they will enjoy reading.

There are two reading strategies that are identified by the author during the pre-reading phase and those are, "determining the purpose for reading, and determining text type (or Activating Text Knowledge)" (Klapwijk, 2015:5). The assumption is that when learners know about a reason for reading the particular text, they are likely to concentrate on what is important for them, depending on the type of text. Activating prior knowledge is the other strategy that can be used in this framework with an intention to allow all learners, irrespective of the language they use to participate freely during this stage. Prediction is another strategy used that helps learners to comprehend better as they have to predict what the text is about before reading it. During the During Reading Phase, they adjust their predictions, depending on their relevance to the reading activity. A prediction guide can be used during this stage. In this view, Pre-reading questions can be asked by learners before reading the text.

The maintain meaning-making process which happens During Reading Phase, entails activities that are supposed to be done by both learners and teachers and both are active participants during the process. This is the level whereby the learners are expected to monitor their understanding, use fix-it strategies, and learn to use different reading techniques as they fully engage with the text. The role of the teacher is to monitor learners and teach them different reading techniques that will both the teacher and learners to fully interact.

Consolidation happens after the reading phase and it usually involves writing. The EMC framework recommends that teaching learners how to ask questions is of crucial importance. That can be done through the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy (Raphael, 1982 in Klapwijk, 2015). According to QAR, there are four types of questions that can be used, firstly, *Right There questions,* (this relates to question whose answers can be found in the text), secondly, Think and Search questions, (it's about questions whose answers are found by searching for information and putting it together). Thirdly, Author and You questions, (they include questions where learners must relate it to their own experience), lastly, On My Own questions, (it is where learners must use their prior knowledge to answer it). The role of the teacher is to teach explicitly the question types and to model how questioning is done. The teachers also need to teach learners explicitly how to summarise text since it is regarded as a significant ability for successful schooling and academic literacy. Hyland (2013) argues that universities are about writing. It helps in constructing knowledge and it is at the centre of teaching and learning. Writing is of concern not only to students, who are supposed to write but also to many including those inside and outside education.

Furthermore, (Curry & Lillis, 2003) assert "that student academic writing continues to be at the centre of teaching and learning in higher education" p.3. However, the challenge is that it is not taught explicitly, thus it is treated as the "invisible dimension of the curriculum"; with the hope that students are supposed to know it or will get it along the way. According to Hyland 2013, there are three main reasons for so much focus on writing, firstly, is the increased number of students entering higher education, which comes with diversity in terms of ethnicity, class and age. Secondly, in many countries including Hong Kong, there are teaching quality audits' initiated by the funding bodies. As a result, universities have focused more on the processes of teaching and learning and on capacitating their staff through continuing professional development programmes.

Thirdly, most of the writing has to be done in English, which has emerged as the international language of research and scholarship (p.2). Consequently, many Institutions implemented different approaches in teaching writing, based on either historical or socio-political reasons, especially considering that academics are judged by their writing (Hyland,2013).

Some of the Universities have implemented writing courses, which are dedicated to first-year students as they are the ones who are deemed to have the most challenges. In other Institutions, writing instruction has been combined with language teaching and learning. Research by Krause (2001:156), indicates that first-year students find the following skills difficult; these include research and writing skills, relevant references through searching library databases, deciding what to include and exclude when writing an essay, distinguishing the most significant points in their reading, putting ideas together from different sources and organizing paragraphs. The other issue that most first-year students struggle with is conducting academic research, as it is a new concept for many of them. Some students may have been exposed to research in high schools, but at the university level, they may struggle with the type and standard of research expected at the tertiary level (Olivier 2016). Hence, some of the academic literacy courses focus more on teaching students basic research skills.

It is of utmost importance that the skills taught to students are applied in other courses for which they are registered, especially in their respective disciplines. Generic research courses are sometimes viewed by first-year students as boring and at times frightening, as they do not find the relevance of such courses within their disciplines (Ciliska, 2005). Writing approaches include amongst others, text approaches, process approaches and writing as a social practice. In the text approach, which is sometimes called the product approach (Olivier, 2016). The emphasis is on specific features of the text, structure of the language, the final product and not much attention is paid to the process of writing. The approach is blamed for being restrictive, as students do not have a choice on what to write as they are given templates and are expected to reproduce the model.

However, there are authors such as Badger and White (2000), who are of the idea that students still need to be taught basic rules and forms of what is expected of them. Delpit (1988) warns that the written product is of critical importance, as students are judged on their written product and not on their writing processes. Thus, the emphasis needs to be on teaching students the requirements of different genres explicitly, to show the variety in the purpose of genres in different disciplines (Curry & Lillis, 2003). The process approach entails focusing more on the steps and different stages of writing, such as planning, making drafts, rethinking, revising and also acknowledging the writer as an individual (Cho, 2003). Furthermore, the author is of the view that the

approach is time-consuming and that is one of the reasons why it is not always implemented, irrespective of its advantages. This approach is blamed for not spelling out what is to be learnt and what would be the product produced by the students as it relies more on students discovering relevant information for themselves. Students also receive no direct instruction in terms of structure and forms of various text types.
Genre approaches are sometimes viewed as an extension of product approaches as the two are closely related. As much as the linguistic aspect of writing is acknowledged in this approach, however, this approach takes a step further and put more emphasis on the social context in which the writing is produced (Hyland, 2003).

The genre approach is not without any criticism firstly; its proponents are blamed for often not being clear about their theories of learning. Secondly, Badger and White (2000) are of the view that the writing skills of the students are undervalued, and students are seen as passive participants. (Kamler, 1995 in Olivier 2016) is of the view that not enough attention is paid to the instructional contexts in which the written texts are produced. The other approach is the writing on line approach, which involves amongst other things, websites which, are connected to writing centres to which the students can have open access to writing materials such as writing guides, style manuals, course materials, and from which students can get feedback from writing specialists.
Reading and writing practices are indeed context-specific. That was evident in the study conducted by Wahyudi in 2016. In the study, the reading and writing practices of a Chinese student in her home country was compared to that of an English-speaking country, which is Australia where she studied. Like with many other students who speak English as a second language, Chinese students have to use various strategies that include, comprehending unfamiliar vocabulary through memory recall, decoding the component of words and inferring from context (Wahyudi, 2016:103), to cope with the demands of a second language.

According to Grabe and Stoller, (2011), there are three purposes for reading there, “reading to search”; which entails finding some keywords, “reading to learn,” which calls for looking for main ideas and “reading to integrate information, write and critique texts,” which has to do with paraphrasing. The students in the Higher Education Institutions have to be able to understand and carry out the above reading purposes

for their success in the academic journey. From the results, it emanated that Sara's (which is a pseudonym used for the Chinese student studying in Australia), used prediction, translation, and use of cognitive strategy as reading strategies to help her cope with English. The major difference that Sara found between her home practices and Australian practices was that in Australia she had to find her voice in writing while doing it neatly, which signals or is a feature of critical thinking in the Australian system of education.

Sara also realized that in order to make it in the new environment, she had to be mindful of genre awareness, as a result, she had to adjust from her reading and writing practices from the Chinese education context to that of the Australian academic context.

In the new environment which is the Austrian environment, she learnt different purposes of reading which entails "reading to search, to learn and to integrate information and write texts" (p. 121). The other challenge she was faced with was to get used to long and complex sentences for which she came up with a strategy to break them into smaller parts to learn them better. From the study, it is clear that students need to be supported to better adjust to the reading and academic demands of a host country. One of the ways in which the reading and writing problems can be dealt with, is what is suggested by Klapwijk (2011), that it is not only the responsibility of language teacher to deal with language issues, but it is every teacher's responsibility, irrespective of the subject they teach. The author is of the view that all teachers should acquire specific skills for teaching and learning towards literacy and language acquisition, and comprehension instruction must form part of every teacher's skillset and be taken into every class in school every day, regardless of the subject.

2.15. Summary

In this chapter, various aspects of academic literacy were discussed. It became clear that the concept of academic literacy is not easily definable. Firstly, theories underpinning the current study were discussed in relation to the study itself. The history and the need for academic literacy programmes, both locally and abroad was discussed. Academic literacy as a concept was defined and various academic literacies models were highlighted. An overview of the English for Academic Purposes

and its contribution to academic literacy was provided. Academic literacy assessment features were also discussed. Models pertaining to the development of academic literacy in South Africa and different approaches in the teaching and learning of academic literacy were also discussed. Academic literacy as a social practice, higher education terrain in South Africa as well as the issue of epistemological access as against formal access in the Institutions of Higher Learning was also highlighted. Finally, reading and writing as the main components of academic literacy in this study were discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, the International, South African academic literacy models and different interpretations of what constitutes an academic literacy intervention were discussed. This chapter outlines the research approach, research paradigm, research design utilized in the study. It also looks at the instruments used, data collection and data analysis methods.

3.2. Research Methodology

The qualitative investigation served as an avenue for vase, exploratory angle of looking at the role that academic literacy plays in students' learning. According to Denscombe (1998:3), "[t]he crucial thing for good research is that the choices are reasonable and that they are made explicit as part of any research report". In attempting to fulfil this purpose the present chapter pays more attention to outlining the research paradigm, approach and methodology. This involves the discussion on research design, population and sampling procedures, data collection methods and procedures, the role of the researcher and data analysis. The chapter ends with discussion of trustworthiness of qualitative data.

3.3. Research paradigm

According to Gaus (2017), the paradigm is created by a combination of epistemology, theoretical perspectives or ontology and methodology. Additionally, Sim and Van Loon, (2004) views a paradigm as an all-encompassing system of practice and thinking that defines the nature of inquiry along these three dimensions. Taken together, in the current study, the researcher's choice of the epistemology is the constructivism, that of the theoretical perspective is interpretivism and that of methodology is qualitative in nature. This is relevant as the current study is looking at lecturers and students' views in as far as academic literacy module is concerned. The ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions are discussed below.

Ontological assumptions

Ontology is related to the question of “what is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:108). According to Creswell (2007), the ontological issue relates to the nature of reality and its characteristics. It is understood that, reality can be explored, and constructed, through human interactions, and meaningful actions. The author further sate that the use of multiple quotes based on the actual words of different individuals and presenting different perspectives from individuals is the evidence of multiple realities. In the current study, the multiple realities could be seen through how lecturers and students view the academic literacy module.

Furthermore, Creswell, Creswell and Poth (2017) note that the ontological issues is about how people make sense of their social worlds in the natural setting and that is done by means of daily routines, conversations and writings while interacting with others around them. The authors further, asserts that many social realities exist due to varying human factors, which include not only people’s knowledge, views, interpretations but also their experiences. Hence, a qualitative type of research was chosen for the current study as it is supported by the understanding that reality and truth are based social construct (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:54).

As a lecturer teaching academic literacy module, I was intrigued by whether students are benefiting from the module that was offered to them. So, I wanted to get the views not only from the students but from the academic literacy lecturers as well in other Institutions of Higher Learning in KZN. Furthermore, during data collection from the academic literacy lecturers and students, I made meaning from listening to their stories and observing their reactions (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:52). Analysing their stories and publishing the thesis contributes to the body of learning towards improving the design and delivery of academic literacy module (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008).

Epistemological assumptions

Epistemology is defined by (Crotty, 1998:3).as “a way of understanding and explaining how we know and what we know”. Creswell (2007) is of the view that epistemological assumption, especially when conducting a qualitative study means that researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied. The author further, asserts that one of the reasons why qualitative researchers conduct their studies in the "field," it’s because that its where the participants live and work, so that becomes a context of understanding what the participants are saying. Hence, it is recommended for researchers to stay longer in the "field" so that they

get to know the participants more and that leads researchers to "know what they know" from first-hand information. In the current study the lecturers and students were interviewed in their environment and much time was spent with them getting to know them better and their understanding of the issue under study. The researcher is of the view that truth or knowledge is not separated from human beings, rather it is integrated into the social context through which knowledge is co-constructed. Additionally, Habermas, (2005:7), is of the view that those active in the research process socially construct knowledge by experiencing participants in real life or in their natural settings. Hence, in the current study the participants were conscientized on the research objectives and they demonstrated their willingness to be part of the study. During the data collection, the researcher ensured that all participants understood the research objectives, felt comfortable and encouraged them to see themselves as part of sharing views on how can academic literacy module be of more benefit to students.

Methodological assumptions

In this study, the researcher worked with academic literacy lecturers and students to get their views on the conceptualisation and delivery of the module. The methodology of qualitative research was deemed relevant for the study as it is characterized as being inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analysing the data (Creswell 2007). The author further asserts that usually the qualitative researcher follows inductive logic, which means from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer. Conducting a qualitative study, meant getting as close as possible to the participants being studied. This meant being open and interacting freely with the participants so that they could be relaxed and share their stories (Creswell, 2013). Using the qualitative methodology also means, it’s possible for the research questions to change in the middle of the study so as to reflect better the information needed to understand the research problem. So, during the data analysis stage, the researcher analyses the data to develop detailed knowledge of the topic being studied. The views and perspectives of the participants in this study who were lecturers and students were captured, thus articulating their contribution on matters that impact them. Sefotho (2015), defines a paradigm as beliefs, practices, or worldviews, which influence researchers. It is about being aware of the lens through which data will be handled and interpreted. Creswell (2014) uses the term worldview when referring to paradigms, and he defines worldview as “a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that the researcher brings to study.

The paradigm for the current study is Interpretivist. Interpretivism is defined “as an alternative research philosophy with its own ontological and epistemological assumptions” (Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991:13-18) in Kroeze, 2012:2). It is also referred to as a postmodernist paradigm (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). It is seen by Chowdhury, (2014: 433) “as the approach which focuses on the meaningful nature of people’s character and participation in both social and cultural life”, which is what qualitative approach is about.

The main purpose of research within this paradigm is to “understand‟ and “interpret” a specific context “as it is”, rather than generalizing or replicating the study (Quinn 1999, p. 41). In the current study, the researcher sought to understand how students viewed academic literacy and what informed lecturers to choose the content and the methods they used to teach it. In this paradigm, it is important that “analysis is put in context.” Interpretivist researchers are described as measurement instruments as they “interpret (measure) the phenomena they observe”, (Weber (2004: vii), and they make meaning informed by their life-worlds. The author further states that when it comes to reliability, the interpretivist researcher is expected to show “interpretive awareness,” meaning that they have to account for subjectivity and also show steps as to how they have dealt with it during the research process. Triangulation, which involves the use of multiple and independent methods is encouraged when using the interpretive design to cover issues of “validity, reliability and generalizability” (Chowdhury, 2014:434). Hence, in the current study, more than one instrument for data collection were used. Understanding is at the centre of an interpretative paradigm since this design is concerned with understanding the intended meaning by the participants within a certain context. As the researcher, I had to interpret the behaviour of the participants which were students and lecturers from their perspective. In the process, I had to be aware of my own prejudices and that helped me to arrive at the informed understanding of academic literacy as the phenomena that is under investigation in the current study.

The researcher had also to consider the social context and examine the influences that it had on people and also document multiple viewpoints and conflicting meanings held by different people when interpreting the same thing (Yanow, 2014). For instance, in the current study, the students from different Institutions gave different meanings to the benefits of attending an Academic Literacy module and they gave different reasons for their understanding. In that way, the researcher had to consider the contradictions which were part of the multiple viewpoints, with a purpose to modify her understanding of the phenomenon under study

appropriately. This paradigm is *research-question driven,* has a likeness for *qualitative methods* and its purpose is to offer a profound understanding of the phenomenon under study in its unique context. The qualitative methods used in the study were semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis which aligned themselves with the qualitative research approach.

However, whilst using the above methods, I was aware that I had to reveal hidden distortions in the data by looking deeper and not only on the surface level. Strategies such as trustworthiness, conformability, credibility and *transferability* are used in the Interpretivist paradigm to determine rigor (Oates, 2006). The same strategies were used in the current study to ensure that the issues of reliability and validity were taken care of. For instance, to ensure that the study was valid, validity strategies such as triangulation use of contradictory evidence, respondent validation, and constant comparison (Anderson, 2010) were employed during the data analysis stage.

Reliability in the eyes of the interpretivist has to do with the issue of research defensibility, meaning that they are concerned with the fact that the knowledge acquired through research is defensible. To conclude that the claims done by the researcher are reasonable, certain things should be in place, that include, proper evidence of the data collected, explanation of the research process followed, the context in which research was done and also some aspects of the researcher's life-world. The researchers have also to account for the subjectivity they bring to the research process that was critical in this study as the researcher was an “insider” researcher.

3.4. Research Approach

Creswell (2014:3) advances three research approaches, which are qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method. He further defines research approaches “as plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.” In the current study, the researcher used a qualitative research approach to explore the views of both the academic literacy lecturers and students' “lived experiences” (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:23) as far as academic literacy is concerned.

When appraising the research process, Babbie and Mouton (2001), views the differentiating between empirical (using primary data) and non - empirical studies (using existing data) as the first level of categorization. The current study is an empirical study; as primary data were collected from a number of different participants, which included students and lecturers. Information was also collected from the module outlines used by lecturers in teaching academic literacy module. As the current study is placed within the qualitative research approach, it used data-collection methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis, which are relevant in a qualitative research approach (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

Qualitative research is a kind of research that seeks to obtain an understanding of a particular phenomenon. It is defined by Creswell (2014:4) “as an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to, a social or human problem.”

The objective is to determine the *what, how* and *why* of a particular case or phenomenon, and thus the focus is on the “qualities of the phenomenon rather than the quantities (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). It is considered as interactive, face-to-face research, (McMillan & Schumacher 2006), as the researcher needs time to conduct an interview, systematically observe the participants, and record the emerging processes as they occur naturally. This approach has the potential to “provide a better understanding of the nature of educational problems and add to insights into teaching and learning in a number of contexts” (Anderson, 2010).
In the current study, the principal purpose was to understand how the acquisition of academic literacy was experienced by the students, why the lecturers chose the content they taught and why they preferred using the teaching methods they used in teaching academic literacy. A qualitative approach was seen to be appropriate for this study because of the following characteristics, which are absent, in a quantitative approach (Creswell, 2014:185-186):

1. *Natural setting*: Data are usually collected at the site where participants experience the issue or the problem under study. In the current study, data were collected at the Institutions where students were based, which is UNIZULU and UKZN.

2. *Researcher as a key instrument*: In the current study, the researcher was involved from the beginning to the end of the research process; she planned, organised, executed and reported the research. During the process, she also tried to be unbiased, honest and trustworthy.
3. *Multiple sources of data*: Qualitative data are collected through multiple sources and in the current study, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis were used. The researcher designed the instruments used during the data collection process.
4. *Inductive and deductive data analysis*: Qualitative data uses an inductive process, which involves researchers building their categories and themes from the bottom up. Consequently, an inductive approach characterizes the current study, as data were gathered from the participants and therefore, building constructs that structure the data to make sense of what had been interpreted. There was no specific hypothesis that was used in the study as the aim of the researcher was to "create a picture" from the pieces of information that were gathered (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).
5. *Participant's meanings:* In qualitative research, the focus is on understanding the meaning that the participants have on the issue and not the researcher's meaning or understanding. Thus, in the current study, the focus was on participants' meanings and those were, lecturers and students who were part of the study.
6. *Emergent design:* It means that the research process cannot be prescribed tightly, as there might be changes during the research process. For instance, in the current study not all questions could be asked in all interviews as some respondents talked to issues that were covered later during the interview process. The order of questions was changed depending on the responses given by participants at a given time.
7. *Reflexivity*: The qualitative researcher is expected to reflect on the research process as a whole, including his or her role in the process. In the current study, the researcher had to reflect on an ongoing basis as she was what is called "an insider," as the researcher is also a lecturer of the academic literacy module in the current study. Much of the information on the role of the researcher as an insider was discussed under the topic "*The role of the researcher*"
8. *Holistic account*: The qualitative researcher has to report on multiple perspectives and many factors involved in a situation. In the current study, academic literacy

was viewed from both the lecturer's and students' views thus getting a holistic picture of the issues underlying academic literacy phenomena.

3.5. Research design

There are five qualitative designs as set out by Mc Millan and Schumacher (2010), and those include case study, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography and critical studies. The researcher decided to use a case study as the methodology (Stake, 1995; Bassey, 1999; Yin, 2009). Then, from the chosen methodology, the researcher planned what instruments were to be used to collect data to answer the research questions.

A case study is a qualitative design was used for this study. Yin (2003:13), defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context". Academic literacy is indeed a contemporary phenomenon as it was introduced only after the dawn of democracy in most South African Universities. Creswell (2008, 476, cited in McMillan & Schumacher, 2014), views a case study as "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection. McMillan and Schumacher, (2014) explain that "being bounded means being unique according to place, time and participant characteristics. Case studies are chosen for different reasons, firstly "they provide a unique example of real people in real situations" (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014: 289), thus it allows readers to have a clear picture of the phenomenon being studied. Secondly, according to Merriam, (1998), a case study has the ability to provide particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. Particularistic knowledge is gained when the main purpose of the researcher is to understand a specific problem that arises from daily practice. It is descriptive when the focus is on thick descriptions and heuristic when the study gives the researcher and the readers new perspectives into the way things are (Gay et al. 2011).

The current study is a descriptive case study as the aim was to find out if the academic literacy curriculum provides for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in student's learning. The aim

was to get a full description of the benefits and challenges that students and lecturers were faced with when it came to the offering of the academic literacy module. Thus, the focus was on the exploration and description of the participants' views, in this case, those were students who had studied academic literacy and lecturers who were teaching the academic literacy module. The aim was not to generalize findings to other contexts, but rather to provide a thorough understanding of the phenomenon in an authentic context (Biggam, 2011). Hence, the focus was on two Institutions under study.

The case study design was also chosen because the current study focused on the "how" or "why" questions (Yin, 2003). The focus was on how the academic literacy modules were perceived by both students and lecturers in terms of their benefits and challenges. The why part was about why it was viewed that way by the students and why the lecturers used the methods they used in its delivery. The above questions allowed the participants to provide a thorough, detailed description to generate a rich, inclusive body of data to understand a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 1994).

The features of a case study are presented by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:289, cited in McMillan & Schumacher, 2014) as follows:

1. It is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case
2. It provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case
3. It blends a description of events with the analysis of them
4. It focuses on individual actors or a group of actors and seeks to understand their perceptions of events

All of the above features are relevant in the current study as the focus is on how both students and lecturers believe to be the benefits and challenges of the academic literacy module offered to first-year student teachers. The focus was on the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in student's learning.

The study focuses on two Universities in KwaZulu Natal which makes it a collective case study as more than one setting is used (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). According to Creswell (2014: 493) in a collective case study, "multiple case studies are described and compared to provide insight into an issue." In the current study, the researcher wanted to focus on a particular collection of cases and investigate them in-

depth. The two universities are treated as individual cases bound together by common characteristics (Stake 2013) such as the fact that both Universities are in KZN province, have faculties that prepare student teachers and offer academic literacy modules to their students.

The collective case study also assisted the researcher to avoid biases from the participants because if there is bias in one case it is taken care of in the other case. When the participants had similar or different views on a particular issue, they were probed further as the aim was to probe for the complexity of the cases.

Kumar, (2019) recommends that when a case study design is used multiple methods should be employed to collect data. In the current study, the researcher used one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with the lecturers, focus group interviews with the students, and document analysis. This was done to explore and get a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study rather than validating and quantifying it (Kumar, 2019). The collective case study assisted in investigating the role that academic literacy curriculum plays in providing for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in students' learning from different angles. It also assisted the researcher to focus on different dimensions of the phenomenon under study. By employing different collection methods, the researcher was able to get detailed information by discussing with the students and interviewing lecturers in each case. Consequently, the researcher obtained a full understanding of the phenomenon under study starting from the analysis to the interpretation of the information gathered from different angles in an endeavour to arrive at valid conclusions.

3.6. Sampling procedures and sample

In this section, the researcher discusses sampling which is an important component in qualitative research (Robinson, 2014). The target population for the study included academic literacy lecturers and student teachers in two public Institutions of Higher Learning in KwaZulu Natal. However, the researcher wanted only the Institutions that had a school or college of Education, preparing future teachers and delivering the academic literacy module. The aim of the module is to close the gap between high

school and university, especially in terms of reading and writing which students usually display in their first year of study. Purposive sampling was used to select, 3 lecturers teaching academic literacy to first-year students, and 11 students who had registered for Bachelor of Education and had studied academic literacy as a module in their Institutions of Higher Learning as participants of the study.

The participants were selected from two Institutions of Higher Learning namely, the University of Zululand where the researcher is based and the University of KwaZulu Natal (College of Education). Anderson (2010) asserts that sampling differs from qualitative and quantitative studies. Therefore, in choosing the sample size, I was, guided by the principle that a qualitative study requires a small sample because the focus is not on the numbers, but on the in-depth analysis required which depends on the "information - richness of the cases" not on the number of participants being interviewed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 353). Purposive sampling was used as it allowed researchers to handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought (Cohen, Manion, & Morrisson, 2011). In the current study, purposive sampling was used to select only lecturers who were teaching academic literacy module to student teachers, and only students who had done this module.

Purposive sampling assisted in selecting information-rich students who attended the academic literacy module for a period of a year. These students provided adequate data on the relevance of academic literacy in equipping them with relevant skills so that they can cope with the demands placed upon them by the content they encounter at University. Purposive sampling also assisted in selecting lecturers who had taught academic literacy for the past three years to get their views on different aspects pertaining to academic literacy content and delivery. Hence, purposive sampling was used, to get participants with rich information who were able to give relevant answers to research questions (Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Consequently; through purposive sampling, the researcher managed to get information-rich participants who provided adequate data and responded fittingly to research questions. This is in line with Robinson (2014: 32) who asserts that a qualitative researcher chooses participants who will provide a "unique, different or important perspective on the phenomenon in question ……."

The last phase entails sourcing the sample from the real world and "this stage of sampling requires ethical skills and sensitivity "(Robinson, 2014: 32).

This phase includes informing the participants about the aims of the study and informing them about confidentiality and anonymity issues (more information is discussed in the ethical issues section)

Categories of participants	Institution	Number of participants
Student teachers	Institution 1(UNIZULU)	7
	Institution 2(UKZN)	4
Lecturers	Institution 1(UNIZULU)	2
	Institution 2(UKZN)	1
Total		14

Figure 3.1: Categories of participants

In summary, a total of eleven (11) students who attended academic literacy for a period of a year were involved in this study. Data were collected from two Universities, (the University of Zululand and the University of Kwa Zulu Natal). There were three lecturers involved in the study, two from the University of Zululand and one from the University of Kwa Zulu Natal. In terms of gender, there was one male lecturer from UKZN and two females from UNIZULU. There were 7 students from Institution 1, two females, and five males. In Institution 2, there were 2 (two) females and 2 (two) male students. In terms of race, all participants were black. The reason for that was that it was only the black students, especially in Institution 2, (two) that were keen to be part of the focus group interviews. Based on this notion, the researcher collected data through one on one, semi-structured interviews from 3 (three) lecturers and conducted focus group interviews with 11(eleven) students.

3.7. The role of the researcher

The researcher is the primary instrument, in all qualitative research, as a result, his or her presence in the lives of the selected participants or the selected cases is essential to the methodology. The researcher is a participant researcher, who takes a neutral stance. She does not influence the participants' perceptions, thoughts, and opinions. The researcher considered the participants as information-rich experts and not her. It became easy to gather needed information about the role of academic literacy in helping students in their academic journey. In the words of Saltan, (2007: 382) "it is critical to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, the production of knowledge and the power relations that are inherent in research processes in order to undertake ethical research.". I am therefore going to talk about my positionality in this research.

I consider myself an insider as I am a lecturer who is teaching academic literacy in one of the Institutions under study. Being an insider researcher can influence one's objectivity, furthermore in social research, as researchers and participants, we are equally involved in knowledge production. It was important for me to be conscious of my role as the researcher and ask questions, which are relevant to the study.

While my knowledge of academic literacy helped me to probe where necessary, I was also aware that my role was to get more information from my participants and that they were the ones who had all the information that I needed. I made sure that I gave them space to express their opinions based on their experiences as students who had attended the academic literacy module It should be noted that qualitative research, particularly the issue of positionality and the social dynamic that exists between interviewer and participant, are far more complex and deep-seated. In the current study as the insider, researcher I share common knowledge with the participants, especially lecturers who were interviewed in this study with regards to academic literacy. However, like what I did with students, I also provided lecturers space to share their own experiences and their own understanding of academic literacy.

In as far as interviewing is concerned, the researcher is a participant researcher and takes the traditional neutral stance, whereby she does not influence the participants' perceptions, thoughts, and opinions. As much as the researcher is an insider

researcher, she did not act as an expert in the field of study, as she wanted to get in-depth views of the students and lecturers alike on academic literacy, which is the phenomenon under study. During the focus group interviews, the researcher's role was also that of a moderator. As a moderator, the researcher coordinates the group, who influences the flow of the conversation, the group dynamic and the manner of the group narrative (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011).

The characteristics of the moderator are outlined by King and Horrocks (2010) as follows: sets the ground rules; welcomes, and shares information and consent; selects the participants and introduces them in the interview; controls the discussion and asks questions; ensures the participants' confidentiality; and does the debriefing at the final stage of the interview.

In the current study, the researcher adopted a low level of moderation. The participants were allowed to do most of the communication to obtain rich descriptions of their experiences, in-depth explanations and benefits of having attended an academic literacy module. The researcher minimised the potential risk of 'researcher bias by separating her own experiences, preconceptions, thoughts and opinions regarding academic literacy, especially as the lecturer of the module. She opened herself up to interpretations, opinions, experiences of the participants that differed from her prior assumptions about the academic literacy module.

It was very important for the researcher to build rapport with students who were part of the focus group, as that is considered a major factor for the success of using qualitative interviewing (King & Horrocks, 2010). The relationship between the researcher and participants was honest and respectful. That was done in order to establish trust with the participants (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010). Consequently, that gave confidence to participants, especially for the students to feel comfortable in expressing themselves freely on the topic to the researcher. The researcher obtained the consent form, which was read approved and signed by each participant before she started the data collection phase. It helped in ensuring that participants shared the researcher's understanding of the purpose of the study and the nature of the interview process. The participants were given a verbal explanation,

before the interview, on the aim of the study and how the data would be eventually used.

The participants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of the collected data. In turn, the participants of each focus group also ensured their anonymity and the confidentiality of the collected data from them as a group, by acknowledging the content of, and signing, the focus group interview assent and confidentiality agreement form.

3.8. Data collection methods and procedures

McMillan and Schumacher, (2010: 343) assert that there are five major methods for gathering data for qualitative research, and those are “observation, interviews, questionnaires, document review and use of audio-visual materials”.

To gather the data of this study, three methods were employed those are semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis. Using a variety of information gathering techniques ensures triangulation, which can be defined as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007:141). As a result, using numerous methods of data collection for the current study means that the information is more likely to be reliable concerning the academic literacy module. The disadvantage of using one method is that it could provide one-sided information.

Using a single instrument may also limit rich information gathering, more so, as academic literacy is a complex phenomenon which means different things to many people, and as such needs different views from different participants. This data collection process was interactive as the three methods involved the researcher with the different sets of participants, such as students and lecturers. Tuckman and Harper (2012: 387), are of the view that the usage of multiple instruments for data collection, corroborating them and confirming the information obtained through them increases the credibility of the study.

3.8.1. Semi-structured interviews:

Qualitative interviews are considered by Creswell (2014) as one of the collection procedures in qualitative research. There are three types of interviews, that a qualitative researcher may use for data collection, i.e. structured interviews, unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used in the current study. According to Basit (2010), semi-structured interviews are the most popular type of interview used in educational research. In the current study, the semi-structured one - on - one interviews were used to gather information from three lecturers teaching academic literacy to first-year students. The semi-structured interviews used in the current study were exploratory, as the intention was to get the lecturers' understanding of academic literacy, the rationale behind the choice of topics they teach as part of the content, and the approaches they used in offering academic literacy.

The other reason for adopting semi-structured interviews in this study was that of its flexibility (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). It allows the researcher not only to alter the order of questions, but also to omit some questions, or change the wording of the questions. It also allows the researcher to probe using additional questions, especially in instances where there is unexpected information that transpires during the interview (Lodico et al., 2010). It is, however, recommended that the interviewer should know the key issues in the research inquiry and should also know how to anticipate interview questions with the most appropriate answers (Gillham, 2010).

The interview schedule, which was used, consisted of key questions, which were based on literature review and research questions. The researcher used an interview schedule to gain understanding from the academic literacy lecturers' perspective. Some of the advantages of using the semi-structured interview are that the researcher communicates directly with the participant as she explores their feelings and experiences. It also allows participants to talk freely about the research topic.

All participants get the same opportunity to answer the research questions using their own words. There are, however, disadvantages of using the semi-structured interviews, for instance, it takes time to get information through interview; the researcher also needs to have good interviewing skills for the interview to be a success. Other disadvantages include the fact that too large 'raw' data can be collected

and that participants may divert from the phenomenon under investigation, thus focusing on the irrelevant issues (Matthews & Ross, 2010). When using the semi-structured interviews, the researcher is the primary instrument for obtaining knowledge (Kvale 2007). The interviewer's role includes asking questions, probes, prompts and allowing the participants to give the answers. Because of the important role that is played by the researcher during the semi-structured interview, there is the risk of the interviewer's bias, and that may threaten the trustworthiness of the research conclusions. Hence, it is important to use various research methods, different types of participants and different sites to triangulate the findings.

3.8.2. Focus group interviews:

Focus group interviews were conducted with students to find out whether the module helped them with the knowledge and skills they needed to survive in their academic journey. The researcher conducted two focus group interviews, focus group one consisted of seven students from Institution 1, and focus group two consisted of four students from Institution 2. This is in-line with the assertion by HesseBiber and Leavy (2011) that the focus group consists of four to eight participants.

A focus group interview is defined as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment (De Vos, Strydon, Fouché & Delport, 2011). Similarly, Krueger and Casey (2000) define the focus group as a "carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment". From the above definitions it is clear that the researcher plays an important role as she does not only plan for the discussion but also chooses participants that have something to share about the topic and makes sure that the environment is conducive (Lodico et al. 2010). The other important point about the focus group interviews is that both the group opinions and the individual opinion are important. There are many reasons why focus group interviews are used. In the current study, the purpose was exploratory, in the sense that the researcher aimed to collect rich information from student teachers to get in-depth knowledge and explanations about the role that is played by academic literacy module in helping students to succeed in their academic journey.

The advantages of using focus group interviews include having a collective perspective, having access to more participants, thus getting diverse views on the phenomenon under study (Arthur et al., 2012). It is also considered the most effective way to gather information from a small group of people, on condition that the group is properly organised which talks to the important role that has to be played by the researcher.

However, there are disadvantages as well, such as that, the interview may be poorly run if the moderator is not sufficiently skilled. That can include the rise of conflicts amongst the participants. The analysis and interpretation of data can also be very challenging because of complex verbal and non-verbal responses. In the current study the researcher used the thematic analyses by Braun and Clark (2006) which has six phases, i.e. familiarising yourself with your data; generating initial quotes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes and lastly, producing the report. There are also administrative challenges, such as the arrangement for a convenient time and place for all the selected participants (Lodico et al., 2010). Hence, in the current study, the researcher made sure that she went to the Institutions where the students were studying and used a day that was agreed upon by all participants.

On the day of the interview, the researcher after all the formalities of greetings, self-introduction the introduction of the topic and the purpose for the study, assured the participants that the information that would be discussed in the focus group would be treated with confidentiality. The participants in the current study individually signed the informed consent form prior to the interview day.

The consent form was about confidentiality and the fact that participants were not forced to participate in the study but they volunteered. Nevertheless, all that information was reviewed on the day of the interview. The findings of the focus group were used for triangulation purposes.

3.8.3. Document analysis.

Documents are a valuable source of information in qualitative research and they offer a good source for text (Creswell, 2014). The documents that were used in the current study were mainly course/module outlines for the academic literacy module from the two Institutions under study. The course/module outlines were consulted to analyse the outcomes, the purpose, the content and the pedagogy used in teaching the module. This is in line with Creswell (2014), who affirms that documents are vital materials for the retrieval of data; however, he also cautions that they are sometimes difficult to locate and obtain. In the current study, it was not difficult to locate and obtain the documents, as the lecturers who were teaching the academic literacy module were willing to give the researcher the module outlines. The researcher had access to both electronic and hard copies of the module outlines. The name for the module from Institution 1 was called Academic literacy for teachers (ELLL 111) and from Institution 2 it was called: Academic Literacy in English (ALE). The documents were similar in the sense that there were many topics that needed to be covered within one semester. For instance, the ELLL 111 module had three sections, with each section having several topics under it, and the ALE module had fourteen topics that were supposed to be covered in one semester. When it comes to differences between the two, the ELLL 111 module was mainly divided into three broad categories while the ALE module was arranged in weeks and topics to be covered under each week. There were also major differences in terms of the content covered in each module.

The document analysis was used to partly assist the researcher to answer the first research question: “To what extent does academic literacy curriculum provide for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in students’ learning?”

Text type	Number of text	Year
Academic literacy for educators (ELLL 1111)	1	2015
Academic Literacy in English (ALE)	1	2015

Figure 3.2: Document analysis

According to the document analysis schedule shown in Figure 3.1above, there are mainly two documents that were used in carrying out this study.

The main purpose of examining these documents was to get the perspective of the institutions understudy on the module, which was going to help to analyse the outcome, content, and pedagogy of the module. The above was used to get a better understanding of what was taught and the way it was being taught within the module.

3.9. Data Analysis

Data were collected from focus group interviews with students and semi-structured interviews with lecturers. During the process of data analysis, the raw data were then processed into meaningful information that could be interpreted to understand the role played by academic literacy in helping students succeed in their academic journey. Kumar (2019) is of the view that the way the researcher processes and analyses data in a qualitative study depends upon how the researcher plans to communicate the findings. Creswell (2014:196) conceptualised six steps for data analysis (see figure 3.21) which can serve as a guide for qualitative researchers. However, the author cautions that as much as the steps “suggest a linear, hierarchical approach “in practice they are “more interactive “and “interrelated”.

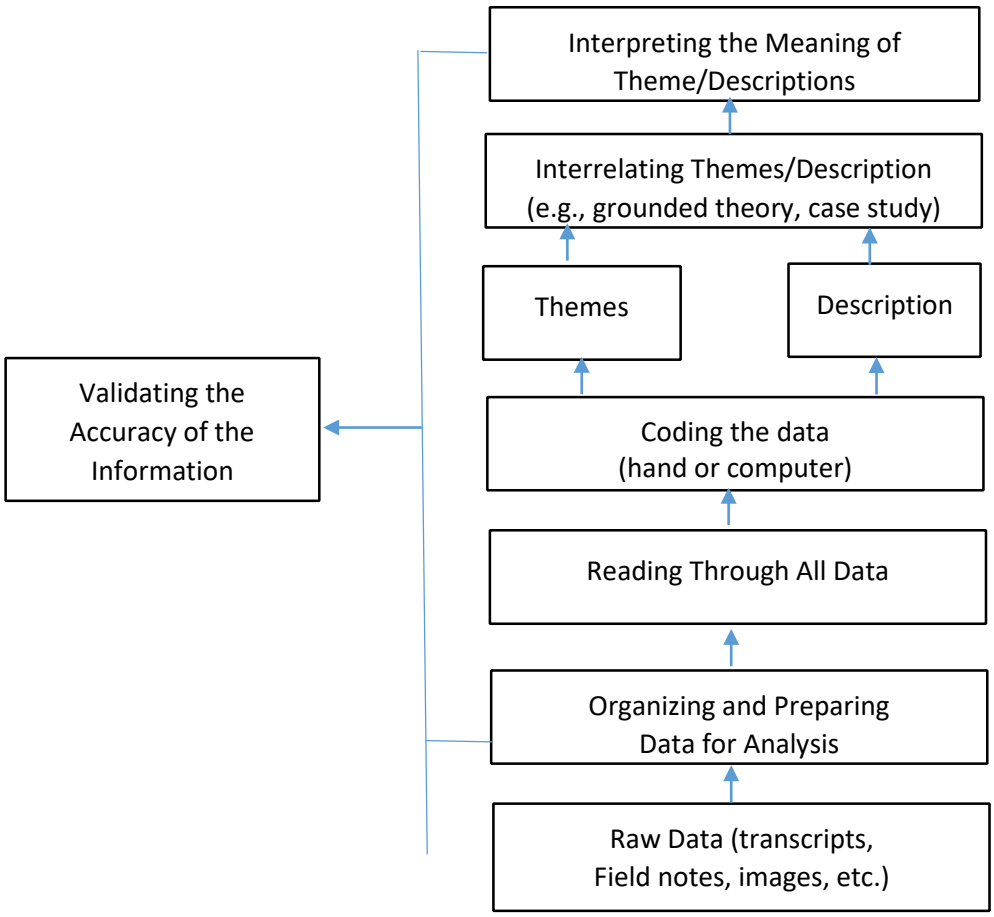

Figure: 3.3 Data Analysis in Qualitative research (Creswell, 2014: 197)

The researcher followed six steps outlined by Creswell (2014: 196-200) in this study.

Step 1. It entails organizing and preparing the data for analysis.

In the current study, the researcher transcribed interviews and typed field notes from the semi-structured interviews held with lecturers and focus group interviews done with students. The transcription process involved listening and also interpreting participants' words and it is during this process that the researcher becomes familiar with the data. For focus group interviews, code names were used so to identify a person speaking. Moreover, the audiotapes were labelled with identifying information such as date, venue and the name of the Institution. Backup copies of the transcribed data were made by the researcher which were then stored in a location known to the researcher only for safekeeping.

Step 2. It is about reading or looking at all the data.
At this stage, the researcher got a general sense of the information collected through semi-structured and focus group interviews. It is during this stage that themes may emerge from the data. Saldana (2009) defines a theme as a phrase or sentence that reveals what a unit of data is about and/or what its meaning is. Themes can only be identified through repetitive reading.

Step 3. It involves coding all the data.
Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) define coding as a system of classification or a process of noting what is central and relevant to the study, identifying different segments of data, and labelling them for the organisation of the information gathered in the data. It involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection into categories and label those categories using a term that is based on the language of the participants (Creswell, 2014). The author further classifies codes into three categories.

Firstly, the codes that readers expect to find based on the past literature and from the readers' common sense. Secondly, codes that were not anticipated from the beginning of the study, those that are surprising. Thirdly, the unusual codes, are to readers. The researcher needs to make sure that there is a potential emergence and development of new concepts and theories during the coding process.

Step 4. It entails using the coding process to generate a description of the setting as well as categories or themes for analysis. The description is the process whereby the researcher expands on his/her field notes and combine notes and interviews with the same codes into a more integrated description of people, situations, and places (Lodico et al., 2010). It entails giving more information about people, places or events in a setting. The researcher used the collected coded data and themes or categories to write the thick descriptions that explain the views of students on the importance of academic literacy and the strategies used by lecturers to make sure that students are helped in their academic journey. The researcher gave the same codes to the field notes collected during the semi-structured interviews with the lecturers and focus group interviews with the students from both campuses that were part of data collection sites.

Step 5. It is about advancing how the description and themes will be represented in a qualitative narrative. In the current study as the case study research design was employed, a narrative passage was used to convey the findings.

Step 6. It is about interpreting qualitative research of the results or findings. As the last step in the data analysis process, the researcher had her own personal interpretation based on the researcher's understanding of the data collected based on the researchers' experiences or history. The researcher included extensive use of quotes from the participants to contextualize the conclusions. The conclusions of the current study were related to those of the previous conclusions based on the research problem of students' acquisition of academic literacy, as well as the conceptual framework of the study.

3.10. Trustworthiness and credibility

There are four factors that can be used by qualitative researchers to establish trustworthiness of their studies and those are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Mills and Gay, 2016:573).

Trustworthiness in the current study was mainly established through the following strategies. The first strategy is that of triangulation and in the current study there were three methods that were used to collect data and those were semi-structured interviews, document analysis and focus group interviews. The second strategy is member checking, its the process whereby the researcher verifies the data with the participants before writing the final report. In the current study, the researcher carried out extensive member checking whereby the participants were given an opportunity to comment on the drafts of the analysed data and to verify whether their points were correctly captured. The third strategy involved peer reviewing of the research instruments, in the current study the research instruments were peer reviewed by other academic literacy lecturers and curriculum specialists, modifications were made based on their suggestion and recommendations.

Credibility is one of the factors/strategies that determine trustworthiness. Credibility refers to the manner in which the study is conducted that ensures that the participants were accurately identified and described, so that the findings depict their truth (Guba,1981) One of the methods that is used to ensure credibility is practice triangulation*:* Practice triangulation, it's when the sources are compared with one another in order to cross-check data. In the current

study practice triangulation was done through the usage of semi structured interviews, document analysis for lecturers and focus group interviews for students.

Transferability, refers to qualitative researchers' beliefs that everything in the study is context- bound and that the goal is not to develop true statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people, but the ones that are context specific and relate to participants in the study. As a result, in the current study, no claims were made regarding the generalizability of the results of this study.

According to Guba (1981) dependability refers to the stability of the data. The researcher ensured dependability through thoroughly describing and precisely following a clear and thoughtful research strategy. The strategy involved describing each step of the qualitative components which involves sampling, how data were collected, coded, analyzed thoroughly and carefully.

Confirmability, refers to the neutrality or objectivity of the data that have been collected. The researcher gave detailed description of the research design which gave other researchers with a clear audit trail, should they wish to conduct a similar study in a different context.

Additionally, Golfshani, (2003) are of the view that reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative research (The difference between the two is that reliability refers to dependability or consistency while validity suggests truthfulness (Neuman, 2006). Anderson (2010) sees validity as relating not only to the honesty but also to the genuineness of the research data, whereas reliability relates to the reproducibility and stability of the data. Creswell (2014) sees qualitative validity, as about checking for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. Kumar, (2019) is of the view that the greater the degree of consistency and stability in an instrument, the greater its reliability. Amongst the techniques that are used to support the validity, there are three that are suggested by Anderson, (2010) and they include triangulation use of contradictory evidence, respondent validation, and constant comparison. Triangulation involves the usage of multiple data collection methods, to study the same phenomenon. It also assists to counteract the threats to validity in each of the instruments used. In the current study, three methods were used, which are semi structured interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis. These strategies were employed as typical strategies for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings (Golfshani, 2003).

McMillan and Schumacher (2014), suggested different strategies that can be used to enhance the validity of the study. There are five strategies that were used in the current study to ensure validity, and those involve the usage of participants, language and verbatim

accounts, the fact that the data was mechanically recorded, member checking, negative and or discrepant data. Therefore, in the current study, the participants' language and verbatim accounts were used to enhance validity and that was done during the analysis phase. The researcher deemed it important to use participants' words, as their feelings, values, beliefs and experience were important in better understanding of academic literacy as a module.

Tape recorders were also used during the interview, which also helped in providing "accurate and complete records" which also enhanced the validity of the current study. Member checking was also done in which the researcher informally confirmed participants' meanings. The negative cases, which are the views of the participants that do not align themselves to the categories that emerged from the study, were also recorded.

Respondent validation involves letting participants go through data analyses, to provide feedback on the researchers' interpretations of their responses. This process helps the researcher, with a method of checking for inconsistencies. The feedback from participants may also challenge the researchers' assumptions, and thus offer the researcher an opportunity to re-analyse their data. The researcher did employ this strategy to make sure their views were not misrepresented during data analysis. The other strategy that is used to ensure validity is the usage of constant comparison, which entails comparing pieces of data. For instance, in the current study, data from the semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and also document analysis were compared to avoid treating data as fragmented, and also helped in the identification of themes that were emerging during data analysis.

Trustworthiness, conformability, credibility and transferability are some of the strategies that are used to determine and evaluate rigor in an interpretative study (Kroeze, 2012). The pilot study was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the research instruments and to ensure that questions that did not elicit the correct responses were eliminated.

3.11. Ethics in qualitative research

In line with McMillan and Schumacher (2010), consideration was given to the ethical aspects from the beginning to the conclusion of the study. The researcher was responsible for all ethical standards that were used in the conduct of the research. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was sought at the University of South Africa. Written approval was obtained before data was collected for the study from the three regional universities in KwaZulu Natal, namely, University of Zululand (UNIZULU), University of Kwa Zulu Natal and (UKZN) and Durban University of Technology (DUT),

where the research was conducted. The written approval was also submitted to UNISA as evidence that permission had been granted. The researcher was open and honest with participants about all the aspects of the study.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they participated in the study. A letter of consent in which the purpose of the study was explained as well as risks or discomfort that might be encountered, was sent to all participants and it was stressed that participation was voluntary. The researcher minimized the potential risk that could result in physical or mental discomfort or harm to the participants. The researcher ensured privacy by means of anonymity, confidentiality and appropriate storing of data. In the findings of this study, the researcher did not mention the personal information of the participants such as names, age and level of education. This was done to ensure that the reader obtained no identifiable information about any participant in any part of the findings of the research. Participants were also informed that their experiences, feelings and non-verbal communication verbatim would be reported in the findings, however, there were guaranteed protection of their privacy.

Participants were contacted personally or telephonically to participate in the study and their consent was sought. The participants were also orally briefed about the topic, the aims of the research, research methods and procedures, as well as the possible risks and benefits to the participants. Upon their verbal agreement, they were issued an informed consent form. In the written consent, the participants were informed that they may voluntarily participate and that they may refuse or withdraw without penalty whenever and for whatever reason they wish.

The above is in line with McMillan and Schumacher (2014) who are of the view that participants need to be assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The author further states that the participants should be informed of how the data collected from them will be used. The participants accepted and signed the forms only after having understood the content and implications of their participation.

3.12. Summary

In this chapter, a detailed description of the qualitative research approach that the researcher used to investigate the research problem on the role that academic literacy curriculum plays in providing for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in student's learning. It focused on the theoretical purpose, the justification of the methodology used, the data collection strategies, the trustworthiness and transferability of this qualitative research and the ethical issues to which the researcher adhered in order to ensure the soundness of the study.

CHAPTER 4 : DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the research paradigm, research approach, research design, sampling procedures and sample. The role of the researcher, data collection methods, data analysis, the trustworthiness and ethics in qualitative research utilized in the study were also discussed. The purpose of this chapter is to present findings in the current study. These research findings are the outcomes of a study conducted in two Institutions of Higher Learning in Kwa-Zulu Natal on the role played by academic literacy in the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and in their learning. The current study was guided by five research questions. It should be noted that the responses recorded during the focus group interview with students and those with lecturers during the semi-structured interviews were taken verbatim as said by participants, hence there were no corrections done on any grammar or sentence construction mistakes. The questions below were used to guide the study during data collection:

1. What does the current academic literacy curriculum in the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and in student's learning play?
2. How do lecturers choose topics that make the academic literacy curriculum?
3. What are lecturers' understandings of their own academic literacy teaching practices?
4. How do lecturers view different approaches used in offering Academic literacy and the rationale thereof?
5. How do student teachers view the academic literacy module in terms of its benefits to them?

Research findings from both focus group interviews with students and semi-structured interviews with lecturers are organized by research questions and presented under themes.

4.2 Coding of participants

Participant	Gender	Category	Institution
1	M	Student	Institution 1
2	F	Student	Institution 1
3	M	Student	Institution 1
4	F	Student	Institution 1
5	M	Student	Institution 1
6	M	Student	Institution 1
7	M	Student	Institution 1
A	M	Student	Institution 2
B	F	Student	Institution 2
C	M	Student	Institution 2
D	F	Student	Institution 2

Figure 4.1: Coding of students' participants

Lecturer	Gender	Qualification	Experience in teaching the module	Institution
A	M	D.Ed	6	Institution 1
B	M	M.Ed	8	Institution 2
C	F	M.Ed	3	Institution 2

Figure 4.2: Coding of lecturers' participants

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 Research question 1

What role does the current academic literacy curriculum in the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and in student's learning play?

Themes

4.3.1.1 Understanding and improvement of academic writing skills

The improvement of academic writing skills entails students' better understanding of the requirements needed to produce quality written outputs such as assignments, reports, tests, etc. The findings revealed that students were better equipped in terms of academic writing through attending the academic literacy module. In the focus group interviews with students, it became clear that students believed that the module was introduced to equip first-year student teachers with reading, writing, critical thinking, exam preparation and research-related skills. This was supported by **Participant 2** who had this to say:

"*It assisted me writing skills especially writing assignments, it also helped me in the productive skills, especially language section"* **Participant 1** also confirmed by saying**:**

…..helps in the assignment writing

Participant A *supports the finding by saying:*

> *"For me well umm firstly academic literacy umm it has certainly helped a lot umm with referencing and understanding and being able to tackle i-academic writing yakhona what we have to do"*

The students also highlighted that the module conscientised them of the academic writing requirements so that they are able to function better in an academic environment, including understanding that referencing is an important part for academic writing.

Participant D *supports this by saying:*

"It kind of created conscience of the academic world, it's a totally different way of reading, writing and presenting academic research that is not found in any other field except in academia. So it created conscience and love of academic work, as they have said that it's an introductory module. For me it helped for striking that interest that there are different ways in which scholars express themselves, this is how you can craft your own arguments. We have scholars that act as role models and when we need cite for something we consult those scholars and see how they present their work and gather information"

Participant C reckoned that it was for the first time that he was introduced to critical thinking, he said:

> *…….it introduces you for the first time in your life to critical thinking so it means you have to be a critical thinker when you writing your assignment. ……. you are taught how to reference, you are taught how to structure your umm umm essay cohesion and so forth*

For **participant 3** the important aspect was that of writing, he indicated:

> *So, yhaa, it got me write in the right context…*

Participant 6 asserted that for him it was more on having the ability to write

> *I want to emphasize about writing assignment, I'm able to skim and scan for information now*

However, for ***participant 4*** it was more about getting ready for the examination, he indicated

> *The section that emphasis exam preparation e.g. stress anxiety, how to thoroughly prepare exam and timing uhhhh, how to write assignment, laid good foundation sometimes you want to do things your way*

From the discussion above, it can be deduced that the academic literacy module does contribute to students' academic writing, especially when writing the assignments in different disciplines. Students indicated that they now understand the writing requirements better as they have been exposed to the module. They highlighted that they are now able to develop and produce assignments that have logic.

Therefore, the content they have learnt in the module was valuable to them especially in terms of assignment writing. They also understand the uniqueness that comes with academic reading and writing, which involves the correct usage of citation and referencing skills.

4.3.1.2 Academic literacy module as a leveller

The module as a leveller is about the fact that students come from different secondary schooling system. The results revealed that the schooling background has a direct impact on the preparedness of students when it comes to academic literacy. The students emphasised that there are two groups of students. Those who come from former Model C schools and those from rural and township schools the latter of which are usually seen as a "disadvantaged" group by their peers. The students were of the view that those who come from former Model C schools are better equipped in terms of reading and writing. However, the students highlighted that the module acts as a leveller as all of them are in one class irrespective of their background and are exposed to the same content. **Participant A** had this to say:

> ……*I'll speak for all the students within the campus because umm personally having grown from a model C school it's much easier for me to relate and to understand and to write academically. ……Umm unlike ama (the) students that went to the disadvantaged umm schools……..., I do feel ukuthi (that) for us it's an advantage when you comparing to disadvantage learners coming from ama rural areas because it's their first time, firstly working with computers and everything has to be typed the assignment has to be typed umm when you doing academic writing so tackling into njalo (things like that) it becomes a problem for them because akubi lula (it does not become easy) unlike us. However, attending the module does help in a way of trying to treat the student as one group in some way levelling the playing field ……*

Participant D agreed and said:

> *…….. some of us come from good schools so obviously discipline, school tradition, school work ethic is being promoted you get to varsity you now that even though we drag our feet but we know that we've got to do the assignment. It doesn't have to be the best but it has to be decent it has to be referenced, our fellow colleagues struggle as they are not used to the culture of being independent. However, in this module we get to learn to work as groups thus we help each other and we all start at the same level.*

Participant 5 also concurred:

> *……we come from different backgrounds, when entering into tertiary you can find that you are at different levels and somehow English was hard for me, so learning English in this module and study with others was a stepping stone for me which will allow me to be able to study better, so for me this module is a leveller…… . we are now in one class with those who come from former Model C schools.*

Only student **Participant B** said this is a problem for everyone, asserting:

> *It's also a problem for those students who come from model C schools…. wonke umuntu (everyone) and worse for those who come from township schools I can say ukuthi i-difficult ngempela (it's very difficult,) ……...*

Lecturers like students were divided on the issue of students' readiness for academic journey.

> **Lecturer B** was for the idea that the urban learners are better prepared than the rural ones especially when it comes to communicating in English as a language for teaching and learning, she said: *Those who come from urban areas have a much better grip of English as a langua*ge, the lecturer also added that ……. *urban learners are better when it comes to expression but not when it comes to technicalities they are also found wanting and we try to teach them all*

However, **Lecturer C** was of the view that the students are the same irrespective of their background, she asserted:

> *These learners whether from urban or rural are the same, they don't critique what they have written or what they read. They lack skills such as those of interacting with a text in a live way such as laughing when reading, thus to me they are all the same…*

From the above views and expressions, it is clear that both students and lecturers are aware that the secondary schooling system does not adequately prepare students for their academic journey. The students from the onset highlighted that those who come from former Model C schools are better equipped in terms of reading and writing compared to those who come from rural and township schools. Therefore, as they begin their academic journey they start on an unequal footing, others being at the advantage of having been exposed to some of the knowledge and skills expected of them, especially in terms of academic writing. However, one student and one lecturer, in particular, were of a different view and they said that all students come to University not fully equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills especially concerning academic reading and writing, irrespective of their schooling background. Still, the students considered the module as a leveller as they all attended one class irrespective of their schooling background, were exposed to the same content and thus got a chance to learn from one another.

4.3.1.3 Students' under-preparedness

Students' under preparedness is about the fact that the school curriculum does not prepare students adequately for what they will come across at the University.

The results revealed that there is a gap between what is learnt in high school and what is expected from students when they enter University, especially in terms of academic literacy which mainly focuses on reading and writing in the current study.

The above was supported by **Participant C** who had this to say:

> .....t*here is obviously the gap between the basic education and tertiary education as far as language is concerned, because if the whole intention of the module is to introduce us to academic writing and academic reading then we've got to reach that gap. We've got to understand that the basic education that the students are coming from doesn't cultivate the basically strong communication or grasp or command of the language. So if we haven't reached that gap then you basically shooting yourself in the foot because you can't be introducing students to a higher order of writing and reading when the basic gap has not been closed.*

Participant D confirmed that:

> T*he gap is really between basic education and tertiary education, if learners are coming from back grounds umm umm where they gather information from the internet they regurgitate it as is. You can't possibly introduce them to critical thinking when you haven't undone basically the programming for 12 years of just re-producing*

The student further elaborated that:

> *…….because basically you covering the gap umm that is being created by basic education to the university. You still have to struggle to actually make it, to actually understand the content let alone play with it, let alone craft your own argument, let alone drive a strong point across in your academic work….*

Participant B confirmed the gap issue and he said:

> *…. because you find ukuthi istudent (that the student) has been learning eskoleni (school) for the past 12 years and level of English to one degree and then ufika la (arrive here) e-university where academic literacy is in a much much higher level so it's difficult for umfundi (student) to grasp that, to change that in a couple of weeks.*

Participant 5 attributed the problem to the teachers by saying:

> *In high school, teachers….., you know the problem with the teaching profession is that, teachers don't delve much deeper into the concepts they take it from the surface.*

Lecturer A also touched on the issue of students under preparedness, he had this to say:

> *I also look at the nature of students we have, I have discovered that the students we have nowadays are not well prepared for academic learning journey. So I have to look at their nature and level of their preparedness to see where to begin then I can organise extra classes for them on weekends just to make sure that those who are not coping can pick up with the rest of the class.*

Both lectures and students agreed that the basic education system does not prepare students adequately in terms of academic writing, language acquisition, communication skills, strong work ethics which is what students need in their academic journey at the University. Some of the participants are of the view that their high school teachers should have exposed them to some of the University writing requirements, while they were still in high school. Participants suggested that there must be a connection between school and University curriculum to solve this problem of students under-preparedness.

4.3.1.4 English as a foreign language

As much as students were happy with the benefits of the module, they however, stated that learning in a language that is not their mother tongue had some challenges. Consequently, most of the students attributed some, if not most of the difficulties they are faced with at the University, to the fact that English is not their mother tongue language. ***Participant 5****:* asked the question:

> *……. how to be competent in making a conversation and a progressive one, like a free dialogue in a foreign language which is English?. ……It means that we as black people are actually intelligent, we get to know our own language and the foreign language "*

Participant 8 was very adamant that for the fact that they learn in English it's what exacerbate their learning problems. He had this to say:

…. it shall forever be foreign as you did not get it from your mother, so it cannot be internalised imagine a child learning in this language who will have to translate every second to understand what is said

Participant D highlighted that this problem is huge, he opined*:*

…we have deep problem and it's one of the influencers when it comes to people deciding not to further their studies, because of the language barrier is a huge issue, it plays out in English I have seen it because I'm majoring in English it also plays out in other compulsory modules such as education studies…

Participant B concurred with others by saying that:

……*English is also a problem for those students who do not come from model C schools,…. being umuntu (a person) who comes from a Model C school and also in the township school, I can say ukuthi (that) i(its) -difficult ngempela (very) but my former school mates has their struggle they have been struggling from first year up until fourth year they still struggling on how to actually write an assignment how to understand an assignment…*

Participant 2 was of the view that using English sometimes doesn't capture their culture and thus dilute the true meaning of the message, he asserted:

:*... like there are things which we speak in English which are against our culture if we speak them in English, for instance if I say to you in English if somebody is hungry give her food that is light but if I say if mntanami umuntu elambile uyamsiza that is strong and it has effect, if I say it in IsiZulu it stays but if I say it in English its outside that's how I see I language as something that takes away our humanity which is embedded in our culture*

The above views show how English as a language of instruction and learning to most students, whose mother tongue is not English, is seen as a barrier in terms of access as students cannot easily understand the rules that are governing the language and thus cannot be well entrenched in their disciplines.

They also feel that English as a language sometimes does not send the message they intend to send if they were studying using their mother tongue, which they take as part

of the culture. Therefore, students are of the view that they have to work twice as hard than those whose mother tongue is English.

4.3.2 Research question 2

What are lecturers' understanding of their own academic literacy teaching practices?

4.3.2.1 Education qualification and experience

Lecturers' education qualifications and teaching experience make them feel they are better equipped to teach the module as much as they are not specialists in academic literacy. The findings revealed that lecturers believe that their educational qualifications and teaching experience make them better equipped, especially in terms of understanding students' needs and addressing those appropriately through the usage of appropriate teaching methods and content. Lecturers also highlighted that experience is the best teacher as all of them had been teaching the module for more than three years. Prior to teaching the academic literacy module, the lecturers had been involved in teaching in one way or another. One of them had worked as a tutor, the other one was a high school teacher and went on to become a college lecturer, while the other one was a resource centre librarian, responsible for amongst other things, sourcing relevant information for student teachers.

Lecturer A was of the view that his teaching qualifications gave him necessary knowledge to teach the Academic literacy module:

> *I have teaching method of how to teach English Language hence I was afforded an opportunity to do tutorials in academic literacy module in 2012.*

Lecturer B felt that her experience as a qualified librarian and by virtue of her having registered for the teacher's qualification helped her in terms of understanding students' needs, she said:

> ……*helping student teachers with resources in the resources centre established in the Faculty of Education motivated me to register for University Education Diploma (UED) so as to understand the student teachers and learners needs better in terms of resources and skills*

Lecturer C attributed her understanding of her own academic literacy practices to her training and experience, she indicated

…. having trained here at University of Zululand (UNIZULU) where I did Senior Secondary Teachers Diploma (SSTD) became a High school teacher for 10 years, then went on to be a college lecturer up until colleges were closed… I have an understanding of what and how to teach.

As far as their experiences in different fields or context are concerned, **Lecture B** had this to say:

……experience helps me to understand the student teachers better as a librarian I am taught to select relevant material for certain topics and this experience provide background in dealing with selecting journal and other relevant material. It helps me when teaching my students as I am capable of selecting and identify topics that are suitable for student teachers …...

Lecturer C was of the view that her experience which was not mainly from teaching student in high school and prospective teachers in colleges, has helped her, she opined:

Coming from a different teaching context has helped me to know what students' needs, and different ways in which teaching is approached.

Lecturer A viewed his experience as a valuable assert in as far as teaching the academic literacy module is concerned:

I learnt from experience and learnt from my mistakes, I have 5 years' experience (2013-2017) I have learnt how to improve some of my weaknesses. Experience, also contributes to effective teaching, you learn from your teaching experience. Sometimes you know that you didn't make an impact on certain thing, you improve your teaching

The above evidence suggests that lecturers are of the view that their background in education helps them to understand the students' needs better than those who did not go through training on how to teach. They also attribute their understanding of their own literacy practices to their experience in different fields, particularly in teaching, as that is deemed an important contributor towards effective delivery of academic literacy, as teachers are lifelong learners. The other remarkable factor about all the lecturers who were interviewed and who were teaching academic literacy is that they all got their qualifications in the Institutions where they are currently lecturing in.

They were of the view that they had a better understanding of the type or kind of students that usually got in their Institutions and might be in a good position to guide

them in an effective manner. All the lecturers interviewed indicated that teaching experience helped them to teach the module better. They also highlighted that experience is the best teacher and that it had helped them in understanding their own academic literacy teaching practices, and in turn to be better prepared to deal with content they are supposed to teach and also improving the way in which they deliver the module.

4.3.2.2 Active involvement of students

Active involvement of students is about students taking ownership of their own learning. The findings revealed that the active involvement of students is at the centre of successful teaching and learning, especially in the academic literacy module. Active involvement entails giving students practical activities to apply theory into practice**.**

Lecturer A was of the view that he had learnt to engage the students and he had this to say:

> *I have learnt to engage my students, reflect a lot and I also discuss with my colleagues some of the strategies they can use to actively engage students during the lecture. I do that because I am a module coordinator.*

Lecturer C agreed on students' active involvement in their learning, he pointed out that:

> *Students now have to be involved, gone are those days when grammar was thee thing, now there is an intention to communicate better not to know the structures only……*

Lecturer B summed it up by saying:

> *Students' engagement is at the core of teaching this module, as they need to understand.*

The above responses confirm that lecturers believe that the more the students are involved in their own learning, the more they will do better in their academic journey. The lecturers also revealed that they did help each other and shared the strategies that they used in class to involve students more.

4.3.3 Research question 3

How do lecturers choose topics that are part of the academic literacy curriculum?

4.3.3.1 Academic writing as the core of the module

Academic writing is the core of the modules and to a lesser extent other skills such as reading and critical thinking. Communication skills also form part of the module content. The above topics are chosen because lecturers believe that these topics entail knowledge and skills that students need to be equipped with so that they are better prepared for their academic journey.

Lecturer A highlighted the topics that were part of the academic literacy curriculum in his Institution, he had this to say:

> *The topics that I teach are part of the curriculum, number one the curriculum focuses more on writing than reading, so everything is about writing, about referencing, it's more on referencing then we have writing, only one chapter is on reading for the entire semester. So that is the focus of the curriculum we don't teach them grammar we teach them how to write academically it's not about grammar. Of which students don't understand what is meant by writing academically, they think is about writing grammar*

Lecturer C concurred that writing skills are important for future teachers, she said:

They need to be equipped with good academic writing skills so that they are able to help their students in future It is a life long journey, what we feed them is what they in turn need to go out and feed their students so.

Lecturer B looked at it from the perspective of what is expected of students at the University, she opined:

> *……students write assignments, write tests, write projects, do research before writing the projects. So generally looking at the kind of work that they do now we need to know how to prepare for them to write academically.*

The lecturer further elaborated on their limited choice of the topics that are covered in the academic literacy module.

> ***Lecturer B**: I can say we don't have much say when it comes to the academic literacy curriculum. In this Institution I think it was just a case of changing the module outline cover, from the module that was called English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to a new cover of Academic Literacy module. However, the content stayed the same as of now the module is divided into grammatical*

knowledge for educators, communication skills (listening and speaking) and reading, viewing and thinking.

The module content is very important, as it is what the students should be able to know and do after they have been exposed to it.

The above discussion shows that lecturers had no say in the topics that were chosen as they relied on the curriculum they were given when they were teaching the module for the first time. There was also a difference in terms of the topics, on which each Institution focused. For instance, in Institution 1 there was a clear focus in terms of the content covered, as the focus was more on writing and to a lesser extent on reading. Whereas, with Institution 2 as much as reading and writing were part of the topics covered in the curriculum, other topics were offered which made the module somehow overloaded, especially looking at the fact that the module was only offered for one semester. This finding highlights that indeed, different institutions conceptualise this module differently.

Students also added their voices in as far as the content they would like to see included in the academic literacy module in the future. They also suggested different topics that they thought would be of benefit to other students in the future: **Participant D** suggested topics like:

…...the introduction of things such as APA and End note as a software, umm obviously research comes with methodology and terminology how you gonna umm umm sequence your work and so forth and you need to understand how people present. ….. The module should dig deeper into the faculty of writing on how different scholars will use different genre to represent their work and their different vocabulary in their different discipline, different approaching towards thinking….

Participant C was more on the thinking side of the spectrum*:*

……how to think, how to reason your academic, how to structure your argument….

Participant 8 said the module should:

: ……expose students to literature

Participant A: felt that the module should involve topics such as:

…. research and also the writing skills how to present information like bringing the voice in your argument, we need to argue and put your voice if you don't do that they say you plagiarise…

Participant B rather than focussing on what the module should offer, he focused on the lecturers, he said:

…. lecturers should use current material.

Participant 3 highlighted the importance of using technology when delivering the content., He opined:

Lecturers should use Moodle effectively, even if you are not class you must be able to see what was done in class and do it while I am at the lab, its not impossible to do that

From the above discussions, one may deduce that as much as students value the content that is delivered to them, there are, however, some topics that students feel need to be catered for in this module, for it to serve its purpose, to equip them with academic knowledge and skills. Those topics include an introduction to research skills, as early as possible in their first year, the development of critical thinking, the introduction of citation software programmes that can be used in research and presentation skills. The students also talked about what lecturers should do to deliver the module effectively, such as using the current material and also that they need to embrace technology more in their delivery, like the usage of e-learning platforms, such as Moodle for ease of access by the students.

4.3.3.2 Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Students need to be assessed to check their progress and the feedback they get scaffold their learning process. The findings revealed that lecturers were of the view that academic literacy needs to be continuously assessed to provide relevant, appropriate and prompt feedback. **Lecturer A** confirmed that continuous assessment is an important part of academic literacy. He had this to say:

T*his module is non-examinable, we have test and assignment, usually the assignment is about how to critique journal article, then they need to write an essay.*

Lecturer B elaborated on one strategy that she thought helped students**:**

…...*Group presentation is one of the assessment strategy that we use and it not only help students with presentation or communication skills but it's also about research and understanding different types of genres that one needs to be exposed to at the University.*

Lecturer C highlighted the role that peer assessment played, also help in class. She said:

> *…….sometimes you have to make students present the topics and have them asses each other in class. So they can take turns in assessing each other as groups. class assessing.*

The above discussion shows that assessment plays an important role in the teaching and learning process, as it provides feedback to both students and lectures. For students, the feedback is more on what they understand or do not understand as far as the content is concerned. For lecturers, it helps them to go back to the drawing board and see what works and what does not work for students in their class. It also helps lecturers to feed-forward in terms of what students need to plan for concerning what students can expect in the content going forward.

4.3.3.3 The Importance of feedback

Feedback is necessary as it fast tracks the learning process. The study revealed that feedback was deemed important for both lecturers and students as it made lecturers reflect and improve on their practices. On the side of students, it helped them to make informed decisions on steps they needed to take to improve their learning. ***Lecturer C*** agreed that*:*

> *Feedback is very important because its one of the ways you can see that whether you are on the right track, it helps to boost your confidence as a lecturer, it also helps with knowing and figuring out what is still lacking, it moves you out of your comfort zone…, when you get positive feedback you want to do more and when you get negative feedback you want to correct what you think is wrong.*

Lecturer B highlighted the advantages of feedback*:*

> *… helps you to re plan or to move on whether it is not what you were looking for and then you can tell that I did not reach my outcomes than, you go back to the drawing board so it very important.*

Lecturer A *also revealed the importance of giving students feedback:*

> *It's important that students receive feedback on their writing practices. It is also essential that you write something that shows what they are doing right and what is wrong so that they can improve so feedback plays an important role in making the student academic writing develop"*

From the above responses, it is clear that lecturers understood the importance of feedback, whether it was positive or negative. The lecturers looked at feedback from different two perspectives, which was they as lecturers giving feedback to students, and also they receiving feedback, either from students or their colleagues. While lecturers appreciate positive feedback they were also of the idea that negative feedback from students made them go back to the drawing board re-plan and come up with a different strategy to help the students understand the content better.

4.3.4 Research question 4

How do lecturers view different approaches used in offering Academic literacy and the rationale thereof?

4.3.4.1 Discipline-specific vs generic module

The academic literacy module can either be offered within the discipline or outside as a generic module. The findings show that in the Institutions understudy, the module was offered as a generic module.

However, the lecturers thought that discipline-specific lecturers might not be in a position to teach the module, as they might be lacking in terms of reading and writing. Having said that though, the lecturers thought that students could benefit more if the module was to be housed within different disciplines.

Lecturer B had this to say:

> *May be its better that we have this housed within the discipline, having someone from science discipline teach students from science the writing and reading within the science discipline.*

Lecturer C had some reservations on the ability of discipline specific lecturers to teach the academic literacy skills within their discipline:

> *….the lecturer will also be keen on reading and writing because there are lecturers who are discipline specific they also they also don't see this thing of academic literacy of reading and writing the way we see it. It may help them, we've had some cases where the lecturers themselves are non - conversant as far as reading and writing is concerned.*

Lecture A also agreed with Lecturer C in terms of doubting the capability of discipline lecturers

I don't know whether the subject discipline lecturers are capable enough when it comes to use of language. …… I have recommended it some lecturers are not comfortable enough when it comes to collaboration. He continued and stated that *"Personally, I do recommend collaboration as I think it will benefit the students*

However, Lecturer B was convinced that if discipline specific sees the benefit of the module that will go a long way in making the students view the module from a positive perspective

They *have to see the benefit for this course /module and try to apply it in their discipline. so that students don't see it as an ancillary…."*

The above evidence shows that as much as the current lecturers are of the view that subject-specific module can help students to understand their disciplines better; they, however, doubt the readiness and willingness of their counterparts.

However, the lecturers feel that students can benefit more if the module was housed in different disciplines.

4.3.4.2 Effective teaching strategies

When lectures were asked what entails effective teaching when it comes to module delivery, they identified different strategies that they use. Findings revealed that strategies used included lecturers being adequately prepared for their classes, using their experiences in terms of lesson delivery and being rewarded for the service they delivered, especially those who were employed on a part-time basis. **Lecturer A** had this to say:

….. on the part of the lecturer is the level of preparedness, how prepared is he to teach. If you don't know what to teach you just go, there and fumble that is the first thing preparation is very very essential. Secondly, its experience, it also contributes to effective teaching, you learn from your teaching experience. Sometimes you know that you didn't make impact on certain thing, you improve your teaching. Thirdly, its payment, if you are not a full time lecture and not paid very well you know that, payment can be kind of motivating factor, because you know that you are paid for what you are doing

He further emphasised the importance of teaching students the basics:

All students need to be taught basics on how to read and write for a particular genre as all of them are lacking in a way ……

The above evidence shows that for the lecturers the effective strategies include being prepared for classes, and also teaching students basic skills. The lecturers also believe that it is important that they treat all the students in the same manner, irrespective of the fact that some are better than others, in terms of being prepared for the University journey.

However, the lecturers also cautioned on the lack of practical activities for students**.** Practical activities are those that have to do with the application of theory into different practical contexts. The findings revealed that more practical activities are needed to help the students to better understand the content of the module. Both lecturers and students agreed on this one.

Lecturer C highlighted the importance of giving students practical and she had this to say:

> *you need to exact pressure on both rural and the urban students and teach them the skill as equal as possible and give them practical work. But practical work I mean topics that are interesting to them and give them time to critique what they have read as that is a life skill that they should possess. They must learn to critique their own work and their learners' work as future teachers.*

The lecturer further opined:

For me I think the module is too theoretical, we need to have practical activities, let students engage with the theory and also be given practicals on that theory, application is needed if there was a chance there could be attending the centre where they will interact and make it practical experience **Lecturer A** confirmed that:

> :*….. we don't give them enough time to practice what they have learnt, we just want to finish the syllabus and we expect them to know, teach theory and finish".*
> He continued and said *", it should be a module where students should be allowed to practice what they have learn*

Lecturer B attributed the lack of exposure to students' practical activities to the large number of students that lecturers have to teach, and she commented by saying:

> *They still struggle as the time for practice is none existent because of the numbers …...*

Lecturer A attributed the lack of practical activities to the fact that it is important that the syllabus is covered before protests start, he stated:

> …..*because of protest, , what we do we do section one and instead of going for the tutorial we go for the next topic because there is no time*

All the three lecturers from both Institutions emphasised the point that the module does not equip students with practical skills, as it mostly focuses on theory**.**

The reasons given ranged from the number of students per class, the number of sessions per week and also the importance of finishing the curriculum before any disturbance in the form of riots or strikes. Students also emphasized the importance of practical activities.

Participant D suggested that:

> ……. *Let us introduce more practical work*

Participant B went further and explained how this could be achieved. He had this to say:

> *….when you promote writing you should have at least a panel of writers within the class, you know , people are aspire to be writers . get them give them a topic or have them debate about anything creative and then you could assess them to see if they can apply the concord you have been teaching them, let's say it's a speaking skill that you want to develop, some people like debate some like presenting so you know you have people who are vocal in class., you can change perception trough articulation. Whatever skill you develop you need to enforce it through certain practical skills, practical resource.*

Participant 8 concurred and opined:

> ……*even dramatization I believe that some of the things can be dramatized, it's a varsity here*

Participant 7 expanded on the type of skills that could be taught by stating that:

> *..If a module is focussing on language there are certain skills I agree that it should have a bit of practicality in what it taught . I mustn't cram and go and write I must also sit down be given a chance to apply those skills*

From the above, both the students and the lecturers agreed on the importance of practical work. Practical work will help students to interact with the content thus benefiting more from the module.

4.3.5 Research question 5

How do student teachers view the academic literacy module in terms of its benefits to them?

4.3.5.1 Value of the module

All the students who participated in the study seemed to be aware of the benefits that the module had for them. They considered themselves better equipped in terms of academic reading and writing.

When they were asked to talk about the benefits of attending the module, including the specific skills that they thought the module helped with. **Participant D** responded as follows:

> *Academic literacy expanded on my previous knowledge on academic writing, presentations, writing assignments, how you argue, how you structure your arguments so forth.*

For ***Participant 2,*** the module even helped him to understand other modules better, and he said:

> *It also helped me to feel as if I'm bright in other modules because there is this section in the module that talked about the History of communication it helped me to and provided a schema to me, whatever comes in my way I use that as a background as a schema to actually accommodate and simulate what comes in my way*

Participant 7 emphasized the issue of skills and knowledge, which he gained from the module when he said:

> I *gained lot of skills including writing skills, it aided me to know how to punctuate, cite, how to use gramma, it helped me to question everything, I didn't know how to write the assignment, the real assignment, it gave me that knowledge and then again in communication. It helped me to differentiate between formal and informal language, mostly in nowadays students use informal language which is not good for academic world …….*

Participant A highlighted one skill that had carried him through the academic journey when saying:

> *For me the things I got from academic literacy is definitely and that is one skill that has helped me so as my first year and now when it comes to academic literacy is the ability to research*

Participant B also agreed with Participant A and he opined**:**

> *I would say its research too because uhmm with research now even this year I'll be able to apply for my Honours because academic literacy we were taught*

what and how to look for certain things and ama academic literature and scholars. So definitely it has to be research ……...

For **Participant C,** it was more than one skill

It would be research and also the writing skills how to present information because ngisuke (I'm from) a High school where I was an A student and I have the ability ukuthi ngiya cram (to memorise)

Participant 2 highlighted reading as the most important skill to him and he said:

For me reading is the most sentimental, for me reading is number one, because it fuels all the other skills, I can speak and write because I have read something related to those things or I have read something from somewhere. Reading is thee important skill because even if a person is miles from you and writes something you can be able to write and decode what was said in what is written, so for me in an academic institution reading is thee **Participant 2** further stated that:

But you know the issue with writing is that writing is productive, so we must receive something to write successfully. If I haven't read anything I will not write, even if I have good writing skills if I haven't read I will have no schema to actually reason so there is nothing I will produce on paper because reading helps you to construct and have a logical reasoning

Participant 5 agreed with **Participant 2** and he said

Writing is the most important skill because that how you are assessed, through test, exams and assignments so if you have errors in those things your marks will go down

From the above statements, it is clear that students valued academic literacy module as it expanded their previous knowledge and also equipped them with different skills such as research, reading and writing skills, which are needed for academic success. It can be concluded that the kind of writing that the students were exposed to, through the academic literacy module, is totally different from the kind of writing that was valued in High schools.

Some of the students highlighted research skills as the most important skill gained by students, especially because research genre is new to them as most of them did research for the first time when they entered the gates of the Institutions of Higher Learning.

On a social level, the module was viewed as having improved social interactions among students, fostered a sense of belonging and also helped students with being more confident in their academic journey. **Participant 5***:* had this to say:

> *It gave us platform where students from multiracial and not from multiracial can be treated as one, it strikes the balance between the two. It gave us confidence as future teachers*

The participant further stated that:

> *…. I can say It was light spirit module, it was not stressful, everything was out in open, people came from different places, understanding different things and were in one class*

Participant 3, gave credit to the module for helping her with social skills, had this to say:

> *It did transform the confidence in me ……I was able to interact more with the other students.*

From the responses of the students, it is clear that they have benefited from attending the academic literacy module, not only academically, but also on a social level. by interacting with students from different backgrounds and in the process of learning from each other.

4.2.3.2 Academic literacy as a way of life

The students were of the view that the academic literacy module should be more than just being a module. It has to try to change the mentality of the students and create positive thinking as far as literacy is concerned. It should be a module where students are challenged to think creatively and logically, even about things that are outside the classroom. **Participant B** had this to say:

> *There should be something more we hold, than value something that positive will come out of it. It has to change i-mentality yengane (of a student), it has to change i-thinking yengane (student's thinking), every single aspect has to change that so i-academic literacy has to be about thinking positively.*

Participant D envisaged the module as that, which can inspire students to read even outside the academic setting, he said :

> *It has to motivate one to read whenever one is, it should instil love of reading ngisho ungaphandle kwe campus (even outside campus) ngisho kuvaliwe*

(even if schools are closed) ube ne (you need to have) interest yokufunda incwadi (to read a book). It has to develop you to an individual to an extent that you are a problem solver to a point where uthi nayi inkinga sinento ekanje ngoba uyi (even if you have a specific problem) critical thinker nasi isimo sinje nakanje nakanje xazulule izinto (even if there is a specific situation that needs solution) so yeah mina I think it should add value to one's life.

Participant C also agreed with Participant D in terms of the module being an inspirational learning for both students and lecturers, and he said:

It should be a module where lecturers can challenge us, we get to sit and debate with them, it has to promote the debate culture which will make students read more and fire some shots. It has to be a provocative module and I think we need to provoke lecturers themselves need lecturers who will challenge students, we need dynamic lecturers

Participant 3 opined for the module to add other aspects as *he said:*

It must add more things be an open module and teach other aspects, ……. those who want to write books and can go to someone who can advise them as to what to do and how is that the right way to do it"

The students look at this module as the module that can have an appositive impact on the student's way of life. It cultivates the love of reading, writing, research etc. They also perceive it as a module, where they as students, can be challenged to be better teachers in the future by discussing even issues that are outside the classroom that can broaden their minds. The students also see it as a module that can challenge the lecturer to bring more to call and to organise speakers and seminars that can broaden the students' intellect.

4.4. Summary

In this chapter, the findings were presented as per research questions. The objective was to present themes that emerged from the study and the verbatim quotes that supported the themes. The findings of this study revealed that most students have benefited from attending the module in terms of different skills such as reading, writing and research skills.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the role that is played by the academic literacy module in helping students succeed in their academic studies. Therefore, this chapter discusses the research findings.

5.2 Findings and Discussions

5.2.1 Understanding and improvement of academic writing skills

Students' responses revealed that most of them had no proper understanding of what entails good academic writing skills when they joined the university. This confirms the studies by Wingate (2006) and Lea and Street (1998) which indicated that learners are exposed to limited writing experiences in schools. However, the exposure to the academic literacy module, assisted students who participated in this study, as there were conscientious about the importance of academic writing, and were thus able to improve on their academic writing. The improvement in the students' eyes had to do with having a better understanding of the requirements needed to produce quality written outputs, such as assignments, reports, tests, etc. These findings are in line with the study conducted by Olivier (2016), in which the participants stated that the academic literacy course (AGLA 121) offered to nurse students helped them to be able to write assignments at the university level. The success of the intervention was evident in the good marks that students got from their assignments.

Similarly, Granville and Dison (2009:56) are of the view that the interventions offered by universities, benefit the students by assisting them not only to develop but also to enhance their skills to meet their reading and writing demands. The students also pointed out that the module helped them to understand that referencing is an important part of academic writing.

Consistent with the findings Olivier (2016), confirms that students, in his study, disclosed that the module directed them on how to use the reference guide book of the university, as they had no idea how to reference when they started at university. In the students' understanding, the academic literacy module was meant to introduce

them to different skills including reading, writing, critical thinking research-related skills and exam preparation skills.

According to the students interviewed in the current study, the module did satisfy its main objective of consciountising them on the above skills and their importance in the academic journey. This finding is in line with the findings of the study conducted by Chokwe (2011), which focused on the English for Academic Purposes ENN103F module whose main aim was to develop students' academic reading and writing skills. The students interviewed for this study appreciated that the module helped them with their writing, as they were exposed to many written tasks and they highlighted that it helped them to write better in other courses as well.

Similarly, the study by Olivier (2016), which was aimed at finding out how effective the writing component of the academic literacy course AGLA 121 offered to all the nursing students doing their first year was. It revealed that the course had a positive effect on students' academic writing. Consistent with this notion is the sociocultural theory that notes that students interact with one other and with their lecturers and tutors. It is during these interactions that students build their knowledge with the aim of achieving their learning goals (Hodges.et.al, 2016). Evidently, academic literacy courses are still relevant in the South African Higher Education terrain, as they help students mainly to be able to cope with academic writing needed for their academic success.

5.2.2 Academic literacy module as a leveller

Students revealed that they came from different secondary schooling systems and thus, for them this module was a leveller as they all registered and attended it irrespective of their schooling backgrounds.

The results revealed that the schooling background has a direct impact on the preparedness of students when it comes to academic literacy. The students emphasised that there are two groups of students, those who come from former Model C schools and those from rural and township schools the latter of which are usually seen as a "disadvantaged" group by their peers. The above is in line with the findings by Pineteh (2014), who conducted a study in Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) with an aim to understand the academic writing challenges faced by undergraduate students in that Institution.

The findings from the students who came from poor and under-resourced schools indicated that their schooling experience, and their literacy background, had an impact on their academic performance. This was because they were second or even third language speakers of English. This is in line with the socio-cognitive theory, which according to Unrau and Alvermann, (2013) puts the students' social background (upbringing) and culture at the centre of writing. It involves a multifaceted meaning negotiation process with texts, which is influenced by a variety of social and cultural factors. These findings further support the idea of Clarence, (2017); Boughey and McKenna, (2016) that some of the students' primary discourses developed from their families and communities, are not closely aligned to the academic discourses, which thus make the acquisition of academic discourses difficult.

Paxton and Frith, (2014) note that there is a growing number of black students' population, many of whom are second-language speakers of English from poor, rural, or urban working-class backgrounds, who need to be catered for in terms of transformation especially in the white universities like University of Cape Town. It shows that even Universities are aware that students in South Africa come from different backgrounds. Something needs to be done to cater for students from different backgrounds. When they arrive at the university, they find themselves in one class and they are expected to perform at the same level. Similarly, other authors like Granville and Dison (2009), Bharuthram and McKenna (2006) and Schwartz (2004) agree that their students usually come from educationally underprepared backgrounds. It is imperative for Universities to acknowledge that students come from different backgrounds and thus have different needs, which need to be catered for.

Similarly, Chokwe (2011) argued that there is a huge burden placed on higher education created by the schooling system, which fails South African students. The Universities also have to acknowledge that the students bring something with them in terms of literacy, which can be used as a foundation for different kinds of interventions that are offered to students. Different backgrounds imply that the other group finds it difficult to adjust to University standards of reading and writing, as their schools did not equip them with the content and skills needed. It can be deduced that students themselves are conscious of the fact that their different backgrounds have an impact on their understanding of the academic literacy module, which in turn has an impact on their academic journey. However, the students highlighted that the module acted

as a leveller, as all of them were in one class irrespective of their background and were exposed to the same content.

The lecturers also agreed with students on this issue. However, the lecturers were of the view that as much as students come from different backgrounds, most students somehow struggled to interact with the text at the expected level, hence they all needed to attend academic literacy classes.

Overall, there is evidence that different schooling backgrounds have an impact on the preparedness of students when they attend the academic literacy module. Consequently, the module is taken as a leveller by students as all of them, irrespective of their schooling backgrounds attend one class, and are exposed to the same content and given a fair chance to improve on some of the content that they were not exposed to in their secondary schooling years.

5.2.3 Students' under-preparedness

The findings revealed that students agreed that the school curriculum did not prepare them adequately for what they would come across at the University, therefore, they considered themselves underprepared for University. In essence, there was a gap between what was learnt in high schools and what was expected from students when they entered University, especially in terms of academic literacy which mainly focused on reading and writing in the current study.

These results match those observed in earlier studies. For instance, Boughey (2000), notes that the writing valued in schools is different from the ones valued in Universities. For example, creative writing is studied in high schools and is not done in Institutions of Higher learning, which results in a mismatch between what students have done and what is expected of them, specifically in terms of academic literacy abilities (Fouché 2009). Furthermore, in the study conducted by Chokwe (2011) in which students' views were elicited in terms of their preparedness when it comes to academic writing, some students stated that they were not prepared adequately for the writing demands required at university, while others felt they were well prepared. However**,** it should be noted that even for those students who had claimed that they were prepared, the analysis of their written essays indicated that they still had challenges. The challenges that were identified had to do mainly with how they structured their writing. These are

just some of many examples that show that there is a gap between what students learn in high schools and what is expected of them at Universities.

To further show that there is indeed a gap between what is learnt in high schools and what is expected of students at Universities, the findings in the current study also revealed that the kind of curriculum that students were exposed to in secondary schools, did not adequately prepare them for what they would find at the Universities. This is in line with the sociocultural theory, which views writing as the social construct, which is governed by societal and cultural rules. The society and the culture from which students come play a vital role in their academic preparedness (Prior, 2006).

This finding is also consistent with Clarence (2017), who observed that the kind of text students encounter at the university is the one they have not encountered before, hence they struggle to identify specific features and underpinning values. Fouché, (2009); and Fouché, et al., (2016) remind us that the secondary schooling system does not prepare the students adequately to deal with the University content. Furthermore, Jonker, (2016) confirms that there is indeed an articulation gap between the secondary schooling system and higher education. Therefore, it seems the standard is higher at the University than what the students are exposed to in high schools.

It is, however, important to note that this problem is not only peculiar to the South African context. For instance, in New Zealand the issue of students not having a smooth transition from secondary school to Universities is still considered “problematic” and in an effort to address the gap, an academic literacy module is used as a solution (Emerson, Kilpin & Feekery, 2015).

Whilst, Engstrom and Tinto (2008) argue that there are many reasons that contribute to students’ unpreparedness. However, students interviewed for the current study attributed the reasons mainly to the schooling system, which includes the role played by the teachers. For instance, students attribute the gap to teachers who use methods that promote rote /surface learning, thus encouraging them to regurgitate what they have learnt. This in line with the findings by Jonker (2016:156) whereby two of the students interviewed mentioned that students are spoon-fed at high school, thus making high school better compared to the university.

As in University, students are expected to be independent and think critically about the issues in which they are engaged. In the same study, another student also touched on

the incompetent teachers as one of the reasons for her ‘under-preparedness’ for university journey. One of the consequences of this gap is that the students struggle with the content they meet at the University. The students who were part of the focus group of the current study highlighted that there were students who were hesitant to continue with their post-graduate studies. The reason for this was that they were aware of the struggle they had been through in order to succeed in their undergraduate degrees. Their struggle was mainly pertaining to academic writing. Consequently, they thought that they would not make it should they continue with their postgraduate studies, since more work would be required and expected of them, especially in terms of academic writing. There needs to be a relationship between what is done in secondary schools and what is done at Higher Education Institutions to help students to deal better with their University work.

In the study conducted by Jonker (2016:154) the researcher enumerated the aspects in which students were ‘underprepared,’ and those are specifically: “academic essay writing; use of technical subject-specific terminology; critical thinking skills; basic grammar rules; research skills and the use of academic language”. However, in the same study, it was discovered that only two of the above six issues were addressed during tutorials, and those were academic essay writing and the use of technical subject-specific terminology. The other aspects were considered not adequately covered due to the lack of resources in terms of students’ support.

This finding is also supported by the sociocognitive theory, in the sense that in their interaction with students, Universities should acknowledge that social and cultural factors also influence how students make meaning shaped by their background and culture.

However, Chokwe (2011:56) argues that universities also contribute to poor student writing as they have a role to play in trying “to correct what the schooling system failed to do”. That can be done by implementing effective teacher training programmes and other programmes that can be designed to introduce students to their specific discipline writing.

Students’ under-preparedness is the issue that has to be dealt with both by the secondary schooling system and the Universities to help students to deal better with the academic demands of academic writing.

5.2.4 English as a foreign language

As much as students were happy with the benefits of the module, they, however, stated that learning in a language that was not their mother tongue had some challenges. Consequently, most of the students attributed some if not most of the difficulties they were faced with, to the fact that English was not their mother tongue language. Interestingly, Kirkpatrick, (2008:37) makes a distinction between English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). ESL is spoken in countries where English is usually the official language and important but not necessarily the main language of the country. Whilst EFL is used in countries, where English is not often used or spoken in the normal course of daily life. This distinction makes sense since, in the South African context, English is usually regarded as ESL as it is an official language in most of the schools.

However, the students opted for EFL and they meant it as it showed in their expression that there were not happy to be using English as a language of teaching and learning. The findings are supported by Bridgewater (2014), who claims that students entering the University speaking languages other than English are at a disadvantage as English is used amongst other things, to publish textbooks that they are expected to use during their academic journey. Similarly, Banda (2007) asserts that students whose mother tongue is not English, are at a disadvantage when it comes to academic literacy.

In most South African institutions English is used as a language of learning and teaching, thus referred to as a" default language of learning" (Van Schalkwyk, 2008), as even those students whose mother tongue is not English (Mhlongo, 2014) are expected to use it. Most students who speak English as an additional language have different primary discourses, which are not close to the academic discourses, thus finding it difficult to survive (Mhlongo, 2014).

However, Spencer (2007) cautions that academic writing is also a challenge to first language speakers as well. Chokwe (2011) agreed with the above assertion and her reason is that academic writing as discourse is not emphasised in high schools and all students need to be introduced to it when they come to higher education. As much as authors such as Boughey (2000) and Boughey and McKenna (2016) are against what is termed language problem, as they are of the view that it leads to the thinking that says providing remedial instruction in English language solve the problems of under-

preparedness and of students failing to deal with the demands of Higher education. The findings revealed that students still feel that this language is a barrier as some of them struggle throughout their University years and some students do not even continue with their post-graduate studies because of the use of English in academic discourse as one of the reasons.

The findings also revealed that the academic literacy module, which is taught through the study skills approach, did help students to improve on their communication skills in the language that was foreign to them. The findings are in line with Jonker, (2016) who asserts that lecturers who are still teaching according to this approach might be trying to level the playing field. Firstly, for students who did not enjoy mother-tongue education. Secondly, for students who come from educationally disadvantaged schools, and thirdly, those who were taught by teachers with an inadequate proficiency of English. The above assertion is valid in this instance, as the majority of students in the focus group were from disadvantaged backgrounds and as such, they were not introduced to some of the aspects that were going to make their transition from the secondary schooling system to University entry better.

While the students in the focus group focused mainly on the challenges, the second language imposed on them, (Fouché, 2009) in their personal experiences suggested that the challenges of being unprepared for the academic literacy demands of tertiary education were also the same for the first language speakers. The findings also revealed that students valued their ability to be bilingual as they mainly talked about knowing and somehow mastering the two languages, which were IsiZulu and English in their context.

The finding is supported by (Al-Khasawneh 2010) who views the mastery of English language as playing an important role in shaping students' thoughts during the writing process, especially second and third language speakers. The role of the modules like academic literacy is to enable students to immerse themselves "in a language learning environment which can be done through programmes such as English for academic purposes, and online interactive language programmes (Pineteh, 2014:19).

The students in this study had no option but to study and write in English as a second language, and those students are likely to "produce texts that contain varying degrees of grammatical and rhetorical errors" as they are denied immediate access to content (Zhu 2004 in Chokwe 2016: 66). They also struggled to cope with institutional literacy expectations (Pineteh, 2014). It should also be noted that teachers have an important role to play here, as they are expected to guide the students, and thus becoming co-authors during the writing process as per the principles of the sociocultural theory.

In summary, the responses to the first question show that while students agreed that the current academic literacy curriculum had played a significant role in the acquisition of academic literacy skills, they, however, pointed out that they still grappled with problems, of being English second language speakers and being expected to use this language as the official language. Students also acknowledged that they came from different backgrounds and different schooling systems and thus, they were at different levels of preparedness. However, the majority of them acknowledged that they were underprepared especially considering what was expected of them at the University. They attributed their under-preparedness to the secondary schooling system which did not prepare them adequately for their academic journey. However, it should be highlighted that the students had positive sentiments about the academic literacy module, and they commended it for amongst other things, improving their understanding of the academic literacy requirements and being a leveller.

5.2.5 Education qualification and experience

A teaching qualification and teaching experience were important for lecturers teaching the academic literacy module.

The findings revealed that lecturers believed that their teaching qualifications and experience made them better equipped in terms of understanding students' needs, delivering the content effectively, thus enabling students to understand the content better. This finding is in line with that of Rosales, (2012*),* who is of the view that a lecturer's expertise and experiences help students to cope with the academic demands placed upon them, especially when it comes to academic writing. Lecturers also highlighted experience as the best teacher, as all of them had been teaching the module for more than three years. Prior to teaching the academic literacy module, the lecturers had been involved in teaching in one way or another.

Lecturers' experiences are of vital importance to students' academic success, as research indicates that some of the lecturers teaching in foundation programmes or academic literacy practitioners are not well experienced. They are not proficient in "applied academic literacy or higher education discourses," which are central or important in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Institutions of Higher Education (Boughey, 2010:3).

One of the lecturers interviewed was the module coordinator, which demanded that he became a role model to other lecturers as they were looking up to him for support and guidance. The other lecturer had librarian experience, which equipped her with necessary experience amongst others, to select relevant material that could help students with literacy demands. While the other lecturer had high school and college of education teaching experience, which she attributes to her success in teaching academic literacy to first-year students.

The teaching qualification and experience in teaching the module were taken as important requirements for successful teaching. Pineteh (2014) suggests that the inadequacy of qualified Communication and Academic literacy lecturers at CPTU reflects the priorities of the university. The main challenge is that an overview of the current study inadequately prepared lecturers tended to ignore the academic writing components embedded in the course outlines, partly because they were unfamiliar with the theoretical conceptions that underpinned student writing in higher education. Similarly, in the study conducted by Merisi (2016), all tutors were considered non-language specialists, as all of them were from Social Justice in the School of Education.

While the above is an important point to consider, however, the fact that the lecturers in the current study had a teaching background needs to be taken into consideration. This is consistent with the findings of Jonker (2016), who confirmed that the teaching strategy that of engaging with technical terminology, which was used in tutorials, was deemed helpful and successful by the students, especially in facilitating learning and understanding, and in simplifying and explaining the content. He further highlighted the importance of benefits, which students enjoyed by being exposed to theories before moving to the application of the learnt theories.

5.2.6 Active involvement of students

Active involvement of students is about students taking an active role in their own learning. The findings revealed that the active involvement of students is at the centre of successful teaching and learning, especially in the academic literacy module. Active involvement entails giving students practical activities to put theory into practice**.** This notion is consistent with theories underpinning this study, that talk to "social interaction of teaching and learning" (Hodges.et.al.,2016). The findings by Jonker (2016:212), advance that the large classes pose a challenge to lecturers, as they are unable to engage with students through class discussions and personal interaction. Lecturers in the current study yearned for dialogic teaching, which is supposed to take place in an academic literacy class for meaning-making purposes. Lecturers believed that the active engagement of students in their own learning would make them better students. However, there are other ways of engaging students which does not involve class discussion, and those include encouraging students to keep a diary, use journals, jotting down new words, learning logs, memorising words and their meanings, and essays (autobiographies) in an endeavour to encourage them to write (Blanton, 1987 in Chokwe, 2016). This is also in line with the sociocognitive theory, which views the student as an active participant in his or her learning.

5.2.7 Academic writing as the core of the module

The results revealed that academic writing is at the core of the topics that are covered by the academic literacy module. There are other topics covered such as reading, critical thinking, communication skills etc., but they are not given the same time and depth as academic writing, which signals its importance to both lecturers and students. All the topics covered are believed to assist the students with knowledge and skills that are necessary to help them in their academic journey.

The findings further revealed that in Institution 2 the focus was not clear, as there were many topics that needed to be covered under the module, which made the module overloaded, especially considering that it was only offered for one semester. Whilst, in Institution 2 the module was focused mainly on academic writing. It is clear that different Institutions conceptualised the module differently. The finding is in line with Merisi (2015), whose study revealed that both the students and the lecturers were of the view that the module was focused on academic writing. The students also highlighted that the module improved their writing skills. Furthermore, the findings by

Merisi (2015), revealed that the way writing was taught, was more concerned with teaching “the structure, vocabulary, and organisation of academic texts.”

Similarly, the research by Sebolai and Huff (2014), revealed that the academic literacy course that was designed in CUT focused mainly on the teaching of reading and writing in academic English. Again, in the study conducted by Olivier (2016), the module offered at North West University is a skills-based module done by all first-year students to acquire different skills including, academic reading, writing, listening, study, seminar, research, and academic computer and information skills. The above shows that in different Institutions, the academic literacy module focused on more or less the same skills, which involve mainly reading and writing.

The findings also revealed that lecturers did not have a choice when it came to topics covered. The topics were part of the academic literacy curriculum, which was not designed by them but they found them there. This finding was not peculiar to the current study. Sebolai (2014), found out the academic literacy curriculum offered to students in CUT prior to its revision, was mainly based on the “intuition of course designers,” and as a result, it was not serving the purpose for which it was meant, which was to increase the reading proficiency of the students. From the fact that the lecturers did not have a choice on the topics, it can be deduced that they taught what might create problems for the students since they did not choose what they thought would serve the needs of the students.

In the study conducted by Merisi (2016), one of the participants highlighted that there is an imbalance between reading and writing, as per course design, which makes them as tutors focus more on writing than reading. Writing is viewed as using the lens of a sociocultural theory, and as such, it is taken as an act of social collaboration (Prior, 2006). Furthermore, in the same study the other lecturer participant was of the view that the way writing was taught within the modules, was the way in which the course designers planned it. The current lecturers or tutors have nothing much to do in terms of changing the content of the module, however, they can prioritise which topic is treated in depth. Lecturers in the current study agreed that they taught what they were supposed to teach as per the current academic literacy curriculum.

5.2.8 Assessment

Students need to be assessed since assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning, to check their progress and to help them to learn effectively.The findings revealed that lecturers were of the view that academic literacy needed to be continuously assessed to provide relevant, appropriate and prompt feedback. This is consistent to the views by Luckett and Sutherland (2000); Haines, (2004), who assert that formative assessment motivates and helps students to improve their learning that takes place during the learning process. Similarly, the study conducted by Fouché in 2009, revealed that assessment is an important component in the teaching of academic literacy. Furthermore, the author suggested that the number of formative assessments and workshops should be increased as that can help in the improvement of the intervention programme.

The advantage of formative assessment is that it helps students by providing them with standard, by which they can measure their improvement throughout the year, it can also take many forms, which can be short tests or essays. It was recommended that the pre-assessment and summative assessment activities, be included in the intervention programme to make it more effective. It is, therefore, important for lecturers to plan their assessment activities and make sure that they are aligned to the objectives of the module, which will help students to perform better.

The results revealed that while students were cognisant of the importance of assessment, however, they were not happy with the manner in which their assessment tasks were marked, as they got different responses from different lecturers when it came to feedback. This is in line with the sociocultural theory that underpins the current study, as feedback is taken as one of the social interactions that students engage in (Hodges.et.al, 2016).

Furthermore, Adams and Mabusela, (2017) suggest that lecturers in the Higher Education Institutions have to modify and align their assessment practices to the modern way of doing things, which include student-cantered assessment, which assist students to learn from assessment experiences, thus becoming independent learners. Wingate and Tribble, (2012) are of the view that assessment entails the production of text, and students need to be taken through instruction to the process of text production for them to be successful in their assessment and what academic literacy is all about. Students need to be confident about the assessment process and procedures so that they can fully participate in it to improve their learning.

When it comes to feedback, the study revealed that feedback is of vital importance as it fast tracks the learning process, especially in academic writing pedagogy (Ferris, 2012). Feedback is also important since students are interested in knowing what needs to be done and whether they are improving or not (Weaver, 2006). Both lecturers and students agreed on the importance of giving feedback to students. For lecturers, the negative feedback that they sometimes receive from students force them to go back to the drawing board, to re-plan and come up with different to improve aspects of the module that the students were not happy about.

Coffin and Donohoue, (2012), are of the view that feedback is a high-stake practice, hence it is at the centre of teaching and learning. It also helps to close the gap between what students know and what they do not know, hence different opportunities must be afforded to students at different levels of performance to improve students' performance (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017). In other Institutions, like CPUT, there were structures like the writing centre, which were established "to support and provide formative feedback on students' draft assignments before final submission (Esambe & Mkonto, 2014:114).

However, in the current study, there was a complaint from students that, sometimes lecturers gave them vague feedback, which did not help them to improve their performance. This finding is in line with that of Lea and Street (1998), which revealed that often tutors gave vague comments to students, and thus students found it challenging to use it. Feedback sessions need to be given to students, as they are an important component in students' learning. It can be either personalised written format or the class feedback, which is done in class. Class discussion feedback plays a vital role, in the sense that it helps students to realise that they are not the only ones dealing with problems, but there are other students as well (Hunt & Baker, 2014).

As discussed above, feedback is very important to students, especially when it comes to their writing. The main reason is that academic writing is considered one of the most critical skills in Institutions of Higher Learning, as most assessment tasks are done through writing (Chokwe, 2011). Students are always eager to know about their strengths and weaknesses, especially when it comes to academic writing. Therefore, providing timely and effective feedback is one of the valuable opportunities that must be used by academic literacy lecturers and tutors to help students improve their academic writing.

5.2.9 Discipline-specific vs generic module

The academic literacy module can either be offered within the discipline or outside as a generic module. The findings show that in the Institutions understudy, the module was offered as a generic module. This is in line with Jonker (2016), who described the compulsory academic literacy done by all first-year students, as the one that focuses on generic skills which include academic reading, writing, listening and seminar. However, the lecturers thought that the discipline-specific module could be the most effective way to offer an academic literacy module, nevertheless, they pointed out the challenges that might emanate from that. The author is of the view that the generic courses can play a vital role in equipping students with basic skills they need to cope better with the academic demands placed on them.

Similarly, Hyland, (2006), is of the view that the other another reason for the generic module has to do with the fact that academic literacy lecturers are not necessarily specialists in subject-specific disciplines, and they cannot necessarily teach discipline-specific academic literacy. However, it should be noted that there is the criticism levelled against generic academic literacy courses, such as the fact that they do not prepare students in their specific discipline.

Hence, it is argued that the teaching of academic writing should be a collaborative effort between discipline specialists and language specialists (Elton, 2010; Jacobs 2005). It should also be an integral part of disciplinary learning for all students and not be a remedial activity (Mitchell & Evison 2006).

It is, however, to be noted that in the two Institutions understudy, the academic literacy module was taught as a stand-alone module, which implies that it was taught outside the disciplines. The study conducted by Merisi (2014), which aimed to explore the different strategies that are used to teach students academic writing within the Academic Literacy for the Undergraduate Students (ALUGS) module. It revealed that while the writing in the ALUGS module followed the academic skills discourse; which privileges literacy as a set of skills, as a result, the ALGUS model did not prepare students “for writing practices in other modules” (Merisi 2014:133). Surprisingly, in the same study students had different views on the impact the module had in their academic writing. The other group of students was of the view that the module had

helped them to improve their writing practices, particularly in structuring their essays e.g. paragraph structuring, writing a good academic introduction and conclusion. Some of the students had a positive impact on their writing practices. While the other group reported that, the module did not help them at all, as they still struggled with even the structuring of their essays, notwithstanding being taught in their tutorials.

In the current study, as well students were of the view that they somehow benefited from the module as they revealed that they had been conscientized on academic writing skills. They also pointed out that they had improved in terms of assignment writing, especially when it came to structuring being cognisant of what should be entailed in the introduction, which included thesis point, background knowledge and plan of development. Students also highlighted that they had improved in paragraph structuring, writing a good academic introduction and conclusion. Therefore, it can be deduced from the findings that not all is bad with the generic academic literacy module, as there are skills that the students learn which can be applied in other modules.

The results are the same as those of Chokwe (2011), wherein some students felt the generic academic literacy module fulfilled what it was intended to do, and that was to teach them the conventions of academic writing as well as the ability to cite sources.

5.2.10 Effective teaching strategies

When lecturers were asked as to what entails effective teaching when it comes to module delivery, they identified different strategies that they used. Findings revealed that one of the strategies used by lecturers was being adequately prepared for their classes and using their experiences in terms of lesson delivery. This is in line with Biggs (2012a) who differentiates between two kinds of teaching strategies i.e. teacher/lecturer-focused and student-focused strategies. The lecturers in the current study believed in the blend of the two approaches. When it comes to teacher/lecturer focused strategy they believe that they should be prepared for the class and be able to deliver the content in a logical and systematic order. While they also believe that students play an important role in their own learning. As a result, lecturers do offer students different activities that will, in turn, help them to achieve the learning outcomes and have a deeper understanding of the concepts they are meant to understand.

As far as the experience is concerned (Jonker, 2016) notes that expertise and experience are used by academic development professionals to support students, address curriculum design issues, and to teach and manage. They do that on their own and sometimes in collaboration with other lecturers.

However, Boughey (2009 44), cautions that in most cases, staff members who teach Foundation programmes of which academic literacy is usually part, “are themselves novices in the subjects they are employed to teach and may are simply not equipped to design curricula or teach in ways that epistemologically empower students.” For her, these programmes should be “taught by some of the best and most experienced staff members in the discipline.” In as much as lecturers in the current study have experience in teaching in general and also in teaching academic literacy specifically, there may need to acquaint themselves more with the theories underpinning academic literacy as a discipline to do justice to the students they are teaching. The lecturers also highlighted that being rewarded for the service they deliver, especially those who have employed on a part time basis, also contributes towards their effective teaching. One lecturer who was employed on the part-time basis was of the view that, the type of work contract he had, might be detrimental to the way he was teaching.

The above is in line with Boughey’s (2009) assertion, that some of the teaching staff who are employed on an *ad hoc* basis have a detrimental effect on the delivery of purposeful curricula. The author further ascertains that the problem above is exacerbated by the fact that the lecturers have “no support or expectation of long-term career security or development”. Universities need to plan for these modules to be offered by full-time staff members to avoid challenges of job insecurity and rather focus on assisting students to the best of their abilities.

5.2.11The value of the module

When it comes to the value that students attached to the module, it could be said that it was a meaningful value, in the sense that students gained different skills from the module.

The results also revealed that the module extended their previous knowledge on various aspects that had to do with the academy. This finding is consistent with that of Thonney, (2011), who postulates that there is a need and benefits associated with

isolating, and actively teaching academic writing as evidenced in many Universities offering academic literacy in order to assist students.

The nursing students who were participants in the study conducted by Olivier (2016), mentioned that they valued the academic literacy course they attended, and one of the participants even mentioned that, for students to do well at the university, they have to attend the academic literacy module. One of the reasons why they valued the course was that it improved their academic writing.

Similarly, academic literacy is seen as one of the interventions provided by universities and generally, it can be concluded that students do benefit from these interventions, mainly because the knowledge and skills they get assist them to meet their university academic literacy demands (Granville & Dison, 2009). The findings by Chokwe (2011), state that the participants in the study recognise the value provided by the course, admitting that it assists them especially when they write essays in other courses.

Regarding the perceived benefits students derived from the academic literacy module (AGLE 121), the findings revealed that the majority of respondents indicated that they had benefitted from the key focus areas of the module, namely, academic writing, reading and study skills (Mhlongo, 2014). It can be deduced that the students benefited from attending the module, especially concerning reading, writing, research skills etc. Students also believed that they were better students because of all the knowledge and skills they had been exposed to in the module.

5.2.12 Academic literacy as a way of life

The findings revealed that students believe that academic literacy should be more than just a module, but it has to create positive thinking about the notion of literacy in every student. This is in line with (Clarence, 2009: 17), assertion that language is a social construct, therefore “it has the capacity to shape, and to reshape, the way in which we conceptualise the world”. In the same vein, one of the three dimensions of academic literacy as espoused by Nozinika and van Dyk (2015), is the social (exchange information) dimension, which talks to academic literacy as pertaining to the exchange of information, which can also be seen as a way of life.

This theme is also in line with sociocultural and sociocognitive theories as two theories underpinning the current study, as they rely on “social interaction of teaching and learning,” and that these social interactions are valued and could take many forms.

These social interactions help students to learn from one another so that they assist one another and build knowledge together to achieve the learning goals (Hodges.et.al,2016). McKenna (2014), views academic literacy as comprising the norms and values of higher education as manifested in discipline-specific practices. Academic literacy is deeper than language ability and it looks at the social context of the students on how they view things based on their social context and background. Furthermore, Pineteh (2014), is of the view that students should be oriented in a way that they are allowed to take ownership of their own learning process.

If students are given opportunities, encouraged and supported to engage in academic discourse, that might change their way of thinking about life in general and especially their academic journey. As a way of life academic literacy, makes students aware of the importance of understanding and using academic language and the benefits thereof. This theme also talks directly to the issue of "epistemological access,' which refers to the underlying knowledge systems. When students have a positive attitude about academic literacy, they are willing not only to know the kind of language valued by their own discipline, but that is also valued in the Higher Education Institutions spaces (Boughey, 2007).

Furthermore, academic literacy does not only have to do with "ways of using language, but also the beliefs, attitudes and values of the group," (Gee, 1990 in McKenna, 2010). Academic literacy is also concerned about students' beliefs, attitudes and values, hence the interviewed students talked about it as a way of life. Students were of the view that the content and way the module was taught, had to enable students to think deeply and change their mentality, especially when thinking about the notion of literacy.

This finding also suggests that it is important for students to take ownership of their own learning process, (Pineteh, 2014). They are the ones who are supposed to lead in terms of making sure that they are adequately prepared for all their academic tasks. In the same vein, Garraway (2009), asserts that students have to change their identities to match those of what they study, which involves new ways of thinking and developing a voice whereby students talk of their own knowledge based on their new learning.

This finding was unexpected and it suggests that the students look at this module broadly not just, in terms of what happens in the classroom space. Therefore, this

finding has important implications for developing an academic literacy module that focuses broadly on issues including values and attitudes that students have about academia.

5.2.13 Analysis of the module content

The module outlines were explored to achieve the two objectives. Firstly, to ascertain what was being taught within the module (content) and secondly, why it was taught that way.

The tables below show the descriptions of the academic literacy module contents in each of the Institutions under study:

SECTION A TOPICS **GRAMMATICAL KNOWLEDGE FOR EDUCATORS** **Outcomes 1 & 5**	**SECTION B TOPICS** **COMMUNICATION THEORIES; LISTENING AND PUBLIC SPEAKING COMMUNICATION SKILLS** **Outcomes 2, 4, 5**	**SECTION C TOPICS** **READING, VIEWING ANDTHINKING SKILLS** **Outcomes 3 & 5**
Basic Phonology: Sounds to words to expressions of thought	Understanding the characteristics of and Engaging in Academic Study	Understand reading comprehension: recognition of words and sentences, comprehension, fluency, and motivation
Morphology: Word formation: prefix, roots, suffix; parts of speech	Purposes and effects of communication	Types of comprehension: Literal, inferential, Critical/evaluation, Creative
Building an academic vocabulary using context clues: synonyms, antonyms, general context, examples	The triptych of communication; Other elements of communication	BICS vs CALP: word levels. Words students should know by high school.
Semantics: logical aspects of meaning, such as sense, reference, implication, and logical form	Components and models of communication processes; communication competence	Understanding the structure of academic texts: determine text types: academic texts and textbooks, journal articles, fiction, non-fiction, poetry

Word Usage	Listening skills: stages and processes; principles and functions; barriers	Review basic reading skills for teaching: locating topics, main ideas, supporting details, conclusions, implied main idea
Sentence constructs and grammatical rules	Speaking Skills: definition and determining the purpose; analysing the audience	Pre-reading strategies: purpose: for information, to learn, to enjoy; text type; activating prior knowledge; inferencing
Construction and classification of sentences (simple, compound and complex)	Selecting the topic, researching and writing the speech; using	Strategies and techniques during reading; monitoring comprehension; inferencing
	organisational techniques for specific purposes	
Construction and classification of sentences according to meaning (declaratives, statements, commands/imperatives, exclamatory and interrogatives/ questions	Preparing the delivery using visuals and graphics for effective speech presentation;	After reading strategies; thinking and reasoning skills: summarising and paraphrasing; Identify patterns of organisation in texts (cause/effect, compare/contrast)
Punctuation, orthographic and capitalisation rules	How to evaluate speeches	Summarising information in various forms by selecting relevant information: diagrams, tables, etc.; use language to investigate and explore information
		Library skills: identify relevant sources; discuss and compare information obtained from various sources
Reflecting on the significance of grammatical knowledge in teaching and learning	Relating public speaking to teaching and learning	Reflecting on the significance of reading, viewing and thinking skills in learning and teaching
EXAMINATIONS		

Table 5.1: Topics of the academic literacy modules in Institution 1:

Week	Topic	Notes
Week 1&2	Orientation and genre Referencing	1. Introduction to types of writing, e.g. descriptive, 2. narrative, argumentative, etc. Introduction to features of common text types; e.g. language features such as nouns, tenses, conjunctions, verbs, etc. 3. Introduction to Hylands‟ article: “Genre analysis: Just Another Fad?” 4. In-text and end-text referencing 5. Paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing 6. Plagiarism - APA referencing style.
Week 3	Planning and structuring an	1. Features of good introductions, e.g. thesis statement, background knowledge, plan of development, etc.
	academic text (introduction)	
Week 4	Planning and structuring an academic text (body and conclusion).	1. Internal structure, e.g. linking devices, paragraphing, 2. External structure, e.g. introduction, argument claims and conclusion
Week 5 & 6	Academic language usage	1. Level of language formality, e.g. formal, informal, intimate, etc. 2. -Nominalization, passive voice, accuracy and clarity, cohesion and coherence, etc.
Week 7	Star Approach to Writing	1. The rhetorical star; subject, audience, purpose, strategy, and designs
Week 8	Reading strategies	2. Types of reading; skimming, scanning, extensive and intensive readings
Week 9	Critical thinking and argumentation	3. Definition of academic argument, vocabulary, construction of basic arguments, etc.

Table 5.2: Topics of the academic literacy modules in Institution 2:

The above tables show the activities that are done in class and tutorial classes. However, it should be noted that while in Institution 1 there are three sections done by three different lectures, in Institution 1 as much as there are many tutors involved in module delivery but their content is not divided into different sections.

In the first topics, the module introduces students to basics, for instance, the topics covered are basic phonology, understanding the characteristics of and engaging in academic study, understand reading comprehension and introduction to types of writing, e.g. descriptive, narrative, argumentative etc. Both Institutions start by laying a foundation for students so that they have a better understanding of knowledge and skills they are supposed to be equipped within their academic journey. It appears that both module outlines have too many topics that need to be covered within one semester. Students are expected to learn all these topics within a limited period, which corresponds with what students alluded to in their focus group discussions that they are only exposed to theory and are not, offered adequate time to put theory into practice.

Lecturers in their interviews also highlighted limited time, and they all recommended that the module needed to be a year module instead of being a semester module, because of the many topics that need to be covered. It can be concluded that the contents of the module outline were based on the academic skills model. Firstly, because of the limited time as alluded above. Secondly, the contents focus on surface features of the language such as types of comprehension, determine text types, internal and external structures etc. It can be deduced that the way in which the module is structured determines the way it is taught. Hence, lecturers in their interviews as well, talked about the importance of coming to class prepared as they are somehow expected to “transmit knowledge” to students.

It should, however, be highlighted that lecturers did not like that method and they preferred a method where they were going to be able to engage students actively during the lecture session. Engaging students actively seems to have its own challenges. The first one was that this module was done in the first semester and by then students were still trying to find their feet in the new environment, and secondly, it was the limited time. Lecturers had to cover the content. Therefore, the methods that were used to teach the module were aligned to the study skills pedagogies because of the curriculum.

While writing skills were somehow privileged in Institution 2, in Institution 1 there was an underlying belief that by exposing students to topics such as sentence constructs and grammatical rules, construction and classification of sentences, students would be able to write effectively in their different disciplines, which is in line with the academic skills model.

Reading strategies were covered broadly in institution 1, while in Institution 2 there was only one topic that dealt with writing. This shows that different Institutions viewed academic literacy differently. The emphasis on reading in Institution 1, could be founded in the belief that when students had learnt different reading strategies they could translate that into their written activities.

The main purpose of ELLL 111 in Institution 1 was to empower the student-educators with linguistic knowledge and communication skills that would enable them to facilitate their own academic learning and to teach effectively in their areas of specialisation. While ALE's main purpose was to teach first-year students the pattern, structures and communicative purpose of the genre of academic argument. It is thus, not surprising that Institution 1 focused more on grammatical features of a language than on reading and writing, while in Institution 2 the purpose was more focused on the academic argument, which could be achieved in written tasks.

The outcomes of the ELLL 111 module were crafted as follows:

4. Apply grammatical knowledge to academic learning and facilitation in areas of specialisations
5. Develop listening and speaking skills for learning and teaching
6. Refine reading, viewing and thinking skills in teaching and learning
7. Apply writing, designing and presenting skills to academic learning and teaching
8. Use linguistic competence and communication skills for academic learning and teaching

The outcomes of the ALE module were as follows:

1. Read and understand a range of academic texts;
2. Analyze and synthesize a range of text sources in order to construct an argument; Identify their own and others' positions;
3. Construct and develop themes;
4. Analyze and debate, orally and in writing, key issues in typical University type texts;
5. Construct an academic argument in writing, according to academic conventions;
6. Understand and reflect critically on the reading and writing processes;
7. Produce coherent and cohesive texts working under time constraints and;
8. Offer evaluations of their own and others' writing through comments on, and editing of, draft materials, oral presentations and small group interactions

When it comes to module outcomes in Institution 1, they are clearly focused on equipping students with different skills, which include writing which is not clearly covered in the topics to be studied. In institution 2 there is a concerted effort in terms of outcomes to teach students both reading and writing, which, however, is not that clear in terms of topics covered.

From the content covered in both modules, it can be argued that the modules view students as the receivers of information, whereby they need to listen during the process of learning, which is not going to help them in their academic journey. Both modules were taught from a generic approach, which had little or no relevance to students' disciplines. It can, therefore, be concluded that there cannot be much that can be done in the approach of the teaching of these modules, until the curriculum is recalculated or re-visited. It should be noted that during the data collection stage, both Institutions under study were recalculating their B.Ed. programmes, including the academic literacy curriculum. It would be interesting to see in the future, if there will be any major differences between the "old" and the "new" academic literacy modules.

5.3 Summary

In this chapter, the results from the empirical research were provided and discussed. The responses from both the students' focus group discussions and lecturers' semi-structured interviews, made it clear that the academic literacy module was necessary for all student teachers, irrespective of their schooling background, and the module was of value to all the students.

Students also viewed the module as a leveller, as it was compulsory for all of them irrespective of their high school background. What stood out from the interviews with students was that, while they appreciated the module, but they also felt that it could be improved. The improvement part mainly entails focusing more on research skills, such as referencing as they felt that, most of the students struggled with it. The reason was that some students did not pursue their postgraduate studies, fearing that they did not have what it takes in terms of academic writing.

The other point that stood out from both lecturers and students was that high schools did not prepare students for University study, hence it is the responsibility of the Universities to offer different intervention programmes to help students to meet their

academic literacy demands. From the lecturers' responses, it was clear that they had no say when it came to the topics they chose as the topics were already part of the curriculum which was not designed by them. They somehow felt constrained to teach what thought would benefit the students more. When it comes to the teaching of the module, it became clear that the way the module was structured, located lecturers to teach it in a manner that somehow, put students on the receiving end. Document analysis also revealed that the content of the modules was too much, as the module was only a semester module.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Introduction

This study sought to explore how higher education institutions conceptualize and teach academic literacy at the three regional universities in KwaZulu Natal. It ended up being two Universities, because of the reasons explained in Chapter 3. It also looked at how the academic literacy curriculum provides for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers, and the role it plays in students' learning. It also aims at shedding some light on tertiary education understanding of academic literacy teaching practices, the choice of topics as part of the content, and how they view different approaches used in offering Academic literacy. Lastly, it was about how students view the academic literacy module in terms of its benefits to them. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to make conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the current study, which were presented and discussed in Chapter 5. This section also briefly discusses the questions that guided this study.

6.2. Discussion of findings

6.2.1 Research question 1: To what extent does the academic literacy curriculum provide for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in students' learning?

6.2.1.1 The academic literacy module improves student teachers' understanding of academic writing.

The offering of an academic literacy module to first-year students improves their understanding of the requirements of academic writing. This statement is confirmed, by the findings of the current study by both students and lecturers. These findings show that the majority of students see this module as a great resource in bridging the gap between secondary school and University, especially when it comes to reading and writing.

The lecturers were also of the view that all students need to register and attend the module, as they somehow come underprepared for the writing and reading that is expected of them.

The module is also considered as a leveller, as there are students who come from better equipped schools in terms of resources i.e. human and physical resources and those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

This conclusion is consistent with findings by Carstens (2011), who is of the view that academic literacy modules, even if they are generic, they do contribute to better understanding of the academic literacy requirements needed from the students. Based on this finding the study recommends that the University alone cannot be responsible for the improvement of academic literacy for students. The secondary schooling system should also take an initiative in trying to equip students with necessary skills, that will help them to cope better with the demands of the academic journey.

The Universities also need to streamline their generic academic literacy modules at least to focus on two or three topics in depth. That means, there will be more time for students to put into practice the learnt knowledge and skills. This can be looked at from a perspective that says that the generic modules are part of the intervention programme, which is better than having no intervention at all. To support this perspective further, Chapter 2, outlined different types of interventions, which are used both locally and internationally, and their effect on student learning. Therefore, one may conclude that the academic literacy module has the potential to better equip first-year students with the knowledge and skills they need to further raise their academic literacy level, thus giving them a chance to succeed in their studies.

6.2.3 Research question 2: How do lecturers choose topics that are incorporated in the academic literacy curriculum and the rationale thereof?

6.2.3.1 Lecturers have no control in the choice of the topics that form part of the academic literacy curriculum

Academic literacy curriculum is a standardized curriculum in most Institutions of Higher Learning, which has limited flexibility. Lecturers have no power to change the content that is in the approved curriculum. There is only a certain percentage of the content, which lecturers can interfere with. Lecturers follow the prescribed curriculum, with limited input when it comes to the content to be covered. For instance, if the lecturer recognizes that writing needs more time than reading, he might not have much to say about it. As a result, all three lecturers in the current study mentioned the inflexibility of the curriculum as a challenge. However, in the end, all the lecturers agreed that the curriculum should focus more on writing than reading for students to succeed academically.

The students also added their voice when it comes to the curriculum, and they suggested topics that could make a difference in their lives, such as the early introduction of the research skills to help them to be better academic writers. The study recommends that lecturers must try to use the accepted percentage somehow to introduce the topics that are of help to students without altering the whole curriculum. The lecturers also need to consider that students come from diverse backgrounds and they arrive at the University prepared in different ways. That also needs to be taken into consideration in exposing students to certain topics within the academic literacy curriculum. Students' voices should also be considered, in terms of what they think would be more beneficial to them, and the reasons for that. This is in line with (Fouché: 2005), who is of the view that the academic literacy curriculum is not sufficiently flexible to even accommodate co-teaching between academic literacy lecturers and discipline lecturers. In addition, finding classes, which are flexible enough to allow time for a language specialist to co-teach is by itself a difficult task.

6.2.4 Research question 3: How do lecturers conceptualize and teach academic literacy to student teachers?

6.2.4.1 Lecturers academic background and teaching experience helps them to conceptualise and teach academic literacy to students' better

Lecturers' academic background helps them to conceptualise and teach academic literacy better.

Based on the findings in the current study, the lecturers with teaching qualifications and teaching background, feel that they are better equipped to understand their own academic literacy teaching practices and thus, they feel better equipped to teach the academic literacy module. Their teaching experience also helps them in conceptualising academic literacy teaching practices, which in turn helps them to understand students' academic needs and thus, finding better ways in teaching the content in a manner that would be helpful to students.

The lecturers understand that they need to prepare students for life after University, and thus make it their responsibility to understand students' needs before delivering the necessary content. Based on the findings, the study recommends that although lecturers have an education background which is helpful in terms of pedagogy, they might need to be workshopped on the areas that are of critical importance in the academic literacy field. This is because this field of academic literacy is a growing field with new approaches that are suggested to improve the academic skills and knowledge of the students.

The study recommends that those lecturers without pedagogical skills should be workshopped on the skills that have been recommended through the research done in the academic literacy field. The above is consistent with the notion by Coffin and Hewings (2003), that lecturers have an important role to play, as students tend to have an improvement in their writing if lecturers help them. In summary, research affirms; that lecturers' background and their experience play a critical role in helping them understand their own academic literacy teaching practices, and in turn execute their function which is teaching l more effectively and skilfully.

6.2.5 Research question 4: What are the opinions of lecturers regarding different approaches used in offering Academic literacy?

6.2.5.1 Generic academic literacy module does equip students with necessary academic literacy information

Generic academic literacy modules equip students with necessary academic literacy information. This conclusion is based on both the semi-structured interviews with the lecturers and focus group interviews with the students. To support this conclusion further, the findings by Merisi (2014:144) revealed, "that many students have improved on their writing practices, particularly in structuring their essays". Generic academic modules have a positive influence on students' academic literacy practices.

To further support this perspective, Chapter 2, outlined the arguments put forward by different authors indicating that generic academic literacy interventions have a place and a role to play in preparing students to be better writers and readers thus, being able to have a chance to survive academically. However, lecturers interviewed also bought to the idea that discipline-specific interventions would yield better results than the generic one. Nevertheless, they were not convinced that discipline lecturers are up to the task when it comes to being ready and prepared to teach academic literacy skills in their discipline or to collaborate with academic literacy lecturers.

The study recommends that a more collaborative approach is needed in teaching the module for the benefit of students. The academic literacy lecturers and the discipline-specific lecturers need to find a way to work together.

Working together does not only entail team teaching, but it also involves planning together and having conversations about challenges that are faced by students in different disciplines. Conversations and planning together will go a long way in trying to equip the student teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to survive in their academic journey. This is in line with (Carstens, 2009) who asserts, that collaborations are important and can take different methods, such as collaboration with content lecturers in a team-teaching or adjunct teaching context". Other alternatives can be used when taking the collaborative route and that needs to be considered for the benefit of the students.

6.2.6 Research question 5: How do student teachers view the academic literacy module in terms of its benefits to them?

6.2.6.1Students value the module

The students value the intervention that comes with this module. This conclusion is supported by the findings of the present study where all the interviewed students agreed that the module had helped them, especially in academic writing. This conclusion is consistent with Carsterns (2009), that writing is learnt and it is not acquired. For it to be used as a foundation for teaching and learning, it has to be identified, analysed and described.

To support this perspective further, Butler (2007:4) noted, that the central issue in academic writing is learners' needs. The students also highlighted that the research skills were important for them, especially skills such as citation and referencing which most of them came across for the first time in the University. However, another student participant's response disputed what the others said about the module. This student

revealed that there were other students, who were not going to continue with their post-graduate studies fearing that they were not well prepared, especially in terms of academic writing. This finding is in line with that of Gee (2001), whose idea is that academic writing can be better acquired through the apprenticeship process than through overt instruction.

The recommendation is that students should be exposed to this module even in the generic form, as they benefit a lot from it. In as much as this kind of offering is not favoured in academic literacy circles, but from the students' perspective, it is beneficial. That is not surprising, considering the low level of preparedness that students exhibit in their initial writing activities at the University. In essence, whatever is taught in the academic literacy module has to benefit the needs of the students but moving forward, there is a need to consider discipline-specific interventions, where students are exposed to their disciplinary discourses.

6.3. A proposed model to improve academic literacy in Higher Education

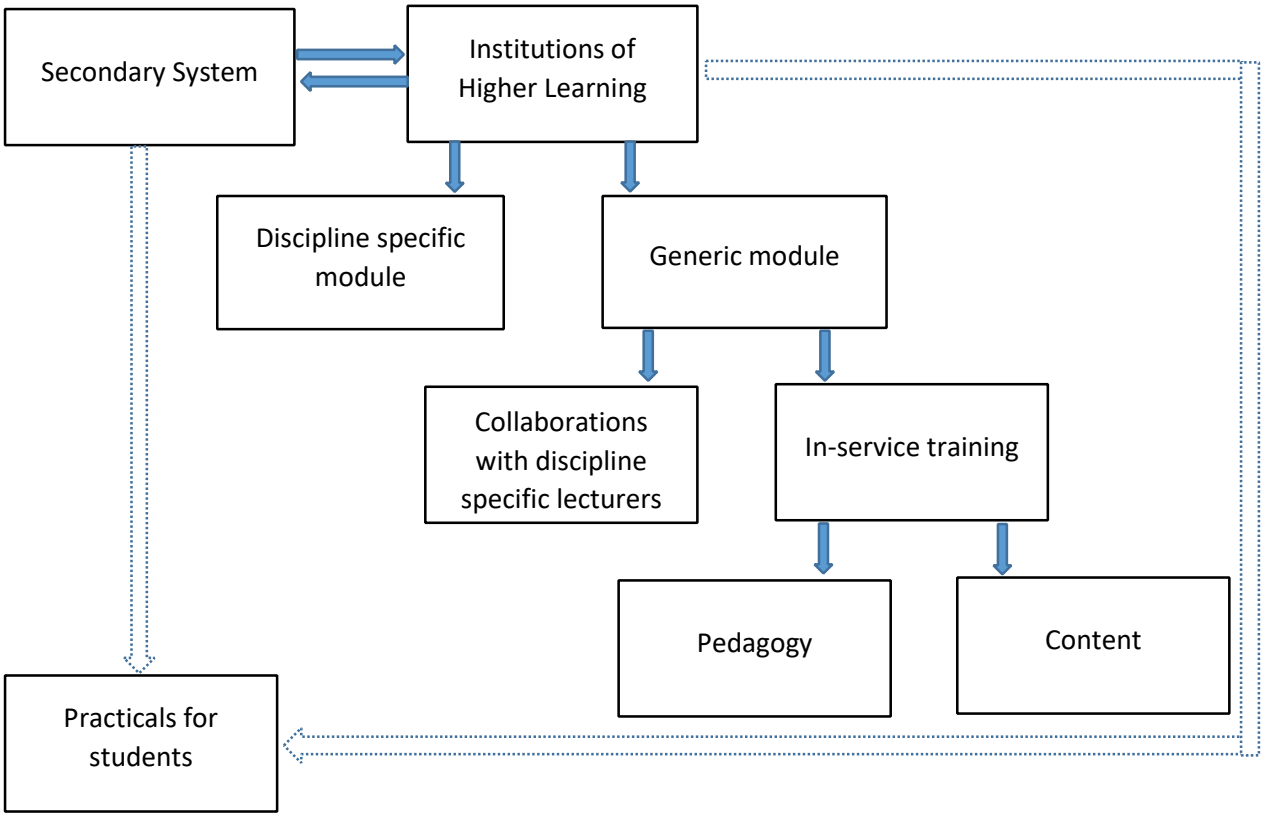

Figure 6.1: A proposed model to improve academic literacy in Higher Education

The proposed model gives information about the elements that need to be there to improve the offering of academic literacy in the Institutions of Higher Learning.

The point of departure in the proposed framework is the envisaged relationship between the secondary schooling system and Institutions of Higher Learning. School teachers and academics from different Institutions should work together in coming up with the gaps, that are there between the secondary school syllabus and the University curriculum. After the gaps have been identified, there should be content that will be part of the discipline-specific module, and the other one for the generic module in academic literacy.

The Universities, depending on their resources, can offer the discipline-specific academic literacy which tends to be more resource-intensive as each discipline needs its own staff. On the other hand, the generic academic literacy module is affordable as all students attend one class, irrespective of their disciplines. The latter module should be given the status it deserves as research reveals that it has a place and an impact on the academic journey of future teachers.

Since most of the lecturers that currently teach academic literacy are not specialists in the subject, there need to be collaborations between the discipline-specific lecturers and the academic literacy lecturers. The collaborations will help in terms of content selection, lesson planning, team teaching and assessment. The steps involved in the collaboration process will benefit the students more, as they will be getting the content that is relevant to their disciplines, thus making their academic journey a success. Collaborations will also include discussions of challenges that students face in different disciplines

The in-service training for lecturers who teach the generic module that focuses on pedagogical skills for those who have no education qualification background and on content for those who have no experience or training on teaching the module should be conducted. The pedagogical skills are important because even if the lecturers have the content, but if they do not have the skills to deliver the content, that will not help the students. The selection of the relevant content for the students cannot be overemphasised, as that will make the students understand better the requirements of academic writing at the university level.

The other point is that the academic literacy curriculum needs to be flexible so that lecturers can make necessary changes that support the students. After everything has been done, the practicals play a major role in the academic literacy module. Students

need to write within their disciplines to improve their academic writing skills. Depending on their discipline, students need also to be equipped with the presentation, reading and mathematical skills.

6.4 Implications of the study and future research

The findings from the study successfully responded to the study's research questions, and thereby helped in achieving the objectives of the study, which are stated in the introduction of this chapter. The findings have important implications for the conceptualisation and teaching of the module, primarily, to improve the curriculum by including topics that will help learners to be academic literate. The material that is used in class, the effective methods that need to be used in class and the workshops for all the lecturers as reading and writing is every lecturer's business.

The topics or content that is offered in the module needs to be revisited and be aligned to the Academic literacies framework, which looks at reading and writing as a social practice and advances the idea of acknowledging that learners bring with them a lot of capital from their families and the society. The module must also cater for the fact that writing is context-specific, in the sense that what is viewed as important in one discipline is not taken as such in another discipline. There should be a movement towards the collaborative model, which will involve working together in whatever form which could be team teaching or adjunct teaching between the academic literacy lecturers and discipline lecturers.

The findings of this study also point to the fact that the module in both Institutions was taught as a generic module, which is in line with the skills approach, which is always blamed for, amongst other things, teaching students to surface features of the text that promotes memorization and teaching, especially reading outside students' disciplines. Both lecturers and students in this study supported the collaborative approach between discipline lecturers and academic literacy lecturers. It is recommended that these academic literacy modules in the two Institutions understudy, be restructured to cater for collaboration.

Through the findings, it is also suggested that lecturers should be well prepared when going to class and be in a position to motivate the students to be more involved as a result of the interactive content and methods that they use in class. Lecturers need to be assisted to come up with innovative strategies to involve learners more so that students are not left behind in the teaching and learning process. It is recommended

that in the future the research needs to focus on specific strategies that have a positive impact on the teaching of the module.

The golden thread running through the study is a need for a collaborative approach, which will be transformational, as it will transform the life and experiences of both lecturers and students. However, the question is how this transformation going to be implemented, how it will look like and who will be involved. Those are some of the questions that need to be answered by future research.

6.5 Limitations of the study

The main limitation of the current study is that the consequences of the proposed revised collaborative curriculum remain unknown. There should be ongoing research on how best to recalculate the collaborative academic literacy that will be suitable for all research.

The other difficulty concerning these interventions is to get support from other lecturers. There is a need to talk about the importance of teaching writing in disciplines or a collaborative manner so that students can benefit more.

There is a lot that needs to be done in order to make sure that interventions like academic literacy modules, whether generic or discipline-specific can be improved.

6.6 Summary

The academic literacy modules generic interventions were examined in this study with an attempt to understand the extent to which academic literacy curriculum provides for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers, and the role it plays in students' learning. Thus, the researcher was enlightened about the vital role that is played by the academic literacy module in the academic life of first-year student teachers.

Understanding the students' interpretations concerns and benefits about the module have benefitted the researcher, especially as she is also a lecturer of the module under study. The recommendations made in this study are based on generic academic literacy intervention. However, it is hoped that the recommendations will be of value to other interventions offered at the first-year level.

From the findings above it can be deduced that the module has assisted students to lay the foundation in terms of academic literacy requirements needed to survive the

academic journey, and to encourage them to become lifelong learners as they continuously improve their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: Ethical Clearance

UNISA university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2017/06/14

Ref#: **2017/06/14/32424698/24/MC**
Name: Ms NP Khumalo
Student#: 32424698

Dear Ms NP Khumalo,

Decision: Ethics Approval from 2017/06/14 to 2022/06/14

Researcher:

Name: Ms NP Khumalo
Email: khumalonp@unizulu.ac.za
Telephone#: 073 611 1973

Supervisor:
Name: Prof MC Maphalala
Email: MaphalalaM@unizulu.ac.za
Telephone#: 083 430 1088

Title of research:

Conceptualization and Teaching of Academic Literacy in Higher Education Institutions: A Case of Student Teachers in three KwaZulu Natal Universities

Qualification: D Ed in Curriculum Studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2017/06/14 to 2022/06/14.

The low risk application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2017/06/14 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date 2022/06/14. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:
The reference number **2017/06/14/32424698/24/MC** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

Dr M Claassens

CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC

Prof V McKay

EXECUTIVE DEAN

mcdtc@netactive.co.za

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APPENDIX B1: PERMISSION LLETTER TO UKZN

28 Monterey Flat

6 launder Lane

Meerensee

3901

24 July 2017

The Manager Research Office University of Kwa Zulu Natal

Private Bag X03

Ashwood

3605

Request for permission to conduct research at University of Kwa Zulu Natal

Title of the research: **Conceptualization and teaching of Academic Literacy in Higher Education Institutions: A Case of Student Teachers in South African Universities**

Dear Registrar

I, Nontobeko P Khumalo am undertaking a research study under supervision of Professor Maphalala, a Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies towards a Doctor of Education degree at the University of South Africa. I am requesting the permission to conduct research on lecturers and students from the Faculty of Education in your Institution to participate in a study entitled: **Conceptualization and teaching of Academic Literacy in Higher Education Institutions: A Case of Student Teachers in South African Universities.**

The aim of the study is to amongst other things examine the extent to which academic literacy curriculum provide for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in student's learning.

Your institution has been selected because, it offers qualification to teachers, who take academic literacy as one of the compulsory first year modules.

The study will entail interviewing two lecturers who teach academic literacy. Secondly interview eight student teachers who are taking academic literacy as one of their modules, Finally, I shall do document analysis looking at the academic literacy documents such as the course outline, study guides, assessment guides as well as any other relevant documents relating to academic literacy.

The benefits of this study are that it will provide insights into those aspects of academic literacy in which students require support on and will extend existing knowledge in the

offering of academic literacy module in the three Institutions of Higher Learning in the KZN province.

There are no potential risks involved as the study deals mainly with adult academics and student teachers and no sensitive questions will be asked.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail sharing the results of the research with your Institution through the research office.

For any questions and clarity concerning this study, do not hesitate to contact the researcher or the supervisor on the contacts below:

Supervisor: Prof M C Maphalala, Contact details: 083 430 1088

Researcher: Ms NP Khumalo. Contact details: 073 6111 973 Yours

sincerely

NP Khumalo

DED candidate

APPENDIX B2: GATE KEEPERS' PERMISSION FROM UKZN

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

27 July 2017

Ms Nontobeko Prudence Khumalo (SN 32424698)
School of Education
University of South Africa
Email: khumalonp@unizulu.ac.za MaphalalaM@unizulu.ac.za

Dear Ms Khumalo

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate degree, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"Conceptualization and teaching of Academic Literacy in Higher Education Institutions: A Case of Student Teachers in South African Universities."

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by handing out questionnaires, and/or conducting interviews with lecturers teaching academic literacy as well as students registered for the module for the first time on the Edgewood campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the Protection of Public Information Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

MR SS MOKOENA
REGISTRAR

APPENDIX C1: LETTER REQUESTING LECTURERS TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW

LETTER REQUESTING LECTURERS TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW

Dear _____

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I, Nontobeko P Khumalo am conducting as part of my research as a doctoral student entitled :" **Conceptualization and teaching of Academic Literacy in Higher Education Institutions: A Case Of Student Teachers in South African Universities"** at the University of South Africa. Permission for the study has been given by your **research office** and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise related to my research topic.

I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you should agree to take part. The importance of empowering students' especially first year students with academic literacy skills and the role it has in helping them succeed in Tertiary Institutions (education) is substantial and well documented. In this interview I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. This information can be used to improve Academic literacy curriculum in Tertiary Institutions.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 60 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 5 years in my locked office.

The benefits of this study are amongst others improved content and delivery of academic literacy module and there are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research. If you would like to be informed of the final research findings or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact Ms NP Khumalo on 073 6111 973 or email khumalonp@unizulu.ac.za

I look forward to speaking to you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the consent form which follows on the next page. .

Yours sincerely

NP Khumalo	_____	----------
Researcher's name	Researcher's signature:	Date:

APPENDIX C2: LECTURER'S CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname : _____

_____

_____

Participant Signature Date

Researcher's Name & Surname: Nontobeko Prudence Khumalo

_____ 05 May 2017

Researcher's signature Date ***Appendix***

C3 Interview Guide

Interview guide for lecturers

This research is being conducted by Nontobeko Prudence Khumalo, a doctoral student at the University of South Africa [UNISA]. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. Your answers will be treated confidentially. I am in the process of writing my doctoral thesis and am collecting data for that purpose. For my doctoral thesis I am very interested in finding out how **Academic Literacy is Conceptualized and taught in Higher Education Institutions especially the three found in KZN.** The purpose of this interview is to amongst other things examine the extent to which academic literacy curriculum provide for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in student's learning.

The interview will be tape-recorded (**EXPLAIN WHY AND ESTABLISH VERBAL CONSENT FROM PARTICIPANTS**) and will take the maximum of ONE hour. Please feel free to express your opinions openly and honestly. The researcher will treat all information collected from this discussion confidentially. Under no circumstances will individual responses will be identified by name in formal or informal meetings or documents. I would like to acknowledge participants by name in a list in the Acknowledgements section of the report, but sources of individual responses will not be identified in discussing results, and efforts will be made to ensure that readers cannot identify these responses.

Month/ Date /Year ----------

SECTION A: PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES

1. Please tell me about your career journey and how come are you teaching academic literacy currently?
2. How has your personal experience as an academic influenced your teaching?

SECTION B: Academic Literacy Curriculum

1. What is the focus of the academic literacy module that you are teaching?
2. To what extent do you think the current academic literacy module meet the academic literacy needs for first year students?
3. To what extent do you think the current academic literacy module lack in developing the academic literacy skills for students?
4. In what way do you think that offering academic literacy to students for 1 year or six months is sufficient for the development of their academic literacy abilities?

5. In your experience of teaching first year students, what do you believe are the most challenging aspects of their academic work?
6. Do you believe in discipline-specific language and how do you think that needs to be catered for in the academic literacy module?
7. Who do you think should be responsible for teaching students the academic literacy abilities they need for successful study? (Subject lecturers or academic literacy specialists). Why do you think so?
8. What is the process that is followed in choosing different topics that are part of the academic literacy curriculum in your Institution?
9. What Academic Literacy abilities do you believe that students need to master in order to be successful with their studies? Why do you think so?

SECTION C: DELIVERY OF ACADEMIC LITERACY CURRICULUM

1. What do you think are the best methods of teaching academic literacy?
2. What are some of the most effective teaching strategies that yielded more successes in your teaching?
3. What do you think constitutes effective teaching and learning of academic writing?
4. To what extent do you promote student engagement in your teaching of academic literacy?
5. What are some of the greatest challenges that you face as a lecturer who is teaching academic literacy to first-year students?
6. What are some of the successes (in teaching academic literacy) that you can share?
7. What are some of the challenges?
8. Do you think that it is important for students to be given feedback? Why?

SECTION D: **RECOMMENDATIONS**

We have discussed quite a number of issues today relating Academic Literacy Curriculum in your Institution.

1. In your opinion, what do you think must be done in this institution in order to enhance the effective and efficient delivery of academic literacy module?

CLOSURE

Thank you very much once again for sharing your views with me today. I really appreciate your views, comments and suggestions.

APPENDIX C4: LECTURER'S CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname : _____

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

Researcher's Name & Surname: Nontobeko Prudence Khumalo

_____ 05 May 2017

Researcher's signature Date

APPENDIX: D1 LETTER REQUESTING STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW

Title: **Conceptualization and teaching of Academic Literacy in Higher Education Institutions: A Case of Student Teachers in South African Universities**

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is Nontobeko Prudence Khumalo I am doing research under the supervision of Prof MC Maphalala a Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies towards a Doctor of Education degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Conceptualization and teaching of Academic Literacy in Higher Education Institutions: A Case of Student Teachers in South African Universities**

The aim of the study is to amongst other things to examine the extent to which academic literacy curriculum provide for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in student's learning.

I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because you are a student teacher and you are doing or have done Academic literacy as one of your modules. I obtained your contact details from your academic literacy lecturer. The study involves of 15 participants.

I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you should agree to take part. The study will explore the importance of empowering student teachers especially those doing their first year students with academic literacy skills and the role it has in helping them succeed in Tertiary Institutions (education) is substantial and well documented. In this interview I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. This information can be used to improve Academic literacy curriculum in Tertiary Institutions.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately *60* minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 5 years in my safe. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study. Thank you.

NP Khumalo

_____

Researcher's signature

APPENDIX D2: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION CONSENT FORM (Return slip)

I_____ grant consent that the information I share during the focus group may be used by NP Khumalo for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions (focus group interview) will be digitally recorded and grant consent/assent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's Name (Please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Researcher's Name: (Please print): _____

Researcher's Signature: Nontobeko Prudence Khumalo 

Date: ----------

APPENDIX D3: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

This research is being conducted by Nontobeko Prudence Khumalo, a doctoral student at the University of South Africa [UNISA]. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. Your answers will be treated confidentially. I am in the process of writing my doctoral thesis and am collecting data for that purpose. For my doctoral thesis I am very interested in **Conceptualization and teaching of Academic Literacy in Higher Education Institutions: A Case of student teachers in South African Universities.** The purpose of this interview is to examine the extent to which academic literacy curriculum provide for the acquisition of academic literacy skills across a diverse range of student teachers and the role it plays in student's learning.

The interview will be tape-recorded (**EXPLAIN WHY AND ESTABLISH VERBAL CONSENT FROM PARTICIPANTS**) and will take the maximum of ONE hour. Please feel free to express your opinions openly and honestly. The researcher will treat all information collected from this discussion confidentially. Under no circumstances will individual responses be identified by name in formal or informal meetings or documents. I would like to acknowledge participants by name in a list in the Acknowledgements section of the report, but sources of individual responses will not be identified when discussing the results and efforts will be made to ensure that readers cannot identify these responses.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1.1 Do you believe that the module has helped you to develop your academic literacy abilities? Support your answer.

1.2 Which aspect(s) of the module did you find most helpful in your studies?

1.3 Do you believe that your attendance of the academic literacy module helped you to do better in your other subjects? Please substantiate your answer.

1.4 What are the most important abilities (skills) that you gained in the academic literacy module?

1.5 Have you applied any of the skills learned in the modules in your other subjects?

1.6 What did you enjoy least about the academic literacy module?

1.7 What topics would you like included in the academic literacy workshop in the future?

1.8 If you were to recommend any changes to the module, what would they be?

1.9. Do you think the amount of time allocated to the academic literacy module is sufficient to develop your academic literacy skills? Why do you say so?

1.10. Are there any additional comments about academic literacy that you would like to make?

Thank you

APPENDIX E: ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL DOCUMENTS CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the study: Conceptualization and teaching of Academic Literacy in Higher Education Institutions: A Case of Student Teachers in South African Universities

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and add any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my documents to be analysed and the researcher has the permission to note down anything that might be relevant to this study.

I am also aware that excerpts from the documents may be included in publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to have documents to be analysed in this study.

Participant's Name (Staff):----------

Participant's Signature ---------- Date:----------

Researcher Name: NP Khumalo

Researcher's Signature: Date: ----------

APPENDIX F: DOCUMENTS ANALYSIS GUIDE

DOCUMENTS ANALYSIS GUIDE

Academic Literacy Programme/ Syllabus

1. What are the topics covered in the programme?
2. What is the nature of knowledge that emphasized by the module
3. What is the content?

Approaches

1. What are the approaches used in delivering the content?
2. How are lesson presented?

Assessment

1. What is the nature of assessment done?

Lecturer's reports:

1. Any kind of support / feedback that helps student teachers?

Any other relevant information that may be relevant