

**SECTION 1: OVERVIEW
OF THE RESEARCH**

1.1 OVERVIEW

This overview provides an outline of the research, which explored the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship in nursing education. The researcher follows the article format which consists of section 1: overview of the research; section 2: article; and section 3: conclusions, limitations and recommendations of this study.

This outline provides a background, a research problem and research questions, the research aim and objectives, the theoretical perspectives, the research methodology, measures to ensure trustworthiness, ethical considerations, as well as a literature review. The literature review forms the basis for exploring the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship by presenting the most relevant evidence available from previous studies.

1.2 BACKGROUND

In the South African context little research has been conducted in private nursing education institutions with regard to the educator-student relationship, specifically the theoretical component in teaching/learning (Freeman *et al.*, 2007:203). An effective educator-student relationship is a key factor to ensure a positive learning climate where learning can take place (Freeman *et al.*, 2007:203). The bottom line is that the classroom is where nursing education begins and therefore the focus should remain on an effective educator-student relationship in the classroom environment (Mkhwanazi, 2007:110). A positive and supportive classroom environment improves students' social

and emotional well-being and ensures their motivation to continue trying, it builds confidence in students' abilities and also strengthens their ability to effectively deal with daily stress (Sosa, 2011:123). Johnson (2008:388) emphasizes the importance of a positive and supportive relationship between educators and students which will contribute to strengthening students' resilience. Therefore it is important to identify the basic elements that form the foundation for an effective educator-student relationship in nursing education.

Research studies available on this topic either explored the educator-student relationship between the clinical facilitator and nursing students in the clinical environment (Wade & Kasper, 2006:162) or explored the schooling years of children (Beutel, 2009:3; Hughes, 2012:319) and undergraduate or graduate students at universities (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002:135; Barta, 2010:5, Chang & Davis, 2009:95; Petrus *et al.*, 2012:1; Redmond & Sorrell, 1996:21; Rennie & Glass, 2001:23). Del Prato *et al.* (2011:109) in turn explored the clinical environment of nursing students together with the faculty-student relationship.

Anderson and Carta-Falsa (2002:134) identify three themes relevant to the educator-student relationship namely, (1) the teaching/learning environment, (2) exchange of information and (3) mentor/peer association. In the teaching/learning environment students and instructors report a desire for an open, supportive, comfortable, respectful, safe or non-threatening and enjoyable interpersonal climate (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002:136). With the exchange of information, theme two, students report a desire to work together, to share, and to learn and interact with each other (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002:137). The last theme, mentor/peer association, highlights that students want to develop networks, friendships and they want to work with each other. On the

other hand, the instructors involved in the study were more focused on principles of effective teaching and did not express a strong need to collaborate with students (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002:137).

Beutel (2009:5) explored educators' understanding of their relationships with students and identified 5 categories namely: (1) providing information, (2) instructing, (3) facilitating, (4) guided participation and (5) mentoring. Category 1: providing information is based on delivering knowledge to students that they can in turn reproduce in examinations (Beutel, 2009:5). The second category, instructing, refers to educators instructing students in the acquisition and application of skills (Beutel, 2009:5). Facilitating (category 3) denotes to educators perceiving their interaction with students as something that facilitates students' learning (Beutel, 2009:6). In category 4: guided participation, educators talk about students taking responsibility for their own learning (Beutel, 2009:6). The last category, mentoring, focuses on the quality and duration of the partnership between educator and student (Beutel, 2009:6).

Strong similarities exist between the works of these different authors mentioned above. All of them discuss the importance of how information is exchanged between the educator and student, or how information is provided by the educator (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002:137; Bernard, 1995:2; Beutel, 2009:5; Hurlington, 2010:2; Del Prato *et al.*, 2011:109). Furthermore, two of these authors also mention that the educator needs to be a mentor for the students to improve the relationship between them (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002:138; Beutel, 2009:6). The only difference that exists between these authors is that Anderson and Carta-Falsa (2002:137) explored the teaching/learning environment in the classroom setting and Del Prato *et al.* (2011:109) explored the clinical practice as the learning/teaching environment.

Literature on the educator-student relationship also stresses resilience as an important factor that promotes positive and supportive relationships between educators and students (Johnson, 2008:388). From a perspective of resilience in the educator-student relationship, research demonstrates that protective social environments, which provide refuge in high-risk situations, are important in the development of resilience (Hurlington, 2010:2). The protective factors that are crucial in the construction of environments that foster the development of resilience are caring relationships, positive and high expectations, and opportunities to contribute and participate (Bernard, 1995:2; Hanson *et al.*, 2004:4; Hurlington, 2010:2-3; Vitto, 2003:10-14).

Research on resilience emphasises the crucial role of educators in building an environment that protects students against adversity, and fosters the psychological well-being and healthy development they need in order to learn (Bunn, 2000:4). Educators who form caring relationships with students and who creates positive learning environments have a strong influence on students and their outcomes (Downey, 2008:57; Northup, 2011:2; Sosa, 2011:119). Koen and Du Plessis (2011) developed a research programme, RISE, which focuses on strengthening the resilience of health caregivers and risk groups. According to Koen and Du Plessis (2011), the resilience of health caregivers need to be strengthened in order to prevent threats to their well-being that may eventually lead to lower quality health care. Therefore, strengthening nursing students' resilience from the beginning of their nursing career through a positive and supportive educator-student relationship can improve their well-being, as well as improve the quality of education and eventually the patient care delivered.

In addition Petrus *et al.* (2012:1) identify three dimensions in the educator-student relationship namely: (1) the caring environment, (2) the psychological state and beliefs

and (3) psycho-social interactions. It was found that the caring environment, dimension one, set the foundation for the other two dimensions to develop. In several other studies the authors also recognise that caring is an important element in the educator-student relationship (Del Prato *et al.*, 2011:113; Petrus *et al.*, 2012:2; Redmond & Sorrell, 1996:22; Schofield, 2001:5; Wade & Kasper, 2006:163). All these authors emphasise that caring is the most important element that needs to be present for an effective educator-student relationship to exist.

From a perspective of resilience, effective educators create a sense of caring that is reciprocated between educator and student and also between student and student (Caballero, 2011:21-22). McLaughlin and Talbert (1993:7), mention that educators need to create an environment that support students' resilience by expressing high expectations and trust, promoting caring relationships among colleagues and providing on-going opportunities for small groups to reflect and make decisions together. Moreover Black (1999:42) states that educators need to listen, assess individuals' strengths, create ways for students to express themselves and demonstrate their understanding, cultivate caring students and ensure that students engage and take more risks in classroom activities.

Additionally, Halarie and Cross (2012:2) as well as Schofield (2001:36) found that certain educator qualities are needed for an effective educator-student relationship. Qualities, similar to the ones mentioned above, that these two authors mention include warmth, genuineness and empathetic understanding. Halarie and Cross (2012:2) identify extra qualities needed, namely trust and acceptance, while Schofield (2001:36) states that openness, taking time, touching and listening are also important. Wade and Kasper (2006:163) note that educators should promote trust, sharing and respect for an

effective relationship with students. The statements by various authors above make it clear that the educator must possess certain qualities in order to ensure that an effective educator-student relationship exists. Furthermore, in order to strengthen resilience, educators need to listen to their students, engage them as fellow human beings, recognise and understand their perspectives and world views, and attend to their relational needs (Johnson, 2008:396).

Another important factor identified by several authors is the type of interaction between the educator and the student as this determines the quality of their relationship (Barta, 2010:23; Chang & Davis, 2009:122; Hughes, 2012:320; Rennie & Glass, 2001:27). There are strong similarities between these authors' reports with regard to the quality of the relationship that depends on the type of interaction between educator and student. They ask critical questions such as: Is the interaction seen as the educator simply giving information and the student only receiving it, or does the interaction engage both educator and student? Beutel (2009:5) found that the interaction only exists from the educator to the student and therefore the type of interaction is a one-way communication. It becomes quite clear that Beutel (2009:5) is the only author whose findings differ from those of Chang and Davis (2009:97); Barta (2010:33); Hughes (2012:320); Rennie and Glass (2001:2) as all these authors state that a relationship is based on a two-way communication between educator and student. Ultimately the type of interaction determines the quality of the relationship (Barta, 2010:33; Chang & Davis, 2009:97; Hughes, 2012:320; Rennie & Glass, 2001:2).

Through reviewing the literature it is evident that an effective relationship between an educator and students comprises several elements. The relationship depends on the type of teaching/learning environment where learning has to take place as well as the

type of interaction between the educator and student. In order to ensure that these elements are provided for, the educators should also possess certain qualities. This study was conducted in the classroom setting of enrolled nursing auxiliary students of a private nursing education institution in Potchefstroom, North-West Province. Research needed to be conducted within this setting because such information would be valuable to strengthen these nursing students' resilience and improve the educator-student relationship within the private nursing education institution.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although literature could be found on the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship, very little research has been conducted from the nursing students' perspective, especially enrolled nursing auxiliary students' in a classroom setting at a private nursing education institution in Potchefstroom, North-West Province. It is thus clear that research that aims to explore and describe these nursing students' views with regard to the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship in this private nursing education institution setting can be valuable. This research will provide the researcher with the necessary information to recommend guidelines that can be followed to strengthen the resilience of the nursing students within the educator-student relationship and to improve the existing educator-student relationship within the classroom setting.

In light of the above it is clear that an effective educator-student relationship is necessary for effective learning to take place. This is especially true in a private NEI where a smaller educator-student ratio depend on the educator-student relationship to facilitate learning. Being an educator at this private nursing education institution

demarcated as the specific context, the researcher experienced that students depend on educators for guidance, support, care and understanding, necessitating a sound educator-student relationship. However, many educators see students as mere the recipients of information and not as part of the educator-student relationship. It was important to explore and describe the basic elements required to make this relationship effective. The views of nursing students can enable the educator to recommend guidelines on how to strengthen the resilience of nursing students within the educator-student relationship. In future this can also contribute to the development of an instrument to measure existing relationships between educator and students in the classroom setting.

This research was conducted as a sub-study in the RISE project. The RISE project is concerned with strengthening the resilience of health caregivers and high risk groups (Koen & Du Plessis, 2011). In this study, the aim is to improve the resilience of nursing students at a private nursing education institution, through establishing effective educator-student relationships.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To address the above-mentioned problem the following questions needed to be answered:

- ✚ What do nursing students perceive as basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship?
- ✚ How can the resilience of nursing students be strengthened within the educator-student relationship?
- ✚ How can the educator-student relationship be improved?

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of this study was to explore and describe the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship in a private nursing education institution in Potchefstroom, North-West Province. This enabled the researcher to recommend guidelines that need to be followed in order to improve the educator-student relationship. To reach this aim the following objectives have been identified:

- ✚ To explore and describe what nursing students perceive as basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship
- ✚ To explore and describe how the resilience of nursing students can be strengthened within the educator-student relationship
- ✚ To recommend guidelines to improve the educator-student relationship

1.6 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

The paradigmatic perspective describes the researcher's own views and is divided into three sections, namely the meta-theoretical, theoretical and methodological. Together these views serve as a framework in which the research was conducted (Botes, 1995:9).

1.6.1 META-THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

“The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord”

Isaiah 11:2

The researcher concurs with the verse, and believes that if Jesus, in human form, served through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, how much more so do educators need to rely on the work of the Spirit in and through their lives? The researcher thus chose to conduct this study based on the Christian philosophy grounded on four concepts within the nursing meta-paradigm as states by Shelly and Miller (2009:53). The nursing meta-paradigm begins with God in the Christian worldview. God created the world (environment) and everything in it. God created human beings (persons) and placed them within this created environment, to live in “shalom” (health). This kind of health allows the person to live at peace in a God-centred human community with a sense of physical, psychosocial and spiritual well-being. Nursing then, works towards establishing ‘shalom’ (health) among individuals and the community (Shelly & Miller, 2009:53).

Contributing to the Christian philosophy is the interpretivist perspective. The philosophical underpinnings of the interpretivist paradigm states that interpretivist researchers are concerned with the need to consider human beings’ interpretations and their perceptions of the real world as the starting point to understand social phenomena (Mack, 2010:7). Therefore the ontological assumptions of interpretivism advocate that social reality is seen by multiple individuals and these multiple individuals interpret experiences differently leaving multiple perceptions of an occurrence (Mack, 2010:8). The epistemological assumptions of interpretivism state that knowledge is gained through personal experiences and arise from particular situations and is therefore not reducible to simplistic interpretation (Mack, 2010:8).

The interpretivist assumption emphasizes that human life can only be understood from within (Maree, 2010:58). When considering phenomena it is important to understand

how people, the educator and student, interact or relate to each other within their social environment (Maree, 2010:59). Social life is a distinctively human action and this research regards the specific relationship between the educator and student as an example. The human mind is the purposive source of meaning that determines how the educator and student deduct meaning from their relationship. Human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world and the social world does not “exist” independently from human knowledge (Maree, 2010:60).

According to Maree (2010:60) the ultimate aim of interpretivist research is to offer a new perspective on a situation. The situation under investigation is analysed to provide insight into the way in which a particular group of people makes sense of their situation or the phenomena they encounter. It ensures richness and depth of understanding as the researcher interprets the phenomenon under investigation. In this study the phenomenon investigated is the educator-student relationship. The researcher, who is also an educator, explored this phenomenon in-depth to understand its importance and to attach meaning to its existence.

In addition to the interpretivist perspective is the Florence Nightingale Theory, which explicates her philosophical assumptions and beliefs with regard to the four concepts found in the meta-paradigm of nursing (figure 1) namely person, environment, health and nursing (Selanders, 2010:81). These four concepts encompass the key principles of nursing philosophy and practice and define the ways in which individuals should be viewed and treated within the nursing profession. The four concepts are interrelated and each is built upon the foundation of the concept that precedes it as illustrated by the researcher in (figure 1) below.

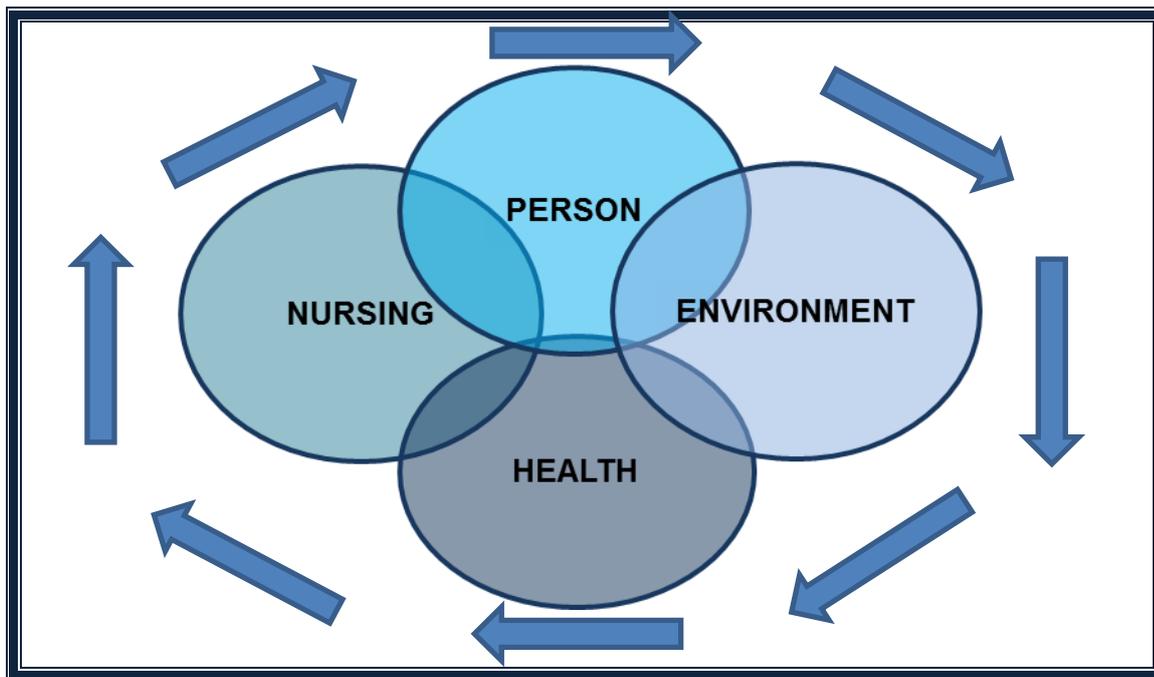


Figure 1: Meta-paradigm in nursing (as adapted from Selanders, 2010)

1.6.1.1 Person

The Christian philosophy regards all people as created by God in His image (Gen. 1:26) to live in a loving relationship with God, self and others (Deut. 6:4-6) and it comprises of the interaction of physiological and spiritual systems (Shelly & Miller, 2009:64). According to Florence Nightingale's Theory the person is multidimensional, consisting of biological, psychological, spiritual, intellectual and sociocultural dimensions which relate to the stages of human development (Selanders, 2010:81). These dimensions operate within or upon the human being in an open, interrelated, interdependent and interactive way. This is strongly linked to the interpretivist perspective that assumes that human life can only be understood from within (Maree, 2010:59). The Christian philosophy as well as Selanders (2010:81) and Maree (2010:59) see the person as a unique human being that is multidimensional and has a body, soul and a mind. In this research the notion of the person is used to refer to the educator and the student. They are both regarded as unique human beings who are multidimensional and who thus possess the above-mentioned dimensions.

1.6.1.2 Environment

According to Shelly and Miller (2009:66), the Christian perspective believes that the world was created by God, Who declared it as good (Gen. 1). The environment includes both the physical and spiritual realities (Col. 1:16) and encompasses the human community (Ps. 24:1) and it can bring forth both healing and illness (Shelly & Miller, 2009:66). Florence Nightingale believed that "Poor or difficult environments lead to poor health and disease" and "Environment could be altered to improve conditions so that the natural laws would allow healing to occur" (Selanders, 2010:81). According to Maree (2010:59) the interpretivist perspective sees the environment as the social world that influences the person. It is important to include the environment when looking at the relationship between an educator and student because that will help one understand how people interpret and interact with each other. In this study the environment will represent the classroom setting, including its physical, social and emotional components.

1.6.1.3 Health

The Christian philosophy supposes that wellness, or health ("shalom"), is being able to live as God created us to live- as an integrated whole living in a loving relationship with God, self and others (Ps. 16). Shelly and Miller (2009:67) say that God's ultimate plan for us is complete health and that a person can be spiritually healthy but physically and psychologically limited (1 Cor. 1:27-29). Therefore the Christian philosophy supposes that health is not only a goal of nursing, but also a sign of the kingdom of God (Rev. 21:1-7). According to Florence Nightingale's Theory health is seen "not only to be well, but to be able to use well every power we have" (Selanders, 2010:81). The interpretivist paradigm views health not as a state but as a process of permanent construction that recognizes cultural and social aspects as symbolic. The idea that the phenomenon of

health is complex and can therefore be studied from various approaches or perspectives makes it quite clear that any knowledge of this phenomenon is relative, therefore it is not isolated from other knowledge, nor is it sufficient in itself nor can it exist on its own (Mack, 2010:8). Health refers to the mental and physical well-being of educator and students as well as healthy resilience within these persons. Optimal mental, social and physical health will promote a healthy relationship between the educator and student.

1.6.1.4 Nursing

Nursing is viewed by the Christian philosophy as a ministry of compassionate care for the whole person in response to God's grace, which aims to foster optimum health (shalom) and bring comfort in suffering and death (Shelly & Miller, 2009:67). Nursing includes the comprehensive physical, psychosocial and spiritual care of individuals in the context of families and communities (Shelly & Miller, 2009:67). God underlined our responsibility to provide physical care by explaining in Matthew 25: "*I was sick and you took care of me.*" The interpretivists view supports the notion that there are many truths and multiple realities and they therefore focus on the holistic perspective of the person and environment within the nursing discipline (Mack, 2009:8). Nursing is different from medicine, since the goal of nursing is to promote health and this occurs in any care-giving situation (Selanders, 2010:81). According to Florence Nightingale's Theory, nursing is a calling and therefore it is imperative that the educator emphasizes the importance of a caring relationship between the educator and student. Nursing will form the foundation of this research with the focus on the development of caring nurses through an effective educator-student relationship.

1.7 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

1.7.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Brink (2006:24) a theoretical framework is based on the propositional statements resulting from an existing theory. The theoretical framework determines which questions are to be answered by the research, and how empirical procedures are to be used as tools to answer these questions (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:35). The theoretical framework underpinning this research is the resilience framework as developed by Kumpfer (1999:182). The resilience framework includes both processes and outcome constructs. Six main predictors of resilience are specified (see figure 2), namely: (1) stressors or challenges, (2) the external environmental context, (3) person-environment interactional processes, (4) internal self-characteristics or resilience factors, (5) resilience processes and (6) positive outcomes and successful life adaptation (Kumpfer, 1999:183-189). The resilience framework is briefly discussed below and reference to its application to this research study is made clear.



Figure 2: Predictors of resilience (Kumpfer, 1999:189)

The resilience framework begins with an event and ends with an outcome. The first predictor (as illustrated in figure 2), stressors or outcomes, are concerned with any type of stressor or challenge that needs to be present in order for the person to demonstrate resilience (Kumpfer, 1999:189). Challenges or stressors in this study refer to any barrier that can threaten the effectiveness of the educator-student relationship. It includes barriers such as a lack of caring and a supportive classroom environment, a lack of mutual interaction and an unfriendly or unsupportive educator. Challenges may serve to help a person to grow from the experience and go on to face new challenges. Thus helping nursing students to adapt to these kinds of stressors will strengthen their self-resilience skills. The external environmental context in which people operate has a lot of influence on their resilience because stressors or challenges in the environment can determine their resilience process (Kumpfer, 1999:189-190). Nursing students who experience a lack of sufficient ventilation, inadequate lighting and a lack of enough space may lead to the activation of their resilience skills in order to adapt to these challenges they are faced with.

Predictor three in figure 2, i.e. the person-environment interactional process, refers to how people consciously or unconsciously modify their environment or selectively perceive their environment (Kumpfer, 1999:191). When nursing students experience a lack of motivation and support from their educator and fellow students it can lead to the inability to focus on their studies. This in turn prevents nursing students from developing internal resilience skills and the ability to cope effectively with their studies. Kumpfer (1999:197) states that the internal self-resilience factors can be grouped into spiritual or motivational characteristics; cognitive competencies; behavioural/social competencies; emotional stability and emotional management; physical well-being and physical competencies.

The final process to ensure a positive outcome is the resilience processes. Kumpfer (1999:210) believes that resilience building processes needed to be implemented to help persons develop resilience skills. This will provide a person with the ability to bounce back after a stressful event, thus ensuring a positive life outcome, which concludes the resilience framework as illustrated in figure 2 above. Nursing education can add stressors to the experiences of nursing students within the educator-student relationship. If these stressors are handled correctly, it can strengthen the nursing students' internal self-resilience and form part of the resilience process.

1.7.2 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT

This study offers an exploration and description of what nursing students perceive as basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship as well as elements that can strengthen the resilience of nursing students within the educator-student relationship. This led to a better understanding of the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship which can contribute to the recommendation of guidelines to improve the existing educator-student relationship.

1.7.3 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

Concepts can be interpreted differently by different individuals. To ensure that the reader and the researcher share the same understanding of concepts used in this study, the important keywords applied in this study are defined below.

1.7.3.1 Educator-student relationship

The educator-student relationship is made up of three components namely the educator, the student and the environment. According to Gravett (2005:viii), the educator is someone who is assigned the role of leader or orchestrator of educational

events for students. Durrheim and Ehlers (2001:13) define the nurse educator as a person who has completed a course in education in a department of nursing science at a university and who is registered as a tutor with the South African Nursing Council as prescribed by R118. In this study the educator refers to the nursing educator who educates enrolled nursing auxiliary students.

A student is a person who is learning or who receive education in a learning situation. According to R169 of 2013 of the South African Nursing Act, No. 33 of 2005, a learner/student is any person registered at the Council to undergo education or training in terms of section 32 of the Act. In this study the student refers to the enrolled nursing auxiliary student who is registered for a one year nursing program to be a nurse at a private nursing education institution in Potchefstroom, North-West Province.

A relationship can be defined as an emotional or other connection between people, and this includes the relationship between educator and student. Therefore academic relationship is the relation that exists when one person requests and is granted professional help from a qualified source. According to Bernstein-Yamashiro and Noam (2013:5) a relationship reflects the complex and integral connection between learning, mutual understanding and individual growth. Wentzel (2012:20) defines a relationship as the evidence of levels of trust, intimacy, and sharing; presence of positive affect, closeness, and affective tone; and the content and quality of communication. In this study the relationship refers to the interpersonal and professional relationship between the educator and the student characterized by mutual trust and respect. The notion of the educator-student relationship in this study thus refers to the academic relationship between the nurse educators and the enrolled nursing auxiliary students in a private nursing education institution.

1.7.3.2 Nursing education institution (NEI)

In the context of this study a Nursing Education Institution (henceforth NEI) refers to an educational nursing institution of learning, that provides education and training for student nurses as regulated by the South African Nursing Act, No. 33 of 2005 (SA, 2005). According to R173 of 2013 of the Nursing Act, No. 33 of 2005 a NEI is an institution with the capacity to offer a prescribed nursing programme, upon compliance with the SANC prescribed accreditation requirements, criteria and standards for nursing education and training. An NEI in this study refers specifically to the private nursing education institution in Potchefstroom, North-West Province, which offers nursing education to enrolled nursing auxiliary students for a period of one year.

1.7.3.3 Learning

Learning can be defined as the measurable and relatively permanent change in behaviour through experience, instruction, or study (Slavin, 2009:217). Learning entails acquiring new, or modifying existing knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, or preferences and may involve synthesizing different types of information. It is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based on their current and past knowledge and their social interactions (Slavin, 2009:217). In this study learning denotes the process through which nursing students acquire knowledge.

1.7.3.4 Resilience

Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress (De Chesnay, 2005). According to Hiebert (2006:10), resilience is a person's ability to bounce back and recover a sense of well-being after encountering an unexpected, and most often unpleasant, event. Kumpfer (1999:181) states that resilience is a process, capacity or outcome of

successful adaptation despite challenges or threatening circumstances. It is the interaction between the person and the environment, and can be related to self-agency (Bandura, 2001 as cited by Bentley-Williams 2011:2). Henderson and Milstein (1996:7) in turn broadly defines resilience as the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social, academic, and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply to the stress that is inherent in today's world. In this study the concept of resilience describes the ability of nurse educators and enrolled nursing auxiliary students to effectively cope with any stressors or barriers that pose a threat to learning and the educator-student relationship.

1.7.3.5 Stressors

A stressor is defined as any life event or change that causes a person stress and which in some circumstances may precipitate distress or deterioration in mental health (Weller, 2010:375). Stressors are caused by any physical, physiological or psychosocial factors. In this study stressors refers to situations that are experienced as a perceived threat to nursing students wellbeing in life, when the challenge of dealing with which, exceeds their perceived available resources.

1.7.3.6 Barriers to learning

According to McDonald (2003:17) the term barriers to learning covers an extremely broad range of factors which could impinge on a students' access to learning. Therefore a barrier is anything that stands in the way of a student being able to learn effectively and can be categorised into internal- and external barriers (Adelman & Taylor, 2002:261). In this study barriers to learning refer to any obstacle hindering the development of an effective educator-student relationship causing interference with learning and teaching.

1.8 METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is defined as the total strategy that encompasses everything from the identification of the problem to the design and final plans for data collection and analysis (Burns & Grove, 2009:223). The researcher decided to follow a qualitative design for the purpose of acquiring an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon that is of interest. The research design and method are discussed below.

1.8.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design denotes the clearly defined structures within which the study is implemented (Burns & Grove, 2001:223). This study follows an explorative, descriptive and contextual qualitative design.

1.8.1.1 Explorative

Explorative research is the investigation of the complete nature of a relatively unknown phenomenon, including the manner in which it manifests itself and all the factors to which it is related (Polit & Hungler, 1997:20; Mouton & Marais, 1996:43). This kind of research aims to comprehend and gain new insights into the phenomenon and to explain concepts and constructs, as well as to determine recommendations for future research. In order to ensure the success of explorative research, the researcher must be willing to examine new ideas and suggestions from all perspectives and must be open to new stimuli (Mouton & Marais, 1996:43). Therefore explorative designs are implemented when examining a research problem about which there are few or no earlier studies to refer to. The focus is to gain insight into the problem under investigation. Explorative research is used as a method in this study in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, namely the basic

elements required for an effective educator-student relationship in a private nursing education institution in Potchefstroom, North-West Province.

1.8.1.2 Descriptive

Qualitative descriptive research aims to identify, observe, understand, and unfold the nature and the relationship between phenomena, as it exists in reality, as accurately as possible (Burns & Grove, 2009:3; Polit & Hungler, 1997:20; Mouton & Marais, 1996:44). The primary purpose of descriptive research is to describe that which exists, to discover new information and meaning, to further understand situations and to order information used in nursing practice (Burns & Grove, 2009:3). Therefore descriptive designs help to provide answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and how that are usually associated with a particular research problem. The researcher decided on making use of descriptive research to describe the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship in a private nursing education institution in Potchefstroom, North-West Province.

1.8.1.3 Contextual

Botma *et al.* (2010:95) state that contextual research focuses on a single event or case or specific phenomenon and its structural coherence. Contextual research focuses on developing a deeper understanding of the design problem, identifying unexpected issues, as well as latent needs and opportunities. This research requires of the researcher to go into the environment of the participants so as to observe and understand how the participants view the problem under investigation. The researcher must also use contextual factors to gain a deeper understanding of the problem (Botma *et al.*, 2010:195). Therefore the data collected is only valid in a specific context and cannot be used to generalise the findings.

The study was conducted in a private nursing education institution in Potchefstroom, North-West Province, and consequently this formed the specific context of the study. The NEI offers a nursing auxiliary course over a period of one year. There are two intakes of forty enrolled nursing auxiliary students per year. The staff includes one principal, two tutors, two clinical tutors, one enrolled nursing auxiliary, one administrative assistant and one cleaner. The NEI is affiliated with the following organisations: the SANC (South African Nursing Council), Umalusi (Umalusi Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training), and is accredited as a Private Further Education and Training College (FET) by the Department of Higher Education and Training. The demographic profile of the enrolled nursing auxiliary students is that they are all black females between the ages of 18-54 years, from all over South Africa. Criteria required for enrolment in the nursing auxiliary course are either Grade 10, 11, or 12.

1.8.2 RESEARCH METHOD

According to Creswell (2009:15) the research method involves the method used for data collection, analysis and interpretation of findings of the study. Botma *et al.* (2010:199) states that the research method refers to data gathering (sampling, role of the researcher and research methods for data gathering), data analysis and ensuring rigour in research. The research method is discussed next and comprises population and sampling, the data collection plan, data analysis as well as measures to ensure rigour.

1.8.2.1 Population and sampling

According to Rossouw (2003:108) population is the term used for the collection of all possible participants that the researcher plans to study. Botma *et al.* (2010:200) describe the population of a study as all the elements (individuals, objects or

substances) that meet the criteria for inclusion in a given universe and in which the researcher is interested. Moreover, Creswell (2009:175) states that the qualitative researcher tends to collect relevant data in the field at the site where participants experience the problem under investigation. The population used in this study comprised of sixty enrolled nursing auxiliary students of a private NEI in Potchefstroom, North-West Province. Sampling is the selection of a group of people, events, behaviours' or other elements needed to conduct a study (Burns & Grove, 2009:343). Klopper (2008:69) defines sample as a subset of the population that is selected for a particular study. The sample is selected by the researcher from the population to participate in the research study and in this case it included only forty enrolled nursing auxiliary students of the private NEI in Potchefstroom, North-West Province. The reason for selecting this sample is because the problem under investigation was experienced by these nursing students in this specific context.

The researcher recruited the population and sample size by following two guiding principles as explicated by Botma *et al.* (2010:199). Firstly, the identification and use of participants who can best inform the research ensured the appropriateness for selecting the population used in this study. The participants were all enrolled nursing auxiliary students within a private NEI in Potchefstroom, North-West Province. Secondly, adequacy refers to the fact that sufficient data are available to develop a full and rich description of the phenomenon under investigation. The study made use of a non-probability sample and specifically a purposive sampling method. Botma *et al.* (2010:201) states that purposive sampling is used in qualitative research because the particular participants are selected since they display some features or processes that are of interest for a particular study. The sample consisted of forty enrolled nursing auxiliary students in a private NEI in Potchefstroom, North-West Province.

A purposive voluntary sampling method with the following inclusion criteria was used:

- 1) Participants had to be enrolled as nursing auxiliary students with the specific private NEI where the study was conducted;
- 2) Participants had to be enrolled in the auxiliary nursing programme for at least three months to ensure that meaningful information could be obtained.

1.8.2.2 Data collection plan

According to Creswell (2009:175) a qualitative researcher can use multiple forms of data collection and does not only rely on a single data collection method. In this study the researcher applied the “World Café” as data collection method (Annexure 6-7). The “World Café” is seen as a brainstorming tool that generates ideas and comments about a specific topic (Brown *et al.*, 2005:2). According to Brown *et al.* (2005:2) the “World Café” method is a living network of conversations used for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action in groups of all sizes around questions that matter. Permission to use the “World Café” name, logo, method and materials including information regarding copyright, was adhered to (Annexure 5). Apart from the “World Café” method the researcher also used facilitation strategies such as discussion sessions, tape recordings, transcribing recordings, field notes and visual materials.

The “World Café” was not originally developed as a research data collection method, but was selected for this study by the researcher because it yielded rich data related to the educator-student relationship. This method was successfully used by Du Plessis *et al.* (2013). Therefore this method was appropriate for use in this study because a large quantity of meaningful data could be collected over a short period of time and it generated ideas and comments from forty enrolled nursing auxiliary students on specific

topics. The time spent on the actual data collection process was four hours: starting with obtaining informed consent, collecting data through “World Café” and concluding with the discussion and feedback session.

In applying this study, the classroom environment was arranged according to a setup similar to that of a café in order to create a relaxed atmosphere (Annexure 8). The tables were arranged to accommodate five groups of eight students with a poster, coloured markers and refreshments at each table. Participants were asked to sit in groups of eight at each table and had a series of conversational rounds; lasting from 10 to 15 minutes each, with one discussion question for every group. Based on the research objectives and guided by the literature review, the following discussion questions were developed and used in the “World Café” discussions:

- 1) What is needed in the teaching/learning environment to improve the relationship with your educator?
- 2) What type of interaction will improve your relationship with your educator?
- 3) What qualities must your educator display to improve the relationship between the educator and student?
- 4) How do you manage to stay resilient?
- 5) What suggestions that can be implemented in the educator-student relationship to strengthen your resilience as students?

At the end of each round, one person remained behind as the table host, while the other seven moved to the next table. Table hosts welcomed the next group of participants to their tables and shared the information of that table's discussion so far. The newly arrived group would relate to any of the ideas presented and continue to add new ones. This process continued until each group had been at all five tables where the discussion

questions were presented. Data collection was followed by a discussion session of 30-60 minutes where students reflected on the whole process and explained, clarified and verified their findings and ideas by writing them down on the posters (Annexure 10). The discussion sessions were audio recorded and then transcribed (Annexure 12). Field notes were taken by the researcher throughout the process and are presented as evidence in Annexure 11. The researcher reserved the possibility of making use of focus groups as a second phase of data collection if data saturation had not been reached in order to verify the data collected. Data were collected over a period of one day.

A pilot study was conducted a month before the actual data collection commenced and twenty enrolled nursing auxiliary students participated in this study. According to Brink (2006:54) a pilot study is a small-scale version or “dummy run” of the major study conducted on a limited number of participants. The purpose of conducting a pilot study is to investigate the feasibility of the proposed study and to recognize and address potential problems by obtaining information for improving the study (Brink 2006:166). The time and effort expended in conducting a pilot study are well spent, as pitfalls and errors that may prove costly in the actual study can be identified and avoided (Brink 2006:166). The data collected during the pilot study have not been included as part of the findings of the actual study due to the following reasons:

- ✚ Students did not understand the questions asked and therefore the questions had to be adapted accordingly.
- ✚ Students were busy with exams (block time) and did not participate actively or with a positive attitude.
- ✚ Data collected during the pilot study did not contribute to the effectiveness of the study and therefore were excluded.

1.8.2.3 Data analysis

According to Creswell (2009:183) the data analysis process involves making sense of text and image data. This involves preparing data for analysis, ascertaining a deeper understanding of the data, representing the data and making interpretations about the overall meaning of the data. Inductive data analysis is used for qualitative research and this includes building patterns, themes and categories from the bottom-up and organizing data into more abstract units (Creswell, 2009:175). Data were analysed by using Creswell's (2009:185) steps in data analysis (Table 1 below). Data analysis was done by reading through each poster individually and ascertaining a deeper understanding of the information written down under each discussion question.

Table 1: Steps in data analysis

STEPS	ANALYST ACTIONS
Step 1: Organise and prepare the data for analysis	Data were sorted according to the questions asked on each poster
Step 2: Read through all data	The analyst gets an overall idea or feeling for the data Listens to audio recorded data Identifies similarities or patterns that start to develop
Step 3: Begin with coding process	Transcribe the data from audio recorder The analyst starts to code the data into themes and categories
Step 4: Description of setting, participants, categories and themes for analysis	
Step 5: Represent the descriptions and themes	
Step 6: Make an interpretation or meaning of the data	

The researcher made use of a co-analyst and they both analysed the data according to the data analysis work protocol (Annexure 9). The researcher and co-analyst started to build patterns, themes and categories. After the researcher and co-analyst analysed the data independently, a meeting was scheduled to reach consensus on the categories, themes and subthemes that emerged from the data collected. Researcher bias in data analysis was limited by using the following measures:

- ✚ The researcher made use of a co-analyst for cross checking data
- ✚ The researcher used multiple realities because the study focused on all the elements in an educator-student relationship and not merely one or two. Therefore the focus was complex and broad.
- ✚ Data were analyzed according to a detailed data analysis work protocol.
- ✚ Data from literature review were only incorporated into results after data analysis were completed.

1.8.2.4 Measures to ensure rigour

The quality of scientific data is very important and therefore the researcher should ensure the validity and reliability of the data. In qualitative research this is established through ensuring trustworthiness. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:294) the four components of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. To establish trustworthiness the researcher ensured that the study complied with the criteria for trustworthiness, namely: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:294).

For this study the researcher ensured truth value by obtaining the experiences as it is perceived by the participants and this reflects the credibility of the findings. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:381) member checking is used as a technique to establish

credibility. Member checking involves sharing interview transcriptions, analytical thoughts and/or drafts of the final report with research participants (Thomas & Brubaker, 2000:260). The researcher used a feedback and discussion session where participants had the opportunity to reflect on data collected and this ensured that participants' views were accurately recorded.

Transferability is attained if the study is one in which findings are relevant in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:295). A technique used to establish transferability is thick description. According to Thomas and Brubaker (2000:260) thick description allows the reader to enter the research context. With regard to transferability, the researcher presented the data sufficiently and descriptively to make it possible for another researcher to make a comparison if needed. The researcher also included detailed descriptions of the study's participants, their educational setting, methods used in the study and participants' experiences as related by them. Field notes also contributed to a thick description on the process followed during data collection.

Consistency checks included having an independent coder check the category descriptions and the text belonging in those categories. Researcher bias was prevented by clarifying findings and comments with participants. The researcher made use of a feedback session where the table host had the opportunity to report on ideas and comments written down on the posters in order to verify and clarify the data collected and this is presented as evidence in Annexure 12.

Lincoln and Guba (1985:295) deemed that a conformable study is objective. The researcher reached conformability through ensuring that the findings, conclusions and recommendations were supported by the data obtained and that there exists a link

between the researcher's interpretation and actual events. Findings could not be generalised, but the research process is discussed in detail so that the application of this research in a similar context will be possible. In order to further ensure trustworthiness, the researcher used multiple data sources for an integration of the findings and existing literature.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the North-West University's Ethical Committee (Ethical number: NWU-00036-11-S1) as part of the RISE study before conducting the study in order to ensure that all ethical considerations were adhered to (Annexure 1). Ethical considerations are a universal requirement and include the basic ethical principles of respect for the person, beneficence and justice (Brink, 2006:31). According to the NWU manual for post-graduate studies the basic ethical principles include autonomy, benefit, non-harmfulness and justice (NWU, 2011:48). The principle of respect for the person manifested in obtaining approval from the ethics committee and permission from the institution where the research was conducted (Annexure 2).

An information session was held with prospective participants by means of a power point presentation to inform them about the study as well as to explain the concept of resilience before commencement of data collection (Annexure 4). The researcher obtained voluntary informed written consent from the prospective participants and no participant was manipulated or forced to participate in the study and could withdraw or abstain at any time without discrimination or prejudice (Annexure 3). The participants' right to anonymity was ensured through not revealing any personal details of participants on any of the posters. Confidentiality was maintained and the privacy of

participants was respected throughout the study. The principle of beneficence was adhered to by protecting the participants and preventing any harm or discomfort to the participants by securing their well-being. This implies that the researcher aimed to do good and no harm. The principle of justice entails that the participants have the right to fair selection and treatment and also the right to privacy. The human rights of participants were protected by informing them about the type of information needed, by ensuring that they understood what was required and by making it clear that they still had a free choice to decide whether or not to participate in the study.

1.10 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review forms the basis for exploring the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship by collecting the most relevant evidence available from previous studies. The search strategy used to obtain data relevant to the study is discussed. This is followed by the body of knowledge and evidence from literature which includes the various themes identified in previous studies, the strengths and weaknesses identified by researchers, the limitations of the studies and lastly, concluding remarks.

1.10.1 SEARCH STRATEGY

A computerised literature search was conducted using the following databases: Google Scholar advanced search, Science Direct and EbscoHost which is a host for various databases and include Academic Search Premier, CINAHL, ERIC, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, PsycINFO and Medline. Several keywords were used: educator-student relationship, nursing education, factors, undergraduate nursing student, basic elements, learning environment, effective learning and resilience. The

search resulted in 1 780,000 references when the keyword educator-student relationship was used. References were excluded due to the following reasons: they were (1) not applicable to the problem under investigation, (2) not relevant to the environment used and (3) inaccessible for a review of the data. The references included in the literature review were consequently downscaled to only 27 articles and 2 post-graduate studies (one master's dissertation and one doctorate thesis). These studies were reviewed and only the information relevant to the educator-student relationship was extracted. The search was very difficult because some of the references that were available are applicable to disciplines other than nursing education and include the clinical practice in nursing, general education e.g. primary and secondary schools as well as psychology.

From the outset of the literature review it was clear that there is a big gap in the information available on the educator-student relationship in the classroom setting of a private nursing education institution, specifically in relation to creating a positive learning climate that will enhance learning.

1.10.2 OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The relationship between educators and students has been a focus of inquiry for over 2000 years (Wang *et al.*, s.a). The philosophers, Plato, Socrates and Confucius emphasize the acquisition of knowledge through dialogue and stress the commitment to the educator-student relationship (Wang *et al.*, s.a). The educator-student relationship was redefined with the advent of cognitive psychology when constructivists said that educators and students construct knowledge in collaboration (Wang *et al.*, s.a). The psychological dimensions of educators' relationships with students indicates that caring educators who show concern for their students and act as confidants, role models and

mentors contribute to students' resilience skills to overcome personal vulnerabilities and environmental adversities (Wang *et al.*, 1994:2). Therefore, educators can have a positive effect not only on students' academic achievement and behaviour, but also on long term success in life by helping students develop resilience skills and attitudes (Hanson & Austin, 2003:58). Resilience skills include the ability to form relationships, to solve problems, to develop a sense of identity and to plan and hope (Bernard, 1997:1). Hanson *et al.* (2004:11) found that protective factors such as caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities to participate and contribute improve not only students' academic performances, but also strengthened their resilience. Therefore nurse educators have a responsibility towards nursing students to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for their nursing career and to foster caring relationships with students (Hanson *et al.*, 2004:11). This includes practices to strengthen their resilience by being a role model for them so they can make use of caring nursing practices towards their patients (Bernard, 1997:1). In order for the students to become excellent, caring and responsible nurses they need to understand the importance of effective interpersonal relationships, something that will impact the rest of their nursing career (Del Prato *et al.*, 2011:112). This can only be achieved if nurse educators set the correct example right from the start of their nursing program. The relationship should already start to develop in the classroom, from the first contact between the educator and student.

Various themes that form an integral part in the educator-student relationship in the classroom setting of a private nursing education institution were identified from the literature search: (1) teaching/learning environment, (2) educator-student interaction and (3) a caring and supportive educator.

1.10.2.1 Teaching/learning environment

In the literature it is strongly emphasized that a positive teaching/learning environment is needed for an effective relationship between the educator and the student. The teaching/learning environment will, for the purposes of this study, refer to the classroom setting of a private nursing education institution where learning takes place. From a thematic analysis of Anderson and Carta-Falsa (2002:136) one can deduce that both students and educators state a desire for an open, supportive, comfortable, respectful, safe or non-threatening and enjoyable environment. Their findings include a representative sample of 400 students and 24 instructors in the southern-region of the National University in California. According to Anderson and Carta-Falsa (2002:134) creating a safe and educational environment sets the foundation for the development of mutual trust and respect. This ensures that students have the self-confidence to mature academically and it provides opportunities for educators and students to appreciate each other's unique qualities.

Bernard (1996:115-137) mentions that the core of caring relationships is high expectations that reflect the educator's deep belief in the student's innate resilience and capacity to learn. Through relationships that convey high expectations, students learn to believe in themselves and in their futures, developing the critical resilience traits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, autonomy and optimism (Bernard, 1995:2).

Moreover, Brooks (1998) mentions strategies that educators need to follow to foster self-esteem and resilience in students:

- ✚ Improve students' feelings and thoughts about their competence and worth
- ✚ Improve their feelings about their abilities to make a difference
- ✚ Encourage them to confront rather than retreat from challenges

- ✚ Teach them to learn from both successes and failures
- ✚ Teach them to treat themselves and others with respect

According to Lantieri *et al.* (2011:287) changes in the behaviour of educators can create classroom environments in which students have more autonomy and influence, in other words, educators who sees students as individuals, motivate and encourage them and giving praise when needed. This increases students' sense of engagement and creates a greater feeling of community in the classroom. Hurlington (2010:2) states that protective social environments that provide refuge in high-risk situations are an important aspect in the development of resilience. This statement is supported by Boynton and Boynton (2005:16) who mention that developing positive classroom pride can be an extremely powerful force in developing positive educator-student relationships.

According to Boynton and Boynton (2005:16) educators can achieve this by implementing the following strategies to develop positive classroom pride:

- ✚ Display student work
- ✚ Positively reinforce students verbally
- ✚ Show off the class's achievements
- ✚ Speak about the accomplishments of all your students
- ✚ Be sincere when taking pride in your students
- ✚ Look for opportunities for students to be proud in all areas
- ✚ Develop parental pride in student accomplishments
- ✚ Develop pride in improvement in addition to pride in excellence

In addition, Bernard (1996:115-137) says that educators understand that successful learning means engaging the whole student and not only their cognitive dimension. This implies that educators need to be student-centred by understanding that student motivation is driven by needs for love and belonging, respect, autonomy/power, mastery, challenge, fun, and meaning. Therefore successful learning experiences need to be designed so as to meet as many of these needs as possible (Bernard, 1996:115-137).

According to Bernard (1996:115-137) strategies to convey high expectations to students are:

- ✚ Sustain a high expectation climate
- ✚ Have a “No excuses/ Never give up” philosophy
- ✚ Aims to meet development needs for mastery and challenge
- ✚ Believes in an innate capacity of all to learn
- ✚ Focus on the whole student, including social, emotional, cognitive, physical and spiritual aspects
- ✚ Challenge and support students
- ✚ Connects learning to students’ interests, strengths, experiences, dreams and goals
- ✚ Encourage creativity and imagination
- ✚ Convey optimism and hope
- ✚ Affirm/encourage the best in others
- ✚ Articulate clear expectations/boundaries and structure
- ✚ Discipline strictly and fairly
- ✚ Provides clear explanations
- ✚ Convey the message to students that they are resilient

Adding to the strategies listed above, Hurlington (2010:3) provides the following tips educators need to follow for classroom practices to create caring learning environments:

- ✚ Always build from strengths. Using activities that students like can get them past the things they don't
- ✚ Schedule one-on-one time to listen to your students. It will give you incredible insight into their world
- ✚ Many students surprise us by becoming highly successful later in life. Ensure that every student gets a chance in your class
- ✚ Educators should use explicit "I care" statements to guarantee that students recognise the supportive environment

Petrus *et al.* (2012:2) states that there is a need to create a safe and open environment. Moreover, Redmond and Sorrell (1996:25) emphasize that students need to experience a caring learning environment to help them implement caring practices towards their patients, and Schofield (2001:13) explains that a classroom filled with care encourages students to support each other. Hanson *et al.* (2004:12) explains that schools that provide caring, supportive and challenging environments have great potential to help students improve their academic performances. These statements are substantiated by Hughes (2012:325) recommendation that educators must receive in-service training on teaching practices to enable them to create a positive social and emotional climate for learning. It is important for educators to ensure a positive teaching/learning environment for students in order to improve the educator-student relationship.

Worley (2007:25) identified four factors contributing to a positive educator-student relationship:

- ✚ Trust must be established between the educator and student

- ✚ Students must know that educators care and are concerned about each student
- ✚ Educators must create a learning environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and
- ✚ Educators need to create a classroom environment that supports and enables each student to feel that they belong in the classroom

The work described above focuses on the emotional component of a teaching/learning environment, whereas Halarie and Cross (2012:2) report on the physical component of the environment. This includes sufficient lighting, adequate ventilation, air-conditioning and rearrangement of seating, all of which will contribute to an effective learning environment for students. This leads to an atmosphere of openness between the educator and student. It is clear that the physical conditions of the classroom also impact on the teaching/learning environment.

The teaching/learning environment comprises both emotional and physical components that have to be well understood by nurse educators to ensure that an effective educator-student relationship will develop between the educator and student. The nurse educator should ensure that the physical environment provides adequate ventilation (either air-conditioning or open windows), sufficient lighting, enough space to prevent cluttering, correct arrangement of tables and chairs to ensure that students can see on the board and the use of sufficient resources e.g. enough stationery for group work and extra hand-outs. With regard to the emotional component of the teaching/learning environment, the nurse educator should create a caring learning environment through sharing expectations, being open, being available and approachable for students, ensuring open and authentic communication, responding to students' questions with interest and enthusiasm, and providing positive feedback (Bernard, 1997:3).

1.10.2.2 Educator/student interaction

Interaction between the educator and student is important for an effective relationship to develop and it has to consist of two-way communication in other words a give and take situation where both parties are involved. In the study of Anderson and Carta-Falsa (2002:137), students expressed that they feel a desire to work together, to share, to learn and to interact with each other and did not express the need to interact with their educators. Interaction in this case seems to refer to how students prefer to interact with each other and not merely how information is conveyed.

Beutel (2009:5) states that the provision of information exists only in a one-way interaction from educator to student, which implies that educators deliver the content so that the students can simply reproduce it in the examination. This type of interaction is not suitable to build an effective educator-student relationship because the educator only gives and the student only receives. Although the above-mentioned study found that there is only one-way interaction between educator and student, several other studies revealed the opposite by presenting evidence of two-way interactions between the educator and student (Barta, 2010:25; Hughes, 2012:321; Rennie & Glass, 2001:6). Beutel (2009:6) explains that in the facilitation of students, there is two-way communication between educator and student because the focus has shifted from educators teaching the subject to educators teaching students. In guided participation, Beutel (2009:6) adds educators provide students with opportunities to instigate learning experiences rather than providing information, which causes a shift from educator-centred work to student-directed activities.

In the study by Barta (2010:33) it is quite clear that relationship with students include involvement, support and expressiveness. Moreover, Bernard (1997:3) mentions that

educators need to provide students with opportunities to grow. This includes opportunities for asking questions that will encourage self-reflection, critical thinking and dialogue. Educators should also provide opportunities for creative expression; for helping others; they should involve students in curriculum planning and in choosing learning experiences; use participatory evaluation strategies; and involve students in creating classroom rules (Bernard, 1997:3). Involving students by allowing them to express their opinions and imagination, make choices, solve problems, cooperate with and help others strengthens the student's resilience skills which in turn improves the educator-student relationship (Bernard, 1997:2).

The extent to which a student demonstrates interest and participation in the classroom will affect the quality of the relationship. When students are actively involved in the discussions taking place the relationship becomes stronger, because students can express their opinions and feelings openly and freely in the classroom. This statement is substantiated by Lanteri *et al.* (2011:270) who state that students need to feel connected to others, have a sense of control and competence, a sense of achievement and have effective social and problem solving skills. Therefore it can be accepted that the educator-student relationship requires educator-student interaction to be effective.

The fact that support forms an integral part for promoting interaction between the educator and the student is also emphasized in several studies (Barta, 2010:24; Del Prato *et al.*, 2011:113; Hughes, 2012:320). Support is the amount of concern, help and friendship demonstrated (Barta, 2010:24). Del Prato *et al.* (2011:111) explains support as psychological support that entails that the educator is approachable, demonstrates respect for students and shows confidence in them, corrects students without being personal, listens to students, gives acknowledgements when it is due, shows a genuine

interest in students and is patient with students. Therefore support forms an important element within the educator-student relationship. When educators express great support towards their students the students feel more willing to participate and become more involved in the teaching/learning process.

Bernard (2004:115-137) describes the following strategies that can be used by educators to increase student participation or contribution in the classroom setting:

- ✚ Provides opportunities for planning, decision-making and problem solving
- ✚ Empower students to create classroom rules
- ✚ Hold regular and as-needed class meetings
- ✚ Infuse communication skills into all learning experiences
- ✚ Create opportunities for creative expression e.g. writing, drama, and storytelling
- ✚ Provide opportunities for students to use/contribute their strengths, interests, goals and dreams
- ✚ Give meaningful responsibilities
- ✚ Provide on-going opportunities for personal reflection, dialogue and discussion
- ✚ Use experience-based learning and cooperative learning

Educators play a very important role in providing support to the students that they interact with. By allowing students to express their feelings and ideas, the educator shows them that he/she acknowledges them as a human being and that their point of view is also important. Educators should treat students with respect and as unique human beings (Del Prato *et al.* 2011:110). By providing students with constructive criticism the educator builds their self-esteem through correcting their mistakes but not degrading them as a person, which in turn will strengthen their resilience.

1.10.2.3 A caring and supportive educator

Caring and supportive educators can be described as those who promote democratic and respectful interactions, set expectations based on differences and also provide constructive and nurturing feedback (Wentzel, 2002:288). According to Rennie and Glass (2001:2), caring, support and nurturing form part of the positive educational practices for nursing students. Bernard (1997:2) states that caring relationships can be built by educators who convey loving support to students by listening to them and validating their feelings, by demonstrating kindness, compassion and respect.

Chang and Davis (2004:99) discuss “caring” as an ethic or a moral value that determines educators’ interactions with students, whereas Petrus *et al.* (2012:1) mentioned that caring can be viewed as being in a relationship that involves beliefs and attitudes of both educators and students. An educator that is seen as a caring person is someone who is authentic and genuinely interested in students. Redmond and Sorrell (1996:25) mention that caring is important in the educator-student relationship for two reasons, namely: (1) a trusting supportive relationship with educators empower students to think critically and to implement nursing care, and (2) students need to experience caring in order to care for others. As viewed by Wade and Kasper (2006:162) caring is learned through experiencing caring interactions in an environment supported by a caring educator-student relationship. They argue that if students perceive the climate of nursing education as caring, they will learn a professional way of caring. This argument is supported by their findings that caring relationships between educators and students enable students to grow as caring professionals (Wade & Kasper, 2006:164).

Over the last 30 years, literature has documented the importance of supportive educator-student relationships to improve student motivation, learning and achievement

(Davis, 2009:2). Caring and supportive educators create classroom environments of a different quality that feel warm, encourage students to behave in responsible ways, and emphasize learning over performing (Davis, 2009:2). Therefore students who perceive their educators as caring tend to engage more with the content; they take intellectual risks and persist in the face of failure (Davis, 2009:3). A caring relationship with an educator gives students the motivation to succeed (Bernard, 1995:2). Ultimately, to go beyond the educator-student relationship by creating a worldwide ethos of caring in educational institutions, opportunities are created for caring student-to-student, educator-to-educator and educator-to-parent relationships to develop (Bernard, 1995:2). According to Boynton and Boynton (2005:18) demonstrating caring is one of the most powerful ways to build positive relationships with students. Boynton and Boynton (2005:19) identify the following strategies that educators can use to communicate to students that they care about them:

- ✚ Show an interest in your students' personal lives
- ✚ Greet the students by the front door as they enter the classroom
- ✚ Watch for and touch base with students who display strong emotions
- ✚ Sincerely listen to students
- ✚ Empathise with students

According to Schofield (2001:36), caring is taught through modelling and students need to be treated with the same care as they are expected to give to their patients. This includes the caring components of warmth, genuineness, openness, taking time, touching, listening and demonstrating concern for the well-being of students. With regard to the previous statement it is clear that the educator should be a mentor who possesses of these caring qualities. A literature search revealed different viewpoints on mentoring. According to Beutel (2009:6), mentoring focuses on the quality and duration

of the partnership between educator and student. Therefore being a mentor plays an integral part in the student's on-going academic and personal development. Anderson and Carta-Falsa (2002:137) reported that students wanted to develop networks, friendships and cooperate with each other, but that instructors were more focused on the principles of effective teaching and did not express a strong need to collaborate with students. In the latter study it becomes clear that educators still focus on teaching the content and are not quite interested in building relationships.

Bernard (1995:2) states that positive role models in the lives of resilient students are those educators who are not just an instructor of academic skills, but who are also positive and confident models for personal identification. It is what educator's model that makes a big difference. If educators show care and respect, students will learn empathy, respect, the wise use of power, self-control, responsibility, persistence, and hope (Bernard, 2004:115-137). Therefore if educators model this invitational behaviour, they create a classroom climate where caring, respect and responsibility are the behavioural norms (Bernard, 2004:115-137).

As argued by Beutel (2009:11), educators have an enormous responsibility to ensure the development of warm, positive and healthy relationship with students. To ensure the above, educators need to be aware of the emotional factors involved in educator-student relationships. Chang and Davis (2004:103) identify the so-called pleasant and unpleasant emotional by-products of being involved with students. Pleasant emotions include: pride, excitement, hope and contentment, while unpleasant emotions include: anxiety, fear, sadness/loss, annoyance, frustration, anger, disappointment, guilt, shame and disgust/resentment (Chang & Davis, 2004:103-104). According to Chang and Davis, 2004:95 (cited by Hargreaves, 1998) teaching is seen as emotional work that

requires a great deal of awareness, understanding and regulation in order to develop and maintain supportive relationships with students.

In the literature, the noteworthy authors view support as follows: Barta (2010:25) states that educator support is the amount of concern, help and friendship display towards students, whereas Northup (2011:2) mentions that educator support needs to exist in quality relationship in order for students to feel cared for, esteemed and valued. Schofield (2001:61) reports that a genuine presence of the educator leads to a supportive/helping relationship which involves demonstrating empathy and considering students as individual human beings. The educator should to be supportive in helping students cope with anxieties and frustrations associated with the student role. In the literature it is clear that stress and unsupportive relationships has negative effects on the student's well-being, self-efficacy, self-esteem, learning and success (Del Prato *et al.* 2011:109). Therefore supportive relationships in the classroom lead to students who are more likely to take risks that enhance their learning and who are more likely to ask questions when they experiencing difficulty in a task (Northup, 2011:2).

According to Del Prato *et al.* (2011:111) students rank their relationship with educators as the fourth greatest source of stress; however Hughes (2012:321) mentions that a close and supportive relationship with educators serves as an external source of stress regulation. Therefore it is clear that educators who provide a supportive relationship to their students reduce their stress levels and encourage them to focus on their studies. Del Prato *et al.* (2011:114) recommend strategies needed for reducing students' stress, namely: peer support and personal mentoring; caring learning environments; supportive educator; experiential learning; social support and empowering students. By implementing these strategies in the classroom nurse educators can improve the

educator-student relationship and thus ensure that effective learning can take place. The greater the opportunity for students to have a voice the greater the likelihood for positive relationships will be, which in turn may potentially lead to greater academic success (Barile *et al.*, 2011:259).

1.10.2.4 Conclusion

Educator-student relationships that are characterised by emotional warmth, opportunities for independent decision-making and instruction that is responsive to students' learning needs will ensure that students develop a positive academic identity and invest more in learning (Hughes, 2012:322). As indicated by Hughes (2012:322), we as educators play an important role in the lives of our students and impact students' investment in learning. Therefore students who have caring, supportive and warm relationships with educators will experience a greater chance of success in their academic studies.

Educators who work together to build caring relationships with students, provide support to eliminate unwanted barriers and create a positive learning climate that will establish an atmosphere characterised by mutual support, caring and understanding, all of which are fundamental to a sound educator-student relationship. Resilience research consistently points to the importance of positive and supportive relationships between the educator and student as a key protective factor in students' lives (Johnson, 2008:386). Therefore it can be concluded that educators need to build caring, positive and supportive relationships with students, which will strengthen the resilience of students and in turn have a great impact on the rest of their lives.

The literature review shows that an effective educator-student relationship should comprise (1) a positive and caring teaching/learning environment, (2) activities to improve educator-student interactions and (3) specific qualities the educator must possess to be regarded as a caring and supportive educator. Barta (2010:23) states that researchers have developed tools to measure educator-student interactions, but that they only focused on the interaction that takes place and not on the relationship that exists between the educator and student. This reveals that there was a gap in the exploration of the relationship between the educator and student, confirming the need for this study.

1.11 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

In this report an article format is followed, as outlined in the NWU Manual for post-graduate studies, as well as the academic rules of the NWU.

Section 1: Overview

This section serves as an introductory orientation to the study encompassing a general overview and background to the study. The research problem and research questions, the research aim and objectives, the paradigmatic perspectives including the theoretical framework of Kumpher and clarification of concepts are briefly dealt with. The research methodology explicates the research design that was implemented and it also stipulates the population and sampling, the method used for data collection as well as data analysis. It is followed by measures to ensure trustworthiness as well as ethical considerations. The literature review elaborates on the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship. The three themes identified were discussed in detail in accordance with relevant literature and previous research studies.

Section 2: Article

Title: Exploring the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship in nursing education. The article reports on the results of the empirical study and is written according to the author guidelines of Nurse Education Today.

Section 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

In section 3 the researcher summarised the findings from the study. Conclusions drawn from the study are presented by the researcher emanating from the research questions. Limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for nursing practice, nursing education and further research are also discussed.

1.12 CONCLUSION

Section 1 served as an introduction and orientation to this study. This section discussed the research problem, research questions, the research aim and objectives. The theoretical framework was dealt with and the important concepts of this study were defined. The research methodology, measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations were also briefly described. These discussions were concluded with the literature review which forms the basis for exploring the basic elements required for an effective educator-student relationship by extracting the most relevant evidence from available literature. Section 2 will provide the guidelines for authors according to the journal for Nurse Education Today, followed by an article.

The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards.

Anatole France (1890)

1.13 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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