

**A qualitative view of the roles and
responsibilities of open distance students at a
higher education institution**

NC Kgati



orcid.org/0000-0001-5305-2195

Thesis accepted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree *Doctor of Philosophy* in *Education Curriculum
Development Innovation and Evaluation* at the North West
University

Promoter: Prof A Seugnet Blignaut

Assistant promoter: Mr C J Els

Graduation ceremony: May 2022

Student number: 12717762

Declaration

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or part submitted it at any university for a degree purpose.

N. C. Kgadi

Signature

March 2021

Copyright© 2021 North-West University

Potchefstroom Campus

All rights reserved

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family and friends. A special word of gratitude to my late parents Atkin and Gladys Matikinca and my late husband Zacharia Kgati who loved me unconditionally and who inculcated in me the culture of hard work and perseverance. My only brother Zola and my sister-in-law, your words of wisdom and support sustained me throughout this journey. I also dedicate this thesis to my daughter Tsholofelo, my son Kagiso, my nephew Onke and my niece Mpho for being there for me and encouraging me during the PhD journey. All of you have been my best supporters. I am truly thankful to have you in my life.

It is with genuine gratefulness and warmest regards that I dedicate this work to my special friend Nxasana, Dunjane, bhut' Sakhiwo whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity still ring in my ears.

I also dedicate this work to my many friends and church family who have supported me with prayers.

Acknowledgement

My deepest gratitude goes to God Almighty, my creator, my pillar of strength and my source of inspiration who made it possible for me to complete this journey.

I appreciate the North West University for financial assistance and emotional support. I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to Prof Seugnet Blignaut, my promoter, who was instrumental to the initiation of this study. I have been fortunate to have her as my promoter. I want to express my gratitude for her patience, academic guidance, support and motivation throughout my journey. My sincere appreciation for your contributions, your constructive criticism that has pushed me to expend the kind of effort I exerted to make this work as original as it can be. Thank you for the opportunity you afforded me to drink from your well of knowledge and wisdom. Most of all I want to thank you for believing in me and for always being there for me. That did not go unnoticed.

I also want to thank Mr Christo Els, my assistant promoter, for his insight, support and guidance.

Dr Verona Leendertz, thank you for sharing your expertise with me and always lending a helping hand in times of need. Thank you to Dr Johan Redelinghuys, for sending out invitations to participants and sharing your knowledge with me. A big thank you goes to Dr Dorothy Laubscher for your countless efforts to help me. My appreciation goes to Dr Doh Walters Nubia, for being a soundboard, a supporter and helping with marking of my students' work. Thank you for your time, words of motivation and advice.

I would also like to thank Mrs Hettie Sieberhagen for your hard work with language editing and translations and for adhering to timelines. In addition, thank you to Mrs Elsa Esterhuizen for checking in-text references and bibliography.

My sincere gratitude to all participants in this study, thank you for your lively discussions during focus group interviews and input.

I would like to acknowledge all my colleagues and staff members of the UODL for their support, interest and encouragement throughout this journey. It really means a lot to me.

Abstract

South Africa requires an educated population to sustain her economic development. Higher education institutions are under pressure to produce graduates with skills and competencies to fulfil such an aspiration. Distance education is an essential avenue through which more South Africans can have the much needed education without necessarily displacing themselves. Distance education is facilitated and regulated by the White Paper on e-Education which is a generic policy document to serve the needs of the system-wide use of ICT integration at all levels of education. It falls short of conceptualising the implications of ICT in distance education particularly the North-West University's (NWU) Open Distance Learning (ODL) multi-mode of education content delivery. The conceptualisation shortfall facilitates a Western oriented understanding of knowledge while ODL students' traditional understanding of their roles and responsibilities are ignored. The concepts of roles and responsibilities are critically important for an effective functioning of ODL and they are essential to the attainment of students' education aspirations. At the NWU, approximately seventy per cent of ODL student are Africans whose worldviews do not harmonise with the vision of universities. The research question which underpinned this study was *What are the experiences of the roles and responsibilities of open distance students at a higher education institution?* I followed an interpretivist research paradigm, which would draw on a qualitative research approach. To explore the experiences of the ODL students' roles and responsibilities, I employed a systematic literature review to qualitatively scrutinise the appropriate literature and subsequently explore the ODL students' views. I purposively selected ODL students as research participants for focus-group interviews with ODL students. The collected data were coded, sorted and summarised as themes, using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (a CAQDAS), ATLAS ti™. The analyses comprised an integrated dataset of voices from systematically selected authors and ODL students in order to address the research question. Due attention was given to ethical considerations throughout the study. The findings revealed that ODL students have several ways in which they understand their roles and responsibilities which were shaped by their African worldview, Africanisation. The findings that emerged from the analyses of roles and responsibilities were task orientation; time management; personal growth; social roles; financial responsibilities; personal responsibilities; family responsibilities and social responsibilities. This is because existing literature on these two entities combined them as a single. The analyses indicated that the students were not able to clearly distinguish the entities of role and responsibilities. From the lens of an African perspective, the study identified eight matching conclusions, contributions and questions to be addressed during future research.

Keywords: open distance education; distance learning; roles of distance learning students; responsibilities of distance learning students; Africanisation

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ACT	Advanced Certificate in Teaching
ADE	Advanced Diploma in Education
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
DE	Distance Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IWB	Interactive White Board
NPDE	National Professional Diploma in Education
NWU	North-West University
ODL	Open Distance Learning
OER	Open Education Resources
OICH	Online Inter-group Contact Hypothesis
OUL	Open University of London
SCTE	School for Continuing Teacher Education
SLR	Systematic Literature Review
SMS	Short Message System
UNISA	University of South Africa
UODL	Unit for Open Distance Learning

Table of Contents

Declaration	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgement.....	iii
Abstract	iv
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	xi
List of Tables.....	xiii
 Chapter One	 1
Epistemological and ontological orientation on the roles and responsibilities of Open Distance Learners	 1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 African epistemological and ontological lens for this study.....	2
1.2.1 Ubuntu	3
1.2.2 Culture as an element of Ubuntu	5
1.2.3 Religion as an element of Ubuntu	6
1.2.4 Tradition as an African way of life as an element of Ubuntu.....	7
1.3 Statement of problem and motivation for research	8
1.4 Initial overview of the literature.....	10
1.4.1 Distance education.....	10
1.4.2 Information communication technology in open distance learning	11
1.4.3 ODL students' characteristics, roles, and responsibilities.....	12
1.4.4 Development and interactions concerning to roles	14
1.4.5 Institutional and individual responsibilities	14
1.4.6 Decolonization of the African University	15
1.5 Aims of the study.....	15
1.6 Research design and methodology.....	16
1.7 Participant selection	16

1.8	Data collection strategies	17
1.9	Data analysis.....	17
1.10	Ethical aspects of research	17
1.11	Structure of the thesis structure and division of the chapters	18
Chapter Two		19
Research Design and Methodology		19
2.1	Introduction.....	19
2.2	Research Design and Methodology	19
2.2.1	Philosophical assumptions and paradigmatic underpinnings of this qualitative study.....	19
2.2.2	Exploratory qualitative case study research design and method of data collection	24
2.2.2.1	Secondary method of data collection: qualitative objective of SLR.....	26
2.2.2.2.	Limitations of the SLR	32
2.2.2.3	Primary method of data collection: qualitative subjective focus-group interviews	32
2.3	Ethical aspects of qualitative research.....	35
2.4	Trustworthiness of qualitative research	35
2.5	Role of the researcher during qualitative research	36
2.6	Summary	36
Chapter Three		38
Analysis of a systematic literature review (SLR) on roles and responsibilities of ODL students		38
3.1	Introduction.....	38
3.2	Roles of students, lecturers and higher education institutions.....	40
3.2.1	Student roles	40
3.2.1.1	Students' task orientation	41
3.2.1.2	Student time management	43
3.2.1.3	Student personal growth.....	44
3.2.1.4	Student social roles	45
3.2.2	Roles of lecturers	45
3.2.2.1	Lecturer support to students.....	46
3.2.2.2	Lecturer institutional support	47

3.2.2.3	Lecturer personal development	47
3.2.2.4	Lecturer social development.....	49
3.2.3	Roles of the HEI	49
3.2.3.1	HEI student support services.....	50
3.2.3.2	HEI servicing a large student body	51
3.3	Responsibilities	51
3.3.1	Student responsibilities	51
3.3.1.1	Student payment of tuition fees	52
3.3.1.2	Student personal responsibility.....	52
3.3.1.3	Student family responsibilities	52
3.3.1.4	Student social responsibility	53
3.3.2	Lecturer responsibilities	53
3.3.2.1	Lecturer pedagogy.....	53
3.3.2.2	Lecturing modelling for life-long learning.....	54
3.3.2.3	Lecturer pastoral care.....	54
3.3.2.4	Lecturer building relationships with colleagues	54
3.3.3	HEI responsibilities.....	54
3.3.3.1	HEI policies and practices	55
3.3.3.2	HEI financial support	56
3.3.3.3	HEI technical assistance	56
3.3.3.4	HEI academic and administrative management.....	56
3.4	ODL experiences	57
3.4.1	Student challenges.....	57
3.4.2.1	Lecturer challenges	58
3.4.3	Institutional challenges.....	59
3.4.4.1	Student benefits of ODL	59
3.4.4.2	Lecturer benefits of ODL	60
3.4.4.3	HEI benefits	61
3.5	Summary	61
Chapter Four		63
Voices of the focus group participants		63

4.1	Background to the analysis	63
4.2	Introduction to the roles of students during ODL	65
4.2.1	Indicators of the roles of students	65
4.2.1.1	Task Orientation	65
4.2.1.2	Time Management.....	67
4.2.1.3	Personal growth.....	70
4.2.1.4	Social Roles.....	71
4.3	Indicators of student responsibilities	72
4.3.1	Introduction to the responsibilities of students in an ODL environment.....	73
4.3.1.1	Financial responsibilities.....	73
4.3.1.2	Personal responsibilities.....	75
4.3.1.3	Family responsibilities	76
4.3.1.4	Social responsibilities	77
4.4	Information and Communication Technologies.....	78
4.5	Challenges and barriers	78
4.6	Implications of the roles and responsibilities for ODL students	80
4.7	Summary of findings of students' roles and responsibilities	81
4.7.1	The relatedness of African philosophy in terms of ODL students' perceived roles and responsibilities	82
4.7.1.1	Roles of students as influenced by African philosophy	82
4.7.1.2	Responsibilities of students as influenced by African philosophy	85
4.7.1.3	Interactions between roles and responsibilities.....	85
4.8	Summary	86
Chapter Five		87
Synopsis of student roles and responsibilities from an African theoretical perspective		87
5.1	Introduction.....	87
5.2	Overview of the previous chapters.....	87
5.3	Synopsis of the significant findings of the study	89
5.4	Addressing the research question.....	90
5.5	Conclusions.....	91
5.5.1	Conclusion 1: Students' superficial understanding of roles and responsibilities	91

5.5.2	Conclusion 2: Time management of ODL students	91
5.5.3	Conclusion 3: Motivation of ODL students.....	91
5.5.4	Conclusion 4: ODL students' dilemmas regarding social roles.....	92
5.5.5	Conclusion 5: Financial constraints of ODL students	92
5.5.6	Conclusion 6: Personal development of ODL students	92
5.5.7	Conclusion 7: Family responsibilities of ODL students.....	92
5.5.8	Conclusion 8: Ubuntu as a social responsibility of ODL students.....	93
5.6	Contribution of this study.....	93
5.7	Limitations of this study.....	94
5.8	Trustworthiness of the study	95
5.9	Recommendations for further research	95
5.10	Questions for future research.....	96
5.11	Reflection on the researcher's journey	97
	References.....	98
	Addendum 2.1: Ethical clearance certificate.....	108
	Addendum 2.2: Students' consent form.....	110
	Addendum 2.3: Lecturers' consent form	112
	Addendum 2.4 to 2.7: SLR recordings of documents	114
	Addendum 3.1: Focus group interview schedule for students.....	115
	Addendum 3.2: Focus group interview schedule for lecturers.....	116
	Addendum 6: Certificate for language editing.....	117

List of Figures

FIGURE 1.1:	AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL RESEARCH LENS	3
FIGURE 2.1:	SOCIAL RESEARCH PARADIGMS (ELS AND BLIGNAUT (2013) ADAPTED FROM BURRELL AND MORGAN (1979)	22
FIGURE 2.2:	STRATEGIES FOLLOWED DURING EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN 26	
FIGURE 2.3:	SLR FLOW DIAGRAM OF DOCUMENT SELECTION	30
FIGURE 3.1:	THEMES, CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES AS IDENTIFIED FROM THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SLR	39
FIGURE 3.2:	CATEGORIES RELATING TO THE ROLES OF STUDENTS, LECTURERS AND THE HEI	40
FIGURE 3.3:	CATEGORY OF STUDENT ROLES.....	41
FIGURE 3.4:	LECTURER ROLES.....	46
FIGURE 3.5:	ROLES OF HEIS	50
FIGURE 3.6:	RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS, LECTURERS AND HEIS.....	51
FIGURE 3.7:	ASPECTS OF STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES	52
FIGURE 3.8:	ASPECTS OF LECTURE RESPONSIBILITIES.....	53
FIGURE 3.9:	ASPECTS OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES.....	55
FIGURE 3.10:	EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS, LECTURERS AND HEIS	57
FIGURE 3.11:	STUDENT CHALLENGES	57
FIGURE 3.12:	INDICATES THE CHALLENGES THAT LECTURERS FACE DURING THE DELIVERY OF ODL.	58
FIGURE 3.13:	INDICATES THE CHALLENGES WHICH HEIS GENERALLY FACE.....	59
FIGURE 3.14:	OUTLINES THE BENEFITS WHICH ODL HOLDS FOR STUDENTS.....	59
FIGURE 4.1:	COMBINED NETWORK VIEW OF THE TWO DATA THEMES, SIX CATEGORIES OF DATA, WITH RELATED DATA CODES, WHICH EMERGED FROM THE QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS.	64
FIGURE 4.2:	NETWORK VIEW OF THE CODING STRUCTURE OF THE THREE DATA CATEGORIES RELATED TO THE FIRST DATA THEME INDICATORS OF ROLES.....	65
FIGURE 4.3:	NETWORK VIEW OF THE CODING STRUCTURE PERTAINING TO THE THREE DATA CATEGORIES OF THE SECOND DATA THEME INDICATORS OF RESPONSIBILITIES	73
FIGURE 4.4:	NETWORK VIEW RELATING TO ICTs	78

FIGURE 4.5:	NETWORK VIEW OF THE CODING STRUCTURE PERTAINING TO CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS ...	79
FIGURE 5.1:	A SYNOPTIC DEPICTION THE FINDINGS OF ODL STUDENT'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	90

List of Tables

TABLE 1.1:	OUTLINE OF THIS RESEARCH REPORT AS FIVE CHAPTERS.....	18
TABLE 2.1:	SIX KEY STEPS IN CONDUCTING A SLR.....	28
TABLE 2.2:	TERMINOLOGY AND FUNCTIONS OF ATLAS.TI™*	31
TABLE 3.2:	OUTLINE OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF QUALITATIVE THEMES AND CATEGORIES TO THE STRUCTURE OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULES	61
TABLE 4.1:	IDENTIFIED STUDENTS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	81
TABLE 4.2:	STUDENT ROLES, PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS REGARDING THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	81
TABLE 5.1:	SYNOPSIS OF SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS	89
TABLE 5.2:	CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY IN TERMS OF ITS FINDINGS	93

Chapter One

Epistemological and ontological orientation on the roles and responsibilities of Open Distance Learners

1.1 Introduction

In my capacity as a university lecturer for open distance learning (ODL) students, I often observe how ODL students grapple with what is expected of them as adult distance students. Some difficulties I observed were that students submit their assignments long after the due date has passed and then make excuses. Some students submit work that is not their own and then they indicate that they are studying “cooperatively.” After infinite face-to-face messages and telephone conversations with students, it became apparent that students are not aware of, or do not understand, their roles and responsibilities as ODL students. This could contribute to why many students experience difficulties in their professional development through ODL. This insight also explains why a study of this nature is required. I have therefore come to realize that this issue requires urgent investigation. It is for this reason that the purpose of this study is to investigate the view of ODL students concerning their roles and responsibilities framed within the African epistemological and ontological perspective.

In this chapter, I firstly elucidate the African epistemological and ontological lenses through which I understood the research problems, systematically reviewed literature, focused, and interpreted my data to arrive at the findings. In this section, aspects of African epistemology and ontology have also been unpacked in the terms of Ubuntu, culture, tradition, religion and human being. As the large majority of the NWU ODL students originate from African cultures, the world view of this chapter and the rest of the study mainly relates to African value systems. This value system is different from the colonized Western epistemological view that often underpins Higher Education methodologies in South Africa. This section is followed by the statement of problem and motivation for the research. A brief review of literature is explained next. In the review, I briefly engage with distance education, ICT in ODL, ODL students’ characteristics, roles and responsibilities and decolonising the African university. The research question is presented in this section. The next section in the chapter outlines the aim of the study. I then present my qualitative case study as well as the research design and methodology of my research. The sampling criteria for participation are also reported, together with the ethical considerations of my research. The collection and data analysis of my qualitative data are discussed, and the trustworthiness and credibility of my qualitative findings are considered. The chapter ends with an outline that explains how the rest of my research report is structured.

1.2 African epistemological and ontological lens for this study

Gray (2001, p. 3) defines the term Afrocentric as “an idea and a perspective which holds that African people can and should see, study, interpret and interact with people, life, and reality from the vantage point of African people rather than from the vantage point of European people, or Asians, or other non-African people, or from the vantage point of African people who are alienated from Africanness.” An Afrocentric worldview is “used to describe the cultural values of people of African origin and African descent throughout the World” (Mekada, 1999, p. 53).

Figure 1.1 presents a graphical view of the African epistemological and ontological lenses through which I view, focus, and interpret the findings of my study. The following section discusses the components of the proposed African epistemological and ontological research lens.

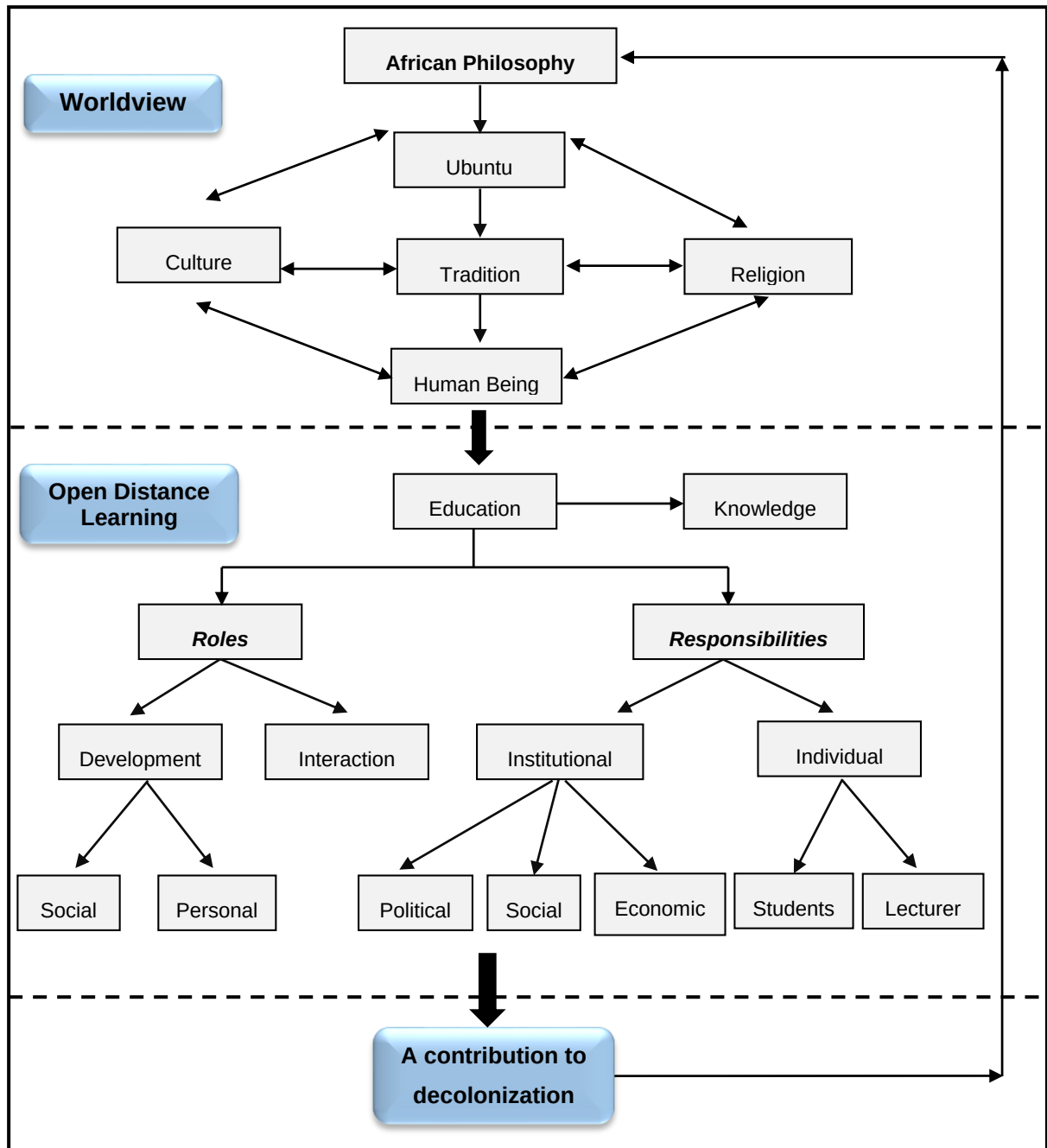


Figure 1.1: African epistemological and ontological research lens

1.2.1 Ubuntu

Tutu (2011, pp. 21-24) states that “Ubuntu teaches us that our worth is intrinsic to who we are. Ubuntu reminds us that we belong to one family: God’s family, the human family.” Ubuntu is associated with *umntu* meaning a human being and is “a deeply rooted value system in the African society.” A human being (*umntu*) comprises the following elements: body, heart, breath, soul, energy, language, intellect, and humanness. These elements together make up a human being. The nature of Ubuntu is the most valuable attribute of true human existence. Le Roux (2000, pp. 43-46) claims

that “a person possessing Ubuntu will have characteristics such as being caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, generous, hospitable, socially mature, socially sensitive, virtuous and blessed.” This would mean that Ubuntu/Botho is considered to constitute aspects of a social ethic which in an African society, serves as a unifier of that society. This is an important social issue because African societies tend to place a high value on social behaviours which are associated with the worth of an individual - unlike the West, which is often characterized by humanism (Teffo, 1998). The dependency of the human self on the other within a society is conveyed by the saying “Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang” (Sotho) or “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” (Nguni) which means “I am because we are” (Teffo, 1998, pp. 3-5). This interconnectedness highlights the centrality of humans within human relationships; for this reason it is often articulated that people only exist and develop in a proportional relationship with others (Higgs & Smith, 2000).

Mbigi and Maree (2005) define Ubuntu as a metaphor that places emphasis on the social connotation of group solidarity; on the endurance of African communities which comes as a result of poverty and dispossession, hence survival is achieved through brotherly group care. Unlike that of individual self-reliance common in western societies. They further explain that this praxis of concerted solidarity is not new and not peculiar to Africa. Ironically, Ubuntu is the embodiment of an idea, often flawed in its interpretation and the practice thereof. As a philosophy, Ubuntu is considered to be at the centre of the promotion of humanness, a common good and to be of benefit to the society, which is taken to imply an element of the essence of human growth (Venter, 2004). Ubuntu acts as a social barrier, causing people to become less selfish and egocentric. “The ideal person according to the African worldview...is one who has the virtues of sharing and compassion. The individual has a social commitment to share with others what s/he has. The ideal person will be judged in terms of his relationship with others, for example, his record in terms of kindness and good character, generosity, hard work, discipline, honour and respect, and living in harmony” (Teffo, 1996, pp. 101-104). The perception of Ubuntu along with that of its counterpart, communalism, when drawn from an African philosophy of education, contributes significantly to one’s understanding of knowledge within an African educational discourse (Venter, 2004).

In recent times, the importance of the concept of Ubuntu has increasingly become more prominent in South Africa. The underpinning notions of Ubuntu, “rooted in African traditional society and philosophy and implying humanness or the quality of being human”, are now questioned by those who seem to experience the meaning of Ubuntu owing to the unequal nature of the South African society under the democratic dispensation. Ubuntu also “espouses the ideal of interconnectedness among people”; much of it is still very much in practice within African societies. This view is supported by the African belief that “one should always live for the other.” According to Mbigi (2000, p. 6), “Ubuntu means, “I am because you are; I can be a person through others.” According to Mbiti (1990, p. 106) “whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual.” “The philosophy of Ubuntu helps with human relationships, and boosts human value, trust, and dignity. This again leads to social harmony and cohesion starting with

the family and cultural community, circling out to the universal community” (Le Roux, 2000). Human beings are social beings created to live within a subtle network of mutual dependency. The ideal of *botho* or *Ubuntu*, as implemented within an educational setting, can only work when teacher advancement forms part of the community. For the implementation to be considered a success, this requires that the philosophy of Ubuntu should be at the centre of teacher advancement in Africa. The mainstream narrative of the current forms of teacher development, mainly western, has to be dismantled. Ubuntu- oriented teacher education should acknowledge the many identities throughout the people that make up any open and distance learning institution and who concur in creating substantial learning opportunities for learners of African descent. (Van Niekerk, 2004).

1.2.2 Culture as an element of Ubuntu

Culture refers to the way of life of a specific group of people. It can be seen in ways by which a group of people exercise “beliefs, values, customs followed, dress style, personal decoration like makeup and jewellery, relationships with others and special symbols and codes,” which are alluded to as attributes of cultural norms. Culture is passed on from one generation (parents) to the next (children). Culture is not static but is always changing as each generation contributes its understanding of the world and discards cultural attributes that are considered redundant to them. To some scholars, culture has been referred to as “the way of life for an entire society” (Boston University. School of Public Health, 2016).

Even though there is evidence that Africans have diverse cultures, it is insufficient to refute the existence and unity of African culture. These claims have contributed to the division and identification of some Africans, especially those south of the Sahara as “Black Africa” whilst identifying those of the north of the Sahara as the “Middle East” (Asante M. & K., 1985, p. 4). Like any other people, Africans are accosted with the complexities and difficulties or questions of life. Africans, like everyone else, try to find ways to deal with these complexities in order to have more meaningful life experiences. Van der Walt (2006) defines culture as a devotional answer to a divine calling, a means of enrichment, which should not be a source of tension between cultures, rather a mutual enrichment and appreciation of each other’s belief systems. “The principles of the African value system include the interconnection of all things; oneness of mind, body, and spirit; collective identity as opposed to individual identity; consanguineous family structure; consequential morality; analytical as opposed to relational-affective thinking; phenomenological time; and spirituality” (Daniels, 2001, p. 303). The debate that African people across the continent share some aspects of their culture does not imply that there are no cultural differences among Africans. Indeed, there are differences, but they are not as great as the Africans’ differences from Europeans or Asians. There is also extraneous cultural differences amongst non-Africans which accounts for some cultural differences (Asante M. & K., 1985). It is of vital importance that professionals be aware of the dynamism of African culture just as it is with other cultures around the world, but taking into consideration that there are core cultural traits that have endured through the difficult times of colonization (Thabede, 2008). He further explains that

some Africans may have adopted Christianity, but there are still times when they follow the African cultural way of life.

As explained earlier, cultural norms and attributes are an embodiment of different values, all of which are closely related to one another. It is for this reason that one can meaningfully combine social, moral, religious, political, aesthetic, and even economic value as an indicator or attribute of peoples' culture. South Africa has been called "the rainbow nation" because it comprises many diverse cultures. Cultural practices are how we talk and behave, how we pray, the special things we do when we have festivals, births, and deaths. These activities are all centred and executed within a frame of cultural values informed and shaped by Ubuntu. Within the South African context, although there are differences drawn from different cultural orientations in terms of languages, religions, race, customs, and traditions, Ubuntu still plays a dominant role in informing how most South African interconnect with one another. This is mostly the case with the people such as the Zulus, Ndebeles, Khoisans, Hindus, Muslims, and Afrikaaners. This is a clear indication of the central role played by Ubuntu in shaping South African society. Even though these different cultural groups do not exercise the African cultural understanding of Ubuntu in a similar capacity, they all however show signs of Ubuntu.

1.2.3 Religion as an element of Ubuntu

In a typical African Society, every activity revolves around religion which seems to be the fulcrum around which reality has been constructed (Umoh, 2005). For this reason, religious values are not toyed with; they are valued and regarded with the highest social esteem. For instance, the religious notion of a supreme being is all-encompassing and is seen as being invisible, indigenous, and eternal. For Africans, religion holds a central belief in their existence of human soul, which is superstitiously believed to be alive into eternity.

Hammond-Tooke (1974) affirms that Africans are concerned about their existence and that of the origin of the planet and they ask existential questions about the origin of the earth. Existential questions asked by Africans include aspects such as who and how was the earth created? Is the man at the centre of all human activities or are humans part of the broader activities of the planet? The question of life after death is frequently asked particularly amongst children? Answers to these questions are centred around the belief of Ubuntu. For instance, Africans believe and have their notions of a supreme being who provides assistance and helps them to gain an understanding of difficult questions about life. It is for this reason that resources and knowledge about life must and should be shared amongst members of the community. Religion is also understood to be an avenue from which emotional support can be acquired. Irrespective of the disruption of African societies by colonialism, many Africans still have a high esteem for an African understanding of religion. Those that were persuaded by the colonial understanding of religions, mainly through Christianity, have continued to exhibit that fundamental African high esteem for a religion although it is oriented towards a western view or spirituality through Christianity.

Africans' knowledge of God is usually disclosed through "proverbs, idioms, short statements, songs, prayers, names, myths, stories and religious ceremonies" (Mbiti, 1990). Africans remember these types of knowledge about God and it is from this understanding that Ubuntu is practiced with ease and passed to the next generation. Most of the practices of Ubuntu and the knowledge about the existence of God are not written. For this reason, Africans relate much importance to an oral narration of the nature of God and such narratives are hardly distorted or questioned for their authenticity. Hence, God is conceived as an integral part of African society. This means that Africans do not believe in a western-oriented understanding of atheists. This understanding is best captured in the Ashanti proverb: "No one shows a child the Supreme Being" Mbiti (1990, p. 29). The implication of this is that the knowledge of God's existence is known by all.

Culture, tradition, and religion are the elements of *Ubuntu* that make up a human being. For ODL students to be able to know and understand their roles and responsibilities they need all of the above. The institution and the lecturers also need to have an understanding of the students' backgrounds in order to provide effective support for the students in order to succeed in their studies. *Ubuntu* philosophy represents an African "conception of human beings and their relationship with the community that embodies the ethics defining Africans and their social behaviour" (Mbigi & Maree, 2005, p. 75). Mbiti (1990) maintains that Ubuntu also prepares the student for education.

In the following section, I scrutinize the concept of tradition as an African way of life and an element of *Ubuntu*.

1.2.4 Tradition as an African way of life as an element of Ubuntu

In an African society, the passing of traditional beliefs from one generation to the next is conceived as a way of life. The complexity and fortune of the African traditional world-view are based on "the complex and delicate symbolic structures which give human life practical meaning and relevance" (Udeani, 2000). This is particularly the case in the situation of social changes, where some cultural values are thought about, and then handed down to the next generation in order to be preserved (Graburm, 2001). This understanding is applicable to the traditional African world-view, as every aspect of African life is articulated in such a way that there is no disconnect from such a traditional understanding of culture. These traditional beliefs are associated with how Africans plant grain in the field, celebrate annual festivals, and how they manage social interactions. Almost every social activity in African society is being informed by these African traditional beliefs.

The traditional norms of working together in Africa are reflections of the heritage of an African society which is underpinned by Ubuntu. Such heritage is exercised in instances where there is a need to develop a sense of co-operation particularly during difficult times like grief. Providing family support is seen as a symbol of solidarity with a person or family in grief (Mwenda & Muuka, 2004). Some African

traditions are still relevant and useful like *lobola* (i.e. traditional marriage customs), but some have outlived their usefulness in a contemporary African society although some of these traditional practices persist nonetheless (e.g. traditional initiation schools and circumcision rites). The presence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic revealed that some African traditional rituals and practices should be considered negligent and obsolete. This is due to their ineffectiveness to deal with the pandemic, traditionally. Similar types of traditional practices are found in many ethnic groupings across Africa. These include polygamy, levirate marriage, and unsafe circumcision for young boys (Mswela, 2009). In a majority of cases in contemporary rural Africa, these practices are continued in good faith. But in the practice of unsafe circumcision, this could unwittingly endanger the very existence and sustainability of the communities concerned. Recently, initiatives are being undertaken to sensitize these communities to the afflictions that can arise from some of these African practices with the help of print media, radio, and television.

1.3 Statement of problem and motivation for research

Within the South African educational context, fundamental learning means learning competently in a second language, using information and communication technology (ICT), and acquiring academic literacy to lay the foundation for effective teaching and learning in education (Enuku & Ojugwu, 2006). Digital delivery of education has become a global phenomenon. As early as 1998, Munyua (1998) identified the importance of ICT capacity building in developing countries such as South Africa. A major challenge for the South African government is to ensure the development of a more effective ICT sector strategy and policy framework, for the country to harness the full potential of ICT and to ensure “better governance, deepen democracy and accelerate growth and development”, especially through “job creation and poverty alleviation,” and in doing so, create an “information society that will improve the quality of life for all citizens” (Mbeki, 2001, p. 3). The White Paper on e-Education (Department of Education, 2004) is the only official policy promoting and guiding the system-wide implementation, integration, and use of ICT throughout all levels of the education system, which includes tertiary ODL education for TPD.

As of 2015, there were about 30 000 UODL students registered at NWU. There are three NWU campuses in South Africa, i.e. in Mafikeng, Vanderbijlpark and Potchefstroom. The majority of the ODL students are in the Faculty of Education and are “teachers who are under- or unqualified and who want to upgrade their qualifications” (Spamer, 2016, p. 6). The Unit for Open Distance Learning (UODL) has 65 LSCs in South Africa and Namibia. The majority of these students are located in deep rural, semi-rural, and urban areas—their identity being mostly that of African. The question arises of what is understood by an African identity? The influence of Western Eurocentric culture on Africans is continuous and there is a need to forcefully retake control of African oriented education. This should be an endeavour for all critically conscious African educators who are interested in the struggle to re-establish an African identity in education theory and practice. “Through *learning to be*, a person is

developing a social identity” (Gravett, 2004, p. 26). This identity either conceived to be under development or construction, helps shapes future learning as well as what a person focuses on and pays attention to. The acquisition of knowledge is a process of learning and not a demonstration of its product, and this implies that one becomes involved with learning in order to become aware of the epistemological foundations of a knowledge domain.

As a mode of delivery, distance learning through distance education has successfully provided an alternative solution to South Africa’s need for higher education, with annual student enrolment on a steady increase. This mode of delivery requires that students demonstrate an absolute sense of urgency towards their studies, under the auspices of self-directed learning. Self-direction and self-determination remain an integral component of the process of teaching and learning for distance students. This study focused on investigating how students perceive their urgency through their roles and responsibilities. A properly perceived concept of roles and responsibilities by a student will have an undeniable potential to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in distance education. In providing an answer to students’ perceived urgency, a unique group of students were purposively selected. Although registered as distance students at the NWU, these students had the proximity advantage of attending contact sessions at the Potchefstroom campus, where Interactive White Board sessions were offered to all distance students. These students’ perspectives came from a mix of distance and contact students, which is critical for improving the overall quality of learning and teaching. Data were generated through focus group discussions, through which comprehensive perspectives were understood. An analysis of the data revealed that although the students understood their roles and responsibilities, the urgency to demonstrate these roles and responsibilities was superficially conceived. The students’ inability to fully conceptualize their roles and responsibilities as self-directed learners, resulted in the perceptual influence of this inability on their roles and responsibilities. This study, therefore, reiterates that students’ roles and responsibilities should be treated with an indispensable urgency, in order for the quality of teaching and learning to be improved in distance education.

A dedicated Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of available literature resulted in initial views on the roles and responsibilities of open distance learning students. The search was then expanded to roles, students, and distance education through interviews with ODL students. As indicated in Section 1.2, the greater majority of students are Africans, but no literature could be found on the specific roles and responsibilities of open distance learning students from an African perspective. Mdakane (2011) extensively explored the roles and responsibilities of ODL lecturers and higher education students. Her study indicated that the roles of ODL students were neither explored nor documented. It was therefore of the essence to explore the aspects relating to the roles and responsibilities of ODL.

The next section describes what education is, distance education in higher education, and how education links to students’ roles and responsibilities.

1.4 Initial overview of the literature

1.4.1 Distance education

Education has always been part of human society and is one of the most important factors that shape a society. Education is mostly considered to mean the undertaking or proceeding of acquiring general knowledge which may or may not directly impact society. Education also has the potential to develop ones' potential of reasoning and rational judgement through a process of preparing oneself or others intellectually for a mature life. Van Heerden (1997, p. 18) indicates that "Africanisation of education is often employed concerning educational change, and in the sense of bringing African culture into formal schooling."

This study is centred on distance education. There is no single unifying definition of distance education (DE). DE has been conceptualized in many ways, but in easy terms, it alludes to a predetermined and systematic educational provision where there is a significant distance between the instructors' institution and that of the student (Sikwibele & Mungoo, 2009). Teaching and learning in DE is a planned process that normally occurs in a different locale from teaching, but it requires a special course design and instructional techniques, supported by special organizational and administrative arrangements, in which various types of ICT are used for communication (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). The most general features of DE include the use of mixed media (paper-based and electronic) for "teaching and learning, correspondence, independent learning, and the possibility of face-to-face meetings with tutors" (Sikwibele & Mungoo, 2009, p. 12).

Although ODL is discussed in the "same breath as DE" (Belawati & Baggaley, 2009; MacIntosh, 2005), not all DE institutions embrace the ODL approach to teaching and learning. Meanwhile, all institutions of ODL are regarded as DE institutions. ODL is an advantageous mode of education delivery because "it makes learning more accessible" to a wider range of students, especially those in remote areas, and provides them with "the opportunity to control their learning schedules" (Ko & Rossen, 2001, p. 5). The term ODL "has been interchangeably used to describe a diverse variety of settings and programmes" (Sherry, 1995). ODL may include some aspects of traditional education, however, much more support services are delivered to ODL students, e.g. utilizing tutorial notes and supportive contact classes (Ashby, 2005). The openness of ODL presents an ideological position that affects access and availability of education to distant communities and supports the assumptions about the production of knowledge and its facilitation. In South Africa, DE and ODL are predominantly being used to deliver Teacher Professional Development (TPD) for in-service practicing teachers across different geographic and socio-economic barriers. In South Africa, consideration of the implementations of open and distance learning and teacher development should be reflected upon in terms of the history and context. This implies that a rethink is needed when teacher development programmes are being designed in open and distance learning.

Kanuka and Conrad (2003, pp. 385-393) refer to ODL “as flexible learning, i.e. a learner-centred distance learning approach that allows learners to choose when, where, how, and at what pace they want to learn.” Distance learning requires a thoroughly planned teaching and learning experience that uses and relies on a wide spectrum of ICTs, to reach students due to ICTs which are designed to encourage learner interaction and participation in learning (Greenberg, 1998). Many higher education institutions (HEIs), e.g. the Open University of London (2009), the University of South Africa (Isman, Altinay, & Altinay, 2004; Isman, Dabaj, Altinay, & Altinay, 2004), and the Unit for ODL at the NWU (North-West University. School of Continuing Teacher Education, 2009), offer ODL programmes through printed media, contact sessions and e-learning. Blended approaches of complementary course delivery methods, e.g. the use of printed media, e-learning, and m-learning, should complement or replace the function of traditional face-to-face interaction, in order to support teachers in becoming independent and self-reliant ODL students (Kelly, Lyng, McGrath, & Cannon, 2009, p. 229).

1.4.2 Information communication technology in open distance learning

As a modern science, ICT aims to gather, store, orchestrate, modify and communicate desired types of information in a specific environment, e.g. ODL delivery (Mahajan, 2002, p. 269). Various forms of ICTs are used in ODL for pedagogical support, e.g. computer hardware and software, the Internet, calculators, multi-media, broadcasting technology (radio and television), personal digital assistants (PDAs), course management tools, computer-mediated communication (CMC), electronic networks, wireless networks, data projectors, interactive whiteboards, computer conferencing, etc. (Gunawardena & Mclsaac, 2004, p. 360; Shafiul Alam, 2010, p. 98). The internet has become the ultimate ICT tool of the information age: those who access the Internet enjoy the advantage of information, knowledge, and education (Guasch & Ugas, 2007, p. 44).

The general direction of DE/ODL depends on a country's technology infrastructure, pedagogy, and educational objectives. The attainment and assimilation of knowledge are significantly facilitated by ICT, which offers developing countries, such as South Africa, unprecedented opportunities to enhance education. To make gains with this opportunity, improved policy formulation and execution is required that would seek to broaden the range of opportunities for business and the poor (Mikre, 2011). Few African countries have policies for the implementation of e-education. However, in its first official e-Education policy of South Africa, the government aims that “every South African manager, teacher and learner in the general and further education training bands (is) to be ICT capable (that is, to use ICTs confidently and creatively to help develop the skills and knowledge they need as life-long learners in order to achieve personal goals and to be full participants in the global community) by 2013” (Department of Education, 2004, p. 17).

Although ICT plays a substantial role in fostering an equalization plan for many developing countries, this has not succeeded in addressing some of the fundamental inequalities also created by the

realities of digitalization. The widening gap between those who have access to the digital world and those who still struggle to have access, seems to have made a huge difference in the digitalization of ODL (Mikre, 2011). Consequently, the use of ICT at different levels in education is a challenging experience for those that are in the struggle to acquire the service (Mikre, 2011). The use of ICT in ODL has the possibility of reducing the digital divide amongst students and has the potential to reach rural and remote areas for skills development and proper education, providing the opportunity for the massification of education while students are exposed to world class standards and trends (Kruger, 2010).

1.4.3 ODL students' characteristics, roles, and responsibilities

Over the years, students' demographics and needs in Higher Education (HE) have shifted due to an increased urbanization, compelling a reassessment of the pedagogic strategy used for students with diverse experiences. (Easton, 2003). General characteristics of successful Open Distance Learning (ODL) students include students who: (i) voluntarily seek further education or professional development; (ii) are on average, older than on-campus students; (iii) are highly self-motivated, (iv) self-disciplined students; (v) are willing to initiate telephonic conversations to instructors for assistance; (vi) possess a serious attitude towards coursework, (vii) take responsibility for their independent studies, and (viii) possess a previous qualification (Baloyi, 2014; Easton, 2003; Palloff & Pratt, 1998). Vital to successful ODL learning is the students' ability to balance responsibilities, both within communities of learning and beyond. Students should become "self-directed learners," which requires them to be highly "self-regulated," to be responsible for organizing their learning, and to be reflective (Du Plessis, 2011; Zariski & Styles, 2000). Self-directed students are expected to understand the subject content and should have "a positive attitude towards themselves as students." This enables them to be able to reflect on their learning and provides self-motivation to continue learning (Clayton, 2003).

The concepts of roles and responsibilities are like the two sides of a coin. Although they can be viewed individually, they cannot function separately and mostly relate to four functions: responsibility, accountability, consultation, and informedness (Makoe, 2011). The further that the students' progress in education, the more responsibility they need to take for their learning. ODL students should have the following general characteristics: be self-directed students, understand expectations, proactively seek clarification, become active students, develop self-discipline, set their own goals, and ask for what they need (Alford & Lawson, 2009). Furthermore, ODL students should know how to access and use the information immediately if it is necessary (Isman *et al.*, 2004). The research of Isman, Altinay *et al.* (2004, p. 5) identifies the following roles of Distance Education (DE)/ODL students:

- "Disciplined and on task
- Consult with, and seek guidance from, advisors through required access methods
- Assume responsibility for own learning
- Develop effective interaction with teachers and counsellors (like classical learning)

- Evaluate and judge own performance
- Combat prejudice and communication barriers.”

Stakeholders involved in ODL play various roles in order for course delivery to be successful. Roles in this context refer to behaviours that are befitting conditions and which increase the likelihood that the individual's goals will be achieved (Solomon, Carol Surprenant, Czepiel, & Gutman, 1985). Roles can further be defined in terms of “functional” versus “technical quality.” The technical quality of ODL students is determined by what they bring to the service encounter, whereas the functional quality is determined by how customers behave during the service. Four groups of people play prominent roles in ODL: (i) students, (ii) lecturers, (iii) designer groups, and (iv) directors (Isman *et al.*, 2004). There are three types of interaction within ODL in terms of the roles of students and lecturers, i.e. interdependence, distance, and interaction. These three types of interaction can be labelled as student-content interaction, student-instructor interaction, and student-student interaction (Isman *et al.*, 2004). Due to the nature of ODL learning, students should take considerable responsibility for managing their learning. It is essential to explicitly communicate programme expectations and the responsibilities of ODL students; but as yet, much of such communication relates to the personal experience of practitioners from their perspective. Compared to traditional teaching and learning approaches, ODL students must assume greater responsibility for their learning, should “take more initiative in asking questions and obtaining help, be flexible and prepared to deal with technical difficulties” (Mdakane, 2011, p. 19).

The evolution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its integration into teaching and learning have considerably transformed the earlier roles of study centres and support systems of many DE universities. Class teaching at study centres, with the help of technology, has shifted to different forms of classroom interaction. Counselling, for example, can now be performed through direct interactions between students and facilitators/tutors, which can be easily facilitated through electronic media. Irrespective of this possibility for counselling purposes, students still need social meetings with tutors and other students despite of electronic media (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). A balanced mixture of various support modalities, suitable to the national setting in which each DE/ODL university operates, is of utmost importance (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). Students enrolled in an online class for the first time may have certain expectations about their roles and the roles of faculty (Paden & Stell, 2009). Many of these expectations result from their past experiences in traditional classroom settings. Student roles (i.e. appropriate behaviours that are usually associated with being a student) have primarily been learnt in the traditional classroom. Behaviours such as coming to class on time, participating in class discussions, interacting with faculty and other students in a respectful manner, are typical roles that students are accustomed to because they encountered these roles throughout their former education (Paden & Stell, 2009). Comparable roles may not be clear to students transitioning from traditional face-to-face classes to the inclusion, for example, of online classes. Often students assume that the expectations and roles of DE/ODL are similar to traditional education. Role congruence is the degree to which students' expectations of their roles match the roles they

perform during a service encounter (Kelly *et al.*, 2009). For example, students may expect the workload (assignments and participation) in an online class to be similar to that of a traditional class. However, because participation can only be assessed by the instructor of an online class, through written work, e.g. through comments electronically submitted as part of an online discussion, students may find that greater effort is required to participate, compared to voicing a comment in a traditional classroom (Paden & Stell, 2009). Students should take an active approach to learning if they are to be successful online learners (Palloff & Pratt, 1998). An e-student should be able to identify and prioritize his or her personal skills gaps and manage the learning experience, including setting clear goals, establishing specific plans, and securing needed resources (Birch, 2002). Success in the online environment requires that students understand the purpose and function of online learning by giving both lecturers and students enough time to be comfortable in using the tools provided in the online environment (Quek & Wong, 2003).

Taking the lead of Merriam (2009) who maintains that initial exploration of a problematic area, a qualitative approach to the research should pose only a single research question. I, therefore, pose the research question which underpins this study as:

What are the experiences of the roles and responsibilities of Open Distance students at a higher education institution?

1.4.4 Development and interactions concerning to roles

Development is a process of improving the quality of all human lives. Isman, Altinay, *et al.* (2004) and Isman, Dabaj, *et al.* (2004) argue that with the development of technology, every lifestyle and also actions of human beings are faced with changes. Isman, Altinay, *et al.* (2004, p. 1) contend that “people can reach fast useful information through the computer-based system.” He further explains that technological implications have changed the social, global, cultural educational competitiveness. Development of open distance learning students’ technology skills will enhance their learning which at the end will enable them to successfully attain their goals.

1.4.5 Institutional and individual responsibilities

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) of South Africa, according to the Higher Education Act of 1997, is responsible for the quality assurance of Higher Education (HE). These responsibilities are undertaken by permanent sub-committees such as the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), Council on Higher Education (2004). The mandate of the HEQC includes, amongst others, the promotion of quality, institutional audits and programme accreditation. Many students in the current South African context, seem not to be fully prepared for HE even after they are qualified to be in higher education. This impediment has negatively contributed to students being unable to cope with the demands of academic expectations of Higher Education. Consequently, a considerable number of

students never graduate. I, and other authors, suggest that one of the reasons is that their expectations do not meet the realities of higher education (Nair & Pillay, 2004; Paras, 2001; Roberts, 2006).

1.4.6 Decolonization of the African University

Relating to the concept of decolonization, Makgoba, and Seepeg (2004, p. 19) emphasize that “we need to face and indeed overcome the penalties of colonial history: the valorisation of western academia, insufficient levels of pride and faith in African achievements, a heritage of complex racial dynamics, and an unequal distribution of national resources. But most importantly, we have to face the responsibility of being an African university, for it is here that the most honourable identity will be found; an identity that will also give a new consciousness—a being in the world and belonging to the world.”

The supposed African University should be the custodian of African knowledge and the production thereof. Besides, both aesthetic and functional also contribute to the notion of an African university. So that it can dictate terms of appropriation to the world. It should engage in the great debates on Africa’s intellectual property which is housed in the West: Africa’s knowledge and experiences that are studied, owned, and appropriated by others from somewhere other than Africa (Makgoba & Seepe, 2004).

Colonial imperialism played a huge role in writing the history of Africa. This one-sided narrative provided the framework for the organized subjugation of the cultural, scientific and economic life of many on the African continent. This subjugation impacted African people’s way of life. For all intents and purposes, African identity became an inverted mirror of Western Eurocentric identity within the educational setting. This state of affairs emerged as an attempt to reassert distinctively African ways of thinking and how they ought to relate with the world. Recently, a reverse reaction has emerged calling for an African Renaissance (van Niekerk & Higgs, 2008).

Calls for an African Renaissance have been heard in the period of Africans’ post-independence. The process of decolonization has empowered Africa to assert its rights in terms of self-determination of Africans within the African context to attain its independence. Thiong (1993) claims that Africa’s fight for independence was mainly about people’s struggle to claim their own space and culture, and their right to name the world for themselves rather than being named through the eyes of Europeans. In this study, I contribute to the decolonisation of African universities by engaging with ODL students’ understanding of their roles and responsibilities as depicted in Figure 1.1 by drawing predominantly on African epistemology and ontology.

1.5 Aims of the study

The aim of this contained qualitative case study, therefore, was to provide an initial qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities of open distance learning students at a higher education institution more specifically to:

- explore the roles and responsibilities of ODL students according to the limited literature identified through a qualitative.
- investigate the views of Open Distance Learning students concerning their roles and responsibilities.

1.6 Research design and methodology

For my research, I followed a qualitative case study research design. A case study is a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context (Yin, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 6) state that “the qualitative researcher studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them.” Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 15) mention that “qualitative researchers are concerned with the meaning people to have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and experiences they have in the world.”

Creswell (2009, p. 7) posits that “the worldview or paradigm is a researcher’s general orientation about the world and the general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds.” The substance of a paradigm is that it gives meaning to the world as we perceive it. The paradigm adopted for this research was the interpretivist, due to the initial exploring of a body of incoherent knowledge. Researchers with interpretivist objectives express and attempt to elucidate the meaning or implications of phenomena associated with educational factors such as “teaching, learning, performance, assessment and social interaction where little knowledge persists” (McKenney & Reeves, 2018, p. 10). The outcome of such a research perspective is a set of questions that could be applied in the future to further address the aspects and variables as part of a pragmatist or humanist approach.

1.7 Participant selection

The UODL is located on the Potchefstroom campus and has over 30 000 registered students in various courses and education programmes. The population for this study constituted the lecturers and students of the Unit for Open Distance Learning in different education programmes. The education students were selected as a sample of this study due to availability. Students of the UODL, as well as a few lecturers, voluntarily participated in the severally organized focus group interviews.

1.8 Data collection strategies

After completing the systematic literature review, I designed an interview schedule for the focus group interviews with the students and lecturers, in order to collect context-sensitive in-depth data on the roles and responsibilities of ODL students. Students voluntarily participated in the focus group interviews at the Potchefstroom learning support centre in their course groups as they attended the sessions.

1.9 Data analysis

The data collected from the focus group interviews were recorded, transcribed and assigned to the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) by the researcher. The documents were analysed through the help of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS); ATLAS.ti™ was used to compile an integrated dataset of the focus-group interviews. With the assistance of ATLAS.ti™, themes and categories about ODL students' roles and responsibilities were coded.

1.10 Ethical aspects of research

Ethics, as controversial as they may be, are frequently considered to deal with issues of beliefs evaluated to be either right or wrong, proper or improper, good or bad (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The researcher is accountable for upholding and ensuring that ethical norms are followed. My study following ensured that the rights and welfare of each participant would be protected and that nobody would be harmed or hurt in any way during the research procedures:

- (i) Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education before the commencement of research
- (ii) Informed consent and formal permission were obtained from all participants
- (iii) Participants were informed about their right to voluntary participation
- (iv) Should participants experience any form of discomfort, they were made aware of their rights to withdraw their participation.
- (v) Participants were treated with respect
- (vi) Assistance was available to participants during data collection
- (vii) All research data were treated as highly confidential and the researcher took precautionary measures that the identity of the respondents would not be disclosed (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000)
- (viii) Research data were to be kept safely in case of further investigation according to the Faculty of Education's conditions.

1.11 Structure of the thesis structure and division of the chapters

The research report of the current investigation comprises five thesis chapters, presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Outline of this research report as five chapters

Chapter	Description
Chapter 1 Orientation	Epistemological and ontological orientation on the roles and responsibilities of Open Distance Learners
Chapter 2 Research design and methodology	Description of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study, including the SLR review methodology
Chapter 3 Systematic literature review SLR	Review of the literature according to the SLR, describing the factors to be included in the interview schedule
Chapter 4 Voices of the focus group participants	The analysis of the qualitative data relating to the focus group interviews
Chapter 5 Synopsis of students' roles and responsibilities from an African Theoretical perspective	Conclusions, contributions of the study, limitations and recommendations for further research

Chapter Two

Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Introduction

Research enables us to explore, to describe, and to understand human issues in social contexts. Research is the systematic enquiry to “design, collect, analyse and interpret data in order to describe,” explain, understand, predict or make inferences on a phenomenon, to eventually empower individuals or systems (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Research is a systematic step-by-step process of collecting and analysing information with the intention of making contributions towards our understanding of an issue (Creswell, 2014). Research on educational issues is indispensable in that it collates information considered to be valid, to understand principles in order to guide our decision-making and thinking, (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Creswell (2009, p. 8) maintains that “research designs are plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis.” As part of the initial planning of a research study, the researcher should choose which one of the following types of research designs, she/he could follow a qualitative design, a quantitative design, or a mixed-methods research design comprising both qualitative and quantitative research components. In this chapter, I discuss my choice to follow a limited qualitative case study research design, comprising two qualitative strategies I used to collect data with, based upon my philosophical assumptions and the social paradigms that underpin my research. I followed a qualitative exploratory research approach to generate the qualitative data for my case study, using subjective qualitative methods of data collection. This chapter furthermore explains the ethical considerations of my study, and contextualises my role as researcher within the research process. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the trustworthiness, validity and reliability of my qualitative findings derived from my qualitative data analysis of the integrated dataset.

2.2 Research Design and Methodology

In this section I first discuss the philosophical assumptions and paradigmatic underpinnings of my qualitative case study, followed by an exposition of the exploratory qualitative research approach that I followed. The section concludes with an overview of the qualitative case study research design and methodology that I used.

2.2.1 Philosophical assumptions and paradigmatic underpinnings of this qualitative study

In this section, the philosophical assumptions and paradigmatic underpinnings of my qualitative case study are explained.

Creswell and Poth (2018) agree that the qualitative research process benefits from the researcher's personal histories, perspectives, experiences, morals, and ethics, as well as her/his perspectives of self and others. Next, the researcher brings certain philosophical assumptions, i.e. the stance of the researcher, that give direction to the study. When a researcher conducts qualitative research, she/he embraces the idea of multiple realities, i.e. that different researchers embrace different realities, as do the individuals in the study, as well as different readers of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a researcher, my view on reality is inherently rooted in the Worldview of Ubuntu—the African philosophy of life and education. The viewpoints of Ubuntu are underpinned by the social values of respect, humanism, time and communalism, from which the learning experiences of African students are constructed (§ 1.2.1 and § 1.3). This view is different from the Western worldview, which focuses on individualistic view of persons, which leads to an individualistic community life. The Western worldview of humanism is reductionist in that it views humans in a one-dimensional manner unlike an African understanding of humanism which is multidimensional (Van der Walt, 1997). These different worldviews also have different approaches to scientific inquiry and knowledge generation. For the Western worldview, scientific inquiry is done in a systematic manner where knowledge generation is focused on material things and the generation of scientific Laws (Van der Walt, 1997). Meanwhile the African approach to scientific inquiry is non-systematic and is focused on the generation of spiritual power (religion) which is believed to determine events (§ 1.2.3). The values of Ubuntu guided me as a researcher and the research in the identification of the problem statement. This is because the insufficient information and research on the roles and responsibilities of ODL students, specifically concerning the unique views of African students on their roles and responsibilities in ODL, required someone that shares a similar identity and worldview as these students. For this reason, I was able to directly relate to my study and the students, and therefore it was especially meaningful for me as a researcher to help address this research problem.

Epistemology refers to the way in which the researcher knows her/his reality, and also determines what counts as knowledge, and how knowledge claims are justified (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The epistemological assumption of qualitative case studies is to get as close as possible to the participants being studied. Accordingly, I collected subjective evidence of my participants' views, perceptions and experiences of their roles and responsibilities as ODL students, based upon their experiences of their worlds. As I am a full-time lecturer of ODL students and I actively work in the same “field,” as the “field” in which my participants conduct their studies, I therefore have first-hand information and experience of the research site, and was able to minimize the “distance” or “objective separateness” (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 94) between my participants and myself.

Axiology refers to the value-stance of the inquirer. Creswell and Poth (2018) posit that the axiological assumption that researchers should make their values known, is one of the basic characteristics of qualitative research. Because I am an experienced lecturer of ODL students, I therefore admit the value-laden nature of my qualitative case study, especially with regard to the nature of the information

that I gathered in the field. Being an African myself and having experienced the reality of an African worldview, it was possible for me to align my worldview with that of this study. That in itself could have contributed to my biases in this study. To overcome these biases, with the help of my supervisor, I was constantly taking cognisance of my biases throughout the study. My presence is reflected in the text, and therefore I admit that the voiced narratives of my participants represent an interpretation and presentation of myself as author, as well as the subject of my study.

Methodology refers to the processes and methods used in research to collect data and to gain new insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The methodology of my qualitative case study is discussed in Section 2.2.4. All these assumptions are applied in the research process by means of research paradigms.

Guba and Lincoln (1988, p. 89) define *Paradigms* as: "a basic set of beliefs that guide actions," which, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), the researcher brings into the research process. The theoretical orientation/framework of the study, as pointed out by Creswell and Poth (2018), is information, found from literature, which provides a general explanation of what the researcher hopes to find in the study, or a lens through which she/he views the needs of participants or communities in a study. Four dissimilar meta-paradigms of organisational research are distinguished by Burrell and Morgan (1979). The distinction is based on four assumptions on the nature of social science which are (i) ontological nature, (ii) epistemological nature, (iii) human nature, and (iv) methodological nature. The relationship between these four assumptions results to subjective-objective and regulation-radical dimensional structure which contributes towards four meta-paradigms: the interpretivist, radical humanist, radical structuralist, and functionalist meta-paradigm scheme for the analysis of social theory (Figure 2.1).

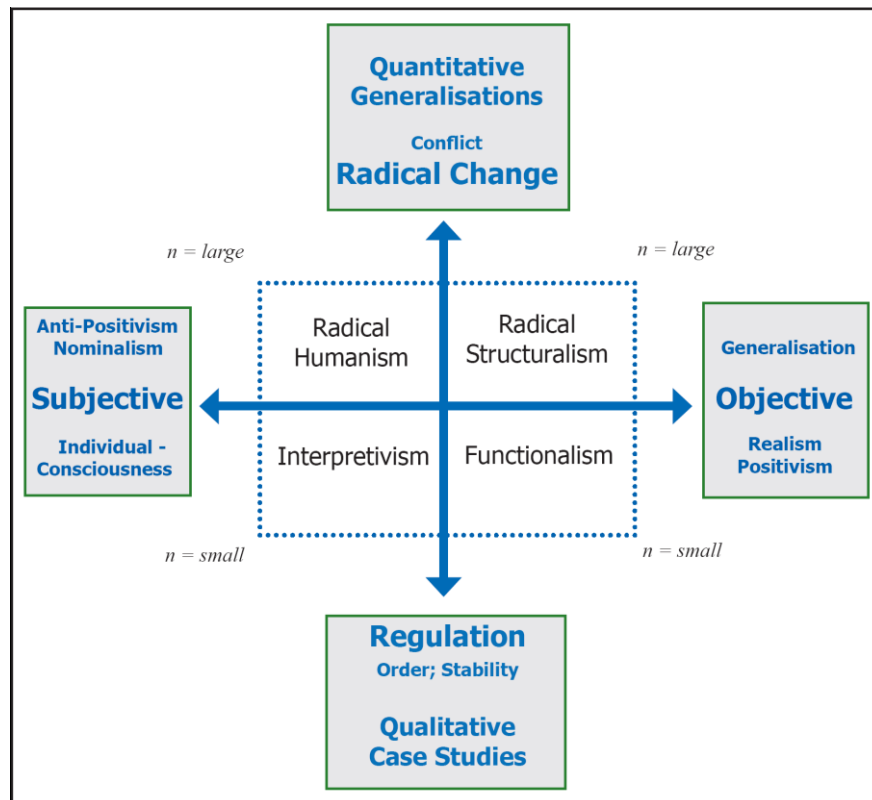


Figure 2.1: Social research paradigms (Els and Blignaut (2013) adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1979))

The four meta-paradigms in Figure 2.1 illustrate overlying but primarily different viewpoints for analysing social phenomena (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Burrell & Morgan, 1994). In addition, they also represent four basic sets of assumptions in social theory with four different worldviews (ontologies) which are a reflection of social sciences (Burrell & Morgan, 1994). The implications of this meta-paradigm is; the social world is understood and viewed in different ways.

The interpretivist paradigm addresses subjective experiences that shape order and stability. Such experiences include the opinions, hopes, fears, and expectations of individuals (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This paradigm helps to construct the social world as an emerging world of socially constructed processes. The Interpretivist paradigm seeks explanation within “the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the contributor as opposed to the observer of action. It has a tendency to be nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic” (Burrell & Morgan, 1994, p. 28). For an Interpretivist theorist, the aim is to understand the basis and source of social reality. This stance is backed by the assumption that “the world of human affairs is unified, ordered and integrated. Issues like conflict, domination, inconsistency, potentiality and change do not feature in their framework. Their concern is with understanding the social world “as it is” and is involved with issues relating to the way of social order” (Burrell & Morgan, 1994). The research component in which I conducted focus-group interviews with ODL students is anchored within this research meta-paradigm, for I collected rich, in-depth qualitative data from these students

concerning their subjective viewpoints on their roles and responsibilities as ODL students. Interpretivist research is directed by “specific beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). For an interpretivists, meaning as it implies to person or group being studied is of critical importance in any good research in social sciences (Willis, Jos, & Nilakanta, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2013, p. 27) categorise the interpretivist paradigm by as “positivist and post-positivist, constructivist-interpretivist, critical and feminist-post-structural.” The main argument of this paradigm is centred on the understanding that known reality is a social construction (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Willis *et al.*, 2007). For this reason, social constructivism is also known by some scholars as interpretivism (Creswell, 2013). This justification is extended by researchers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) as they claim that there is no single observable reality. Contextual understanding in which the research takes place is crucial to the clarification of the data that are gathered (Willis *et al.*, 2007).

As for the radical humanist paradigm, they understand and approach social science in a similar manner to that of the interpretivist understanding of the world which is contrary to that of the “nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic view” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). In the radical humanist paradigm, people’s consciousness is subjugated to an ideological superstructure. The superstructure guides their interactions and cognition within their true consciousness. It is for this reason that emphasis is placed on essential change, liberation, deficiency, modes of domination and potentiality within this paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

For the radical structuralist paradigm, the world is viewed with an objectivistic understanding which is supported by sociology of radical change. Here the inclination is towards radical change, social liberation and human potentiality, and should be arrived at through an analysis of structural conflict, social modes of human domination, contradictory understandings and scarcity. In radical structuralism, the focus is on structural relationships within a “realist social world.” The emphasis in this case is on radical change in the existing constructed social structure whilst seeking to provide explanations of the “basic interrelationships within the context of total social constructions” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

With respect to the functionalist paradigm, the underpinning characteristic is to provide explanations for the contemporary status quo and how it is socially integrated along with the cohesiveness thereof. This paradigm approaches these sociological concerns similar to that of realist, positivist and nomothetic inclinations. In addition, a functionalist seeks to provide logical and rational explanations of social affairs (Burke & Christensen, 2014). It is for this reason that a functionalist is considered as being realistic; they focus on the generation of useable knowledge. In this paradigm, the society where the study occurs is seen as being genuine and physically real, with a temperament which is comprehensive and absolute. In other words, the enquiry techniques and experiments take place in the natural world (Dunnion & Knox, 2004; Koerten, 2008). The method used is often problem-oriented which is aimed at providing practical solutions to social problems (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

This study used the functionalist paradigm since the paradigm emphasizes real world issues such as students' experiences of their roles and responsibilities. The functionalist paradigm was relevant in that it objectively evaluated the realistic objectives within an organisational structure such as that of UODL of the NWU.

The functionalist paradigm relies on its point of view for its solutions to a problem, and is entrenched in social norm. The objective qualitative component of my study in which I performed a SLR, is anchored within the functionalist research paradigm, for:

The functionalist paradigm is firmly rooted in the sociology of regulation [ODL] and approaches its subject matter from an objectivist point of view (roles and responsibilities). It is characterised by a concern for providing explanations of the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration, solidarity, need satisfaction and actuality. It approaches these general sociological concerns from a standpoint which tends to be realistic, positivist, determinist and nomothetic (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 25).

2.2.2 Exploratory qualitative case study research design and method of data collection

Research design denotes a general procedure employed from conceptualization of the research problem and the research question, data collection strategies and the data analysis (Bodgan & Taylor, 1975). Research design offers the complete image regarding the aspects under review (Zachariadis, Scott, & Bearret, 2013). The research design explains and encompasses "all research action from the use of approaches, data collection and strategies" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In my study, I followed a qualitative case study research design; comprising two qualitative methods of data collection.

A case study is a systematic investigation within a particular position and domain whereby detailed characters, information and specifics are synchronized (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). An in-depth data collection happens gradually with the use of numerous sources in a case study (Creswell, 1998). A bounded case study is limited and transpires within a distinct duration with a particular set of citizenry at a given time of the study (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006; Williams, 2011). Merriam (1998) explains a bounded case study as "a study performed over a certain time period where manifold sources of information and rich in content are used for in-depth data collection." In this research data was collected from the UODL registered students, enrolled for education programmes, which are delivered through distance education. Multi-modal alludes to several methods used for data collection (Ilieva, Baron, & Healey, 2002) which comprises voices of recognised authors in the field, as well as of students living their experiences of ODL. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to obtain a qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities of open distance learning students at a higher education institution situated in the North-West Province of South Africa. I used two distinctive methods of qualitative data collection, in order to gain a comprehensive qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities of open distance learning students, i.e. (i) by conducting a qualitative SLR to obtain an objective qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities of ODL students by searching through the available corpus of knowledge, and (ii) by means of qualitative focus-group interviews with students at our HEI to collect subjective qualitative data pertaining to their context-sensitive viewpoints

and perceptions on their roles and responsibilities in ODL. My choice to make use of these two qualitative methods of data collection was directed by the exploratory qualitative research approach I followed for my research.

For the purpose of this qualitative case study, I followed an exploratory qualitative research approach. The exploratory qualitative approach to research is used to investigate a problem that is not yet clearly defined, or a field of inquiry that still remains unexplored by research, and of which very little or no information could be found in literature (Reiter, 2017). When a topic needs to be understood in depth, exploratory research is carried out, especially if such a topic has not been done before within the context in which the study is currently being carried out. The goal of such research is to explore the problem, and not to actually derive a conclusion from it. In an exploratory research design, the aim is not to produce final and conclusive answers to the research question, but rather to explore the research topic with varying levels of depth. Singh (2007, p. 64) explains that “exploratory research is the initial research, which forms the basis of more conclusive research. It can even help in determining the research design, sampling methodology and data collection method.” Figure 2.2 explains the steps and strategies of this approach, applied to my qualitative case study.

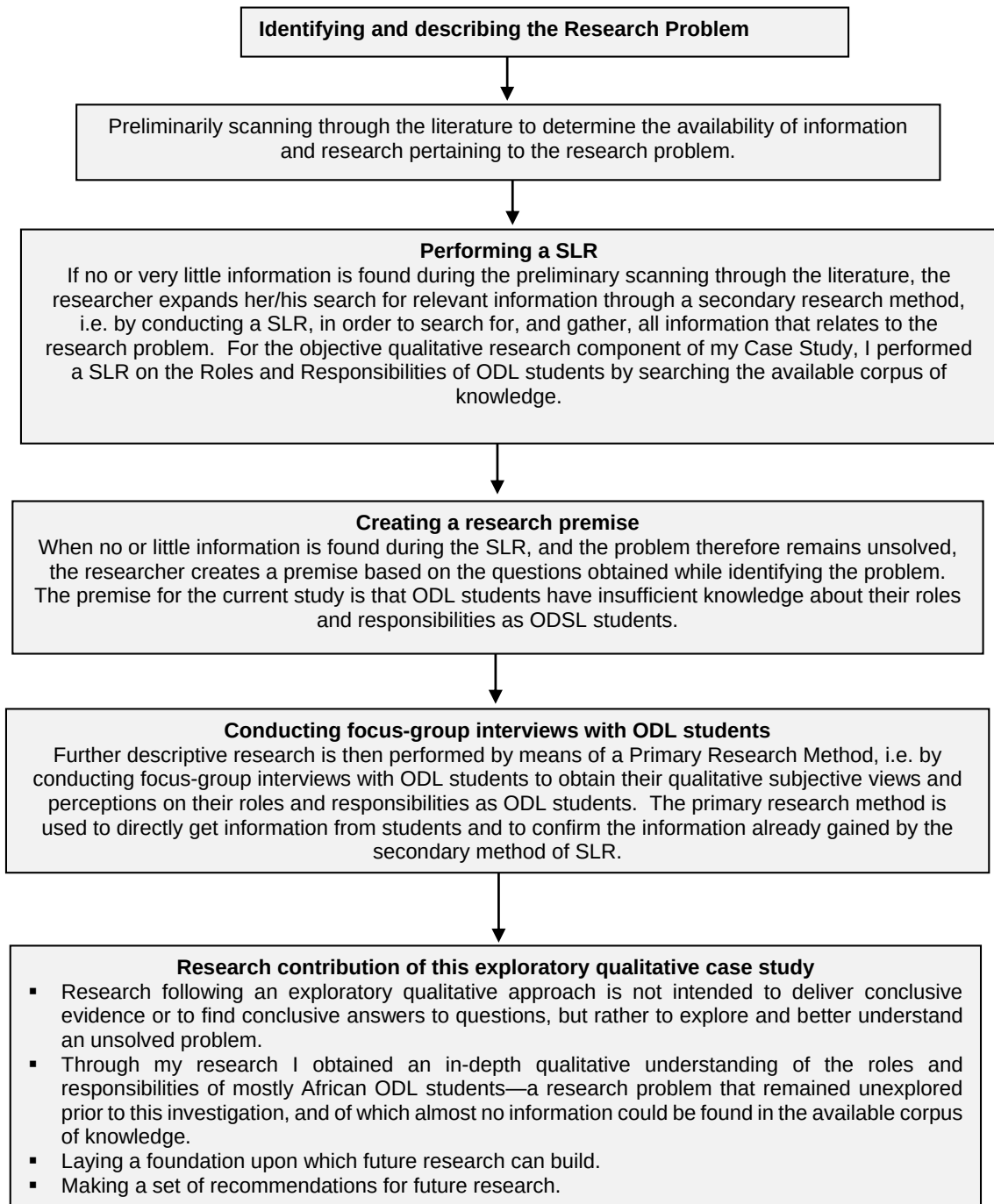


Figure 2.2: Strategies followed during exploratory case study qualitative research design

2.2.2.1 Secondary method of data collection: qualitative objective of SLR

A qualitative SLR guarantees a similar level of meticulousness to that of scrutinizing the evidence of initial research (Hemingway & Brereton, 2009). SLR can identify gaps in existing research literature and “provide a framework to direct the research” (Kitchenham, 2004, p. 3). SLR display the highest scope of evidence, and the expert authors search for high quality studies to tackle the research

question (Barratt, 2011). During this qualitative approach to a SLR “people converse, announce positions, argue with wide range of eloquence, and describe events or scenes in ways entirely comparable to what is seen and heard during fieldwork” (Merriam, 2009, p. 150).

Kitchenham (2004, p. 1) describes SLR as “a means of identifying, evaluating and interpreting all available research relevant to a particular research question, or topic area, or phenomenon of interest.” Furthermore SLR presents as a “method of making sense of large bodies of information, and a means of contributing to the answers to questions about what works and what does not” (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006, p. 2). Areas of scepticism are mapped out while stipulating where new insights are required (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

The most compelling reason for undertaking a SLR is to summarise current evidence regarding roles and responsibilities (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006) of ODL students. Kitchenham (2004, p. 3) adds to these reasons by saying that “the existing knowledge to be arrived at provides a framework in which to position new research; to examine the extent to which hypotheses are supported or contradicted by empirical evidence; or to assist in the generation of new hypotheses.” A benefit of SDL, is that one gains advantages in that you are furnished with information about the “effects of a phenomenon across a wide range of settings” (Kitchenham, 2004).

SLRs have a number of characteristics that should be adhered to: “(i) they should be systematic and organised, transparent, replicable and updatable; (ii) they should present the maximum range of evidence; and they should be of high quality” (Briner & Denyer, 2012, p. 3). An SLR commences by explaining an analysis obligation that stipulates the research question to be dealt with, and the methods to be used during the analysis. SLRs are established using a distinct exploration approach, with the aim to identify ample significant literature. They verify the rigour and comprehensiveness of the documents from the literature search. They therefore require instantly recognisable criteria for inclusion and exclusion when evaluating possible material as they stipulate the information source from each primary document; in addition the quality criteria for the inclusion of the material are also emphasised (Kitchenham, 2004).

During the compilation of a SLR, “people converse, announce positions, argue with wide range of eloquence, and describe events or scenes in ways entirely comparable to what is seen and heard during fieldwork” (Merriam, 2009). Through a rigorous process, I selected documents of expert authors in the field of roles and responsibilities for ODL students. The rationale for selecting documents of expert authors to a SLR process served multiple purposes: (i) it allowed me to be able to incorporate diverse theoretical stances in understanding a research problem as a form of strength during my data analysis processes (Merriam, 2009); and (ii) it helped in the analyses and synthesis of qualitative data from which I benefited and wrote an all-inclusive literature review on the roles and responsibilities of ODL students (Saldana, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Six important steps are involved during a SLR process. These steps have been outlined on Table 2.1 along with the activities I used during the process.

Table 2.1: Six key steps in conducting a SLR

Key steps	Activities during key steps
1. Mapping the field through a scoping review	• Prepare review plan methods and the protocol for the systematic review • Compile a list of appropriate key words (Jesson, Matheson, & Lacey, 2011)
2. Comprehensive research	• Access the electronic databases and search using exact keywords relating to the research and document the process • Refine the research. If the same author names keep appearing, author saturation occurs
3. Quality assessment	• Read all the documents, and apply the quality assessment using the hierarchy of research (Jesson <i>et al.</i>, 2011) • Assess documents by additional independent reviewers (peers in the field) • Calculate results according to a Cohen's Kappa procedure to determine the agreement of documents for inclusion (Wood, 2007)
4. Qualitative content analysis	• Conduct a constant comparative content analysis (Boeije, 2002)
5. Synthesis	• Phase 1: compile the data from the Atlas.ti™ as a single network, as well as sub-networks for use during the formal literature study (Jesson <i>et al.</i>, 2011) • Phase II: export individual authors' values into a Microsoft Excel™ spread sheet as instances indicating the frequency of codes associated with each author
6. Reporting	• Use the quotations, codes, categories and themes (Atlas.ti™ networks) as a basis for writing a balanced objective and complete literature from the systematic review format (Jesson <i>et al.</i>, 2011)

A set of three principles provided a guide to the systematic review: (i) the ability for the process to be able to recur at any particular moment; (ii) a documented assessment trail should be done as one that reflects reviewers' decisions and this process must be standardised; and (iii) a record detailing assessment for exclusion and inclusion of documents must be kept most preferably in a hierarchy of research relevance (Briner & Denyer, 2012). These principles indicate that SLR is an evidence-based process which requires adherence to the criteria of validity, reliability, trustworthiness thereby reducing unconscious biases (Briner & Denyer, 2012; Cohen *et al.*, 2011). I adhered to these SLR criteria as a means to ensure that I followed the process of SLR. This was done as follows: (i) a thorough search of appropriate process documentations, (ii) an assessment of the quality of the selected criteria documentations, and (iii) to ensure that the right standard and quality primary documents were assessed and selected. After this process, the systematic literature search was conducted using these keywords: *Roles and responsibilities*, *Open Distance Learning (ODL)*, and *ICT*. The literature search was conducted as such [(**ICT** or **Information Communication Technology**); (**roles and responsibilities** or **role**, **responsibility**); (**ODL** or **Open Distance Learning**)]. The searches were conducted structuring the keywords with bullions i.e., [(**ICT** or **Information Communication Technology**); (**roles and responsibilities** or **role**, **responsibility**); (**ODL** or **Open Distance Learning**)]. The research was refined depending on the number of hits, in which case the documents relevant to the keywords were then screened, selected and exported onto a Microsoft Excel™ spread sheet. Documents from a Microsoft Excel™ spread were accessed for the possibilities of additional authors in a similar specialized fields. As this research included six main concepts: (i) students' roles, (ii) students' responsibilities, (iii) lecturers' roles, (iv) lecturers' responsibilities (v) open distance

learning, and (vi) ICT, expert authors which conducted research in all these fields were complex to find. For instance, authors from Turkey (Isman *et al.*, 2004; Isman *et al.*, 2004) emerged as the expert authors who worked extensively on the roles and responsibilities of students and teachers in distance education. Although I identified two relating documents of these authors, I included only one as they contained overlapping information.

With the use of these keywords, I then performed numerous trial searches where I tried different combinations of search terms. I maintained my focus on the research question and I also consulted with a peer in the field and a librarian at NWU's Faculty of Education. I was able to draw from the following databases: Scopus EbscoHost™, Science Direct™, Google Scholar, Sabinet Online™, SAePublications™, RefWorks™, Boloka IR, Web of Science™, JSTOR, EditLib. I printed some of the sources in order to conduct hand searches. The process of SLR was indeed rigorous and systematic. For this purpose, it is crucial that the entire process is known in detail to guarantee a repetition of the process by another researcher (Briner & Denyer, 2012). It is for this reason that I noted all searches and provided justification for my searches (Kitchenham, 2004). My research diary indicates the research documentation process that I followed in the study (Addendum 2.4; 2.5; 2.6; and 2.7). I made sure that I numbered each searched item, the date, the databases that the literature was generated, along with their respective keywords and the number of hits. At the end of the process, fourteen searches were conducted which either were done independently or in partnership with the librarian for the Faculty of Education.

Figure 2.3 presents a systematic flow diagram of the document selection process. The first selection of the systematic literature review documents included a total of 225 documents (Addendum 2.4). The 225 Journal articles were published in local and international accredited journal, conference proceedings, and scholarly book chapters. The assessment of these 255 documents related to the above criteria explained. From the assessment, 136 documents were removed. Eighty-nine documents were then selected to be screened in detail (Addendum 2.5). The screening gave rise to the remaining number of 65 documents which were then used for the next level of screening. Due to questionable quality and relevance of these documents, 37 documents were again removed. I was left with 28 documents (Addendum 2.6), including the four documents I handpicked (Addendum 2.7), which finally comprised my data for qualitative analysis (Hemingway & Brereton, 2009).

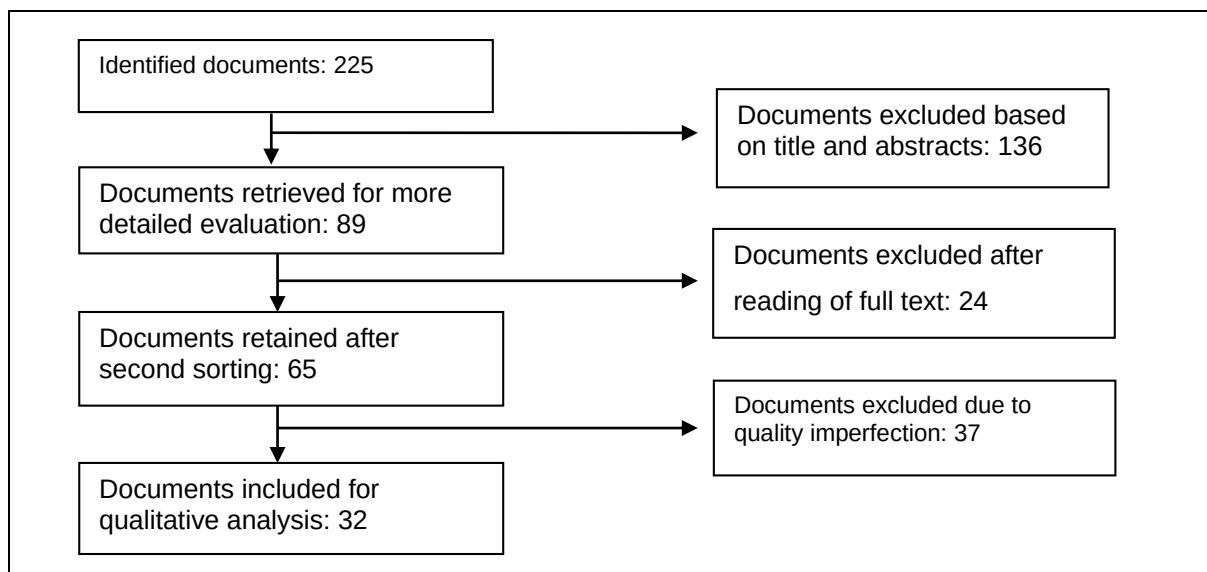


Figure 2.3: SLR flow diagram of document selection

The reliability of my coding was calculated after the review process was completed, in accordance to the Cohen's Kappa procedure to determine the agreement of coding between different coders (Wood, 2007). A Cohen Kappa procedure can range from -1.00 to +1.00, where a Kappa of 1.00 means that two reviewers show perfect agreement, a Kappa of -1.00 indicates that they show "perfect and consistent disagreement, and a Kappa of 0 means that the two reviewers show a random level of agreement or disagreement" (Wood, 2007). Wood (2007) claims that "for research purposes, the kappa should be at least 0.60 or 0.70. In order to draw conclusions about an individual, like doing intelligence tests, the kappa should be at least 0.80 or 0.90." I approached a co-worker who was knowledgeable with the field of research, as well as the process of verifying coded text, to independently repeat the allocation of codes. The Cohen's Kappa for the SLR was calculated as 0.94, which provided an indication of reliability to my coding and coding of my peer of the literature.

A qualitative analysis computer data analysis system (QACDAS), ATLAS.tiTM, assisted with the coding of the documents assigned to the systematic review. An integrated dataset comprising 32 selected documents was categorised into data clusters (codes, categories and themes) pertaining to roles and responsibilities of ODL students (Jesson *et al.*, 2011). ATLAS.tiTM systematically facilitated large volumes of data analysis. Table 2.2 provides a description of the terminology and functions of ATLAS.tiTM.

Table 2.2: Terminology and Functions of ATLAS.ti™*

Terminology	Description
Hermeneutic Unit (HU)	Core of Atlas.ti™ HU is the workbench for inductive analysis HU store primary documents Assign text, graphics, pictures etc. to the HU for inductive analysis
Primary document	Interface between the HU and the data Gives access to the data source
Themes	Outcome after coding, categorizing and reflecting of analytical process
Codes	A word or short phrase which describes a selection of words or visual data Standard code is directly linked to the quotation
Memo	Give a holistic description or definition of the code Assists to capture thoughts regarding the text
Category	Emerging patterns of codes with same attributes
Network view	Ocular illustration of how codes, categories and themes connect
Quotation	A selection of text from a primary document
Sub-category	A cluster of codes with a mutual strand Has the same function as the code family
Super code	Numerous codes are combined

*Adapted from (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 475; Saldana, 2011, pp. 3-13)

The process of qualitative data analysis is described as being eclectic because it solely depends on the creativity and intellectual ingenuity of a researcher to build on theory (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In qualitative data analysis, a researcher engages with data inductively with the aim of gaining insight into a research phenomenon as identified patterns are categorised (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). During inductive analysis, category and patterns are materialised from the data without relying on any pre-determined analysis structure (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In this analysis process, the researcher systematically tries to make sense of the collected data through a process of data selection, categorization, comparison, synthetization and interpretation the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Neuman, 2011).

Six imperative interactive steps are followed when conducting the inductive analysis with ATLAS.ti™. The researcher followed these procedures interactively, but not sequentially:

1. The Creation a new Hermeneutic Unit (HU): The researcher identified and clearly separated the views of ODL students' roles and responsibilities.
2. The assignment of primary documents: The researcher systematically selected 32 relevant documents out of the initial number to assign to the hermeneutic unit.
3. The Discovery relevant passages: The researcher selected only those parts or sections of the text which were deemed relevant to the six research components. These included students' roles, students' responsibilities, lecturers' roles, lecturers' responsibilities, open distance learning, and ICT.
4. The creation of codes and memos: The codes and memos were created with the help of the main components of the research and the text from the primary documents. Codes were not pre-determined. Rather, as the codes emerged, I was able to create the memos which assisted me in defining the meaning of each code, taking into consideration the research question and phenomenon. With assistance of my promoter and some of my critical peers in

the field, I was able to determine the selection criteria. This was done using peer coding: one document was peer coded for matching of themes.

5. Building theory: to build on the theory, I applied the basic activity theory lens used in SLR, with the integrating components for the coding process. The qualitative data were subjected to (i) qualitative and (ii) quantitative data analysis techniques.
6. Visualising and reporting of results: I created “visual networks” to guide me during the writing of findings. With main categories, themes and sub-themes, I formulated the structure for compiling a SLR (Jesson *et al.*, 2011) (§ Chapter Three).

2.2.2.2. Limitations of the SLR

There are several limitations when using a SLR. It is a complex and intensive process, especially for novice researchers. It could be financially costly in instances where there is an abundance of information, which can take many hours to complete. If care is not taken, a SLR process can be executed badly (Hemingway & Brereton, 2009). To conquer this obstacle, researchers should focus on doing rigorous work by following the steps documented for successful SLR by various authors (§ 2.2.4.1). Although there are obvious limitations in SLR, it was nevertheless a suitable method to apply in the study. This is because it provided me with a scholarly opportunity to understand ODL students’ roles and responsibilities from the broader scholarly world to that of a specific context that the study was carried out (UODL, South Africa).

Just as it is with most research, there were also some factors that inhibited this research. Merriam (1998, p. 20) states that “the human instrument is as fallible as any other research instrument.” The researcher as human instrument is limited by being human: mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, and personal bias may cause interferences. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) point out that an institution such as a school or an HEI is a public enterprise and is guided by the external environment.

2.2.2.3 Primary method of data collection: qualitative subjective focus-group interviews

For the purpose of this study focus group interviews were also conducted with participants on an agreed upon day at a scheduled time. I conducted all the interviews. Participants were UODL lecturers and students. Participants were purposively selected on the basis of their study programmes and availability during IWB sessions.

The Unit for ODL at the NWU enrolls approximately 1300 new teacher-students per year throughout South Africa and Namibia for ODL programmes. The Unit manages 65 tuition and resource centres across South Africa and Namibia, which host bi-monthly contact sessions. ODL programmes are delivered through a multi-modal approach (Picciano, 2009, p. 4) that combines the use of print media, contact sessions, CD-ROMs, mobile devices and interactive whiteboards as part of curriculum delivery

and student support (Nenge, Chimbadzwa, & Mapolisa, 2012, p. 23). At the time of the research, the Unit offered the following ODL programmes for in-service teachers who aspired for a TPD: The National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE), the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), Grade R Diploma and the Honours in Education (B.Ed. Hons). The NPDE and ACE are phasing out, and the ACE is replaced by the Advanced Certificate in Teaching (ACT). The new Advanced Diploma in Education (ADE) was added. These ODL programmes are delivered to approximately 24000 in-service teachers throughout South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Lesotho.

For its ODL delivery, the Unit for ODL (NWU) currently employs about forty permanent and temporary academic staff members. Furthermore, the Unit employs thirty contract coordinators at the various contact centres. There are also 250 part-time facilitators who are responsible for providing assistance to students. Fifty-six temporary staff members are in charge of resources and computer centres countrywide. With respect to curriculum delivery, various support services are offered by the UODL which includes: contact sessions for lectures and vacation schools for intense periods of lectures, student-centred study guides to ease understanding, tutorial letters for preliminary information about modules, textbooks, time-tables, information booklets, digital video devices (DVD)s, regular short message system (SMS) communication, telephonic assistance, e-mail and Internet access (Nenge *et al.*, 2012), as well as mobile learning through administrative SMSs, supportive screen-casts, mobi-site and through a learning management system (Blignaut & Kok, 2010, p. 96). The selected site for this research was the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU which is a familiar terrain for both lecturers and students. The staffroom was the venue used for all five focus group interviews.

Two rudimentary types of sampling can be used, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. A non-probability type of sampling is the most appropriate type of sampling for qualitative research with the most commonly used being purposive or purposeful sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Non-probability sampling, or participant selection, infers that a researcher targets a group of people knowing that such a group is not a representation of the wider population. In other words these groups of people are only a representation of themselves (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). A small scale research mostly uses non-probability sampling because, the sample size is less complicated in generating the required sample size, and might be less costly. This can be prove adequate when a researcher does not intend to make generalisations of his/her conclusions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). A purposive sampling (participant selection) allows for the selection of particular types of individuals because they are knowledgeable and offer an understanding of the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The number of participants vary according to the type of study. In focus group interviews the number of participants can vary from four to twelve (Morgan, 1997).

As mentioned in Chapter One and the purpose of study, participants were selected from a group of lecturers and students in the UODL. Lecturers of the Unit for ODL were invited to voluntarily participate in focus-group interviews, while students enrolled for ODL programmes at the Unit for ODL were also invited to voluntarily participate in focus-group interviews. The invitation was extended to all

students who attended contact sessions at the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU and all the necessary details were explained about the interviews. Only students who agreed to participate in this research were used. An agreement was reached with them on the suitable date, venue and time for the interviews. All the students who were willing to participate gave me their contact details. I digitally reminded them of the interviews a day before the actual date. I conducted interviews with all the participants who took part in this study. I made use of availability samples, and the number of focus-group interviews depended on data-saturation (Merriam, 1998, p. 17).

Focus group interviews are a strategy for shared data collection; though not in the sense of a backwards and forwards between interviewer and group. Rather, contact within the group is relied on to discuss a topic presented by the researcher, resulting in a collective rather than an individual viewpoint. (Morgan, 1997). I selected focus group interviews as method of data generation. A focus group interview occurs as a discussion with a collection of people with a shared interest and knowledge of the topic (Merriam, 2009). It is advantageous when the interaction between “the interviewees will produce the best information,” and when the participants “are similar, and when they are willing to cooperate with each other” (Creswell, 2007). In this study, I made use of the focus group interviews because the interaction between participants would produce the most fruitful information. This is because, in the process of having a discussion, some of the participants are able to express other aspects of their experiences that they would not be able to do so should they have a discussion alone.

Five integrated focus-group interviews were conducted, one was with ODL lecturers and four with the ODL students, in order to collect context sensitive in-depth data pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of ODL students. Focus group interview with lecturers started with eight lecturers, and two more lecturers joined the group after about fifteen minutes. An interview took approximately one hour. During one of the contact sessions at the Potchefstroom campus, the students that I made contact with were those that attended the contact sessions. I enquired of these students who would be willing to participate in the research, and collected their contact details. I approached these students per programme and scheduled a day and time for the focus group interviews. I also collected the attendance registers of the students who attended in Potchefstroom and collected the contact details. These students were UODL students who were registered for the B.Ed. Honours, Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), Grade R Diploma and the NPDE. There were seven participants for Grade R Diploma; six participants were for B.Ed. Honours, six participants for ACE and four participants for NPDE. Each focus group interview took about an hour.

I transcribed all five integrated focus group interviews verbatim and then analysed them with the help of Atlas.ti™. The data obtained by way of focus group interviews were then transcribed and the documents were allocated to the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), Atlas.ti™ from which they were coded for meaning construction. With the assistance of Atlas.ti™, themes and categories pertaining to ODL students' roles and responsibilities were coded. The codes

that emerged were constructed in relation to the SLR. Additional codes were then created which were suited to the context and content of the data. In the Atlas data, the P-reference indicated the interview number, (as primary document number), e.g. P2 would indicate the second interview conducted. The subsequent number indicated the line number in the primary document (the transcribed interview), e.g., P2:35 would indicate line number 35 in the second primary document.

2.3 Ethical aspects of qualitative research

Ethics are considered to deal with human behaviours and beliefs about what ought to be right or wrong, proper or improper, good or bad (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 196). Silverman (2011) posits that there are main issues that should be considered in research, namely “codes and consent” whereby an individual involved in any research must give their consent. The consent form must have information about the nature of the study, and the fact that participants have the right to withdraw at any time, is clearly stated. Also, participants’ confidentiality has to be ensured before the interview process is conducted, where the identities of the individual and the group are protected, as well as the location of research. The researcher must establish trust between themselves and the groups taking part in the interview in order not to spoil the field of research or discouraged others from voluntarily participating in future research projects. It is therefore the researchers’ responsibility to ensure that ethical standards are obeyed. The following measures were adhered to while planning and conducting my study to ensure that the rights and welfare of each individual were protected, and that nobody would be harmed or hurt in any way during the data generation procedures: (i) ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education. The clearance number is: NWU-00032-15-A2 (Addendum 2.1); (ii) informed consent as well as formal permission was obtained from all participants by requesting the participants to complete and sign the letter of consent (Addendum 2.2 and 2.3); (iii) all participants were informed about their voluntary participation in the research; (iv) all participants were made aware of their right to withdraw without any penalty from the research process at any time or stage; (v) all participants were treated with respect; (vi) assistance was made available to participants during data collection. All research data were treated as highly confidential and I took precautionary measures that the identity of the respondents would not be disclosed (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 75).

2.4 Trustworthiness of qualitative research

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is dependent on the credibility of the researcher. Researchers are expected to uphold a high standard of ethical behaviour (Merriam, 2009). Credibility in qualitative data includes two central concepts to evaluate qualitative data namely validity and reliability. Silverman (2006, p. 281) explains credibility of qualitative data, which includes two central concepts to evaluate qualitative data, namely validity and reliability. Credibility is the confirmation of whether the

“findings of the qualitative research are authentic, transferable, and pertain to the context of the research” (Bapir, 2012; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 2009).

In social sciences validity is an undecided term as each researcher understands the concept from his/her point of orientation and derives his/her “own meaning within the context of the research” (Bapir, 2012). Qualitative validity is when the researcher conducts research in a “capable, detailed, and systematic way and it is transparent to gain socially acceptable knowledge” (Bapir, 2012). Validity is a goal rather than a product and should not be taken for granted. Validity gives meaning to the events and not to the data that are being generated and analysed (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). To be reliable, exploratory research should be conducted in a transparent, honest and strongly self-reflexive manner and follow a set of guidelines to ensure its reliability. Exploratory research, if “conducted in this fashion, can achieve great validity and provide new and innovative ways to analyse reality” (Reiter, 2017).

2.5 Role of the researcher during qualitative research

Qualitative researchers should understand that the research is an interactive process which is formed by not only their “own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity but also those of the people in the setting” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). They describe the qualitative researcher as a “bricoleur,” as “someone who engages in the construction of something from a variety of available things, an amateur who is able to do practical repairs of any kind” (Given, 2008). Four roles of a qualitative researcher are described by Okonkwo (2012): participant as observer, complete participant, complete observer and observer as participant. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) express the view that qualitative researchers should be skilful in performing many assorted tasks, which include interviewing of participants and rigorous self-reflection. They should also read widely about the interpretive paradigm. The researcher is the principal person for the collection and analysis of data (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I participated in this multi-faceted role and acted as researcher throughout the process; scrutinizing the literature as a SLR; as interviewer of the focus review; and developing new theory from the integrated approach of combining the views of specialists (authors) and ODL students on the roles and responsibilities of ODL students.

2.6 Summary

The unique course that my research journey took, was essentially steered by fundamental choices I made concerning the research processes of my investigation. This chapter explains how I based these choices during a qualitative case study research design upon my philosophical assumptions and the paradigmatic underpinnings of my research. The two qualitative approaches to data collection, in order to obtain an in-depth, context-sensitive qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities of open

distance students, were also based on these. The qualitative data analysis strategies that I performed with Atlas.ti™, for the purpose to build theory, as well as the ethical considerations of my study, were also explained and addressed in this chapter. I also considered my role as researcher, and provided information with regard to the ethical considerations of my investigation, and discussed the credibility and trustworthiness of my data and findings.

In the following chapter, Chapter Three, I report on the findings of the SLR.

Chapter Three

Analysis of a systematic literature review (SLR) on roles and responsibilities of ODL students

3.1 Introduction

The review in this chapter presents purposefully and carefully selected sections from the literature concerning the roles and responsibilities of ODL students. I conducted a SLR of qualitative, quantitative, as well as mixed method research articles, using the following keywords: Roles and Responsibilities, Open Distance Learning, and ICT, as previously discussed (§ 2.7.2.2). I performed numerous trial searches, using different combinations of the search terms relating to the research question in consultation with a peer in the field, as well as with a librarian at the Faculty of Education Sciences on the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University.

The qualitative data-analysis software Atlas.ti™ assisted me in performing a qualitative analysis on an integrated dataset comprising the selected literature sources resulting from the SLR. From the qualitative analysis of the SLR (Figure 3.1), I inductively identified and conceptualised three main data themes, i.e. 3.2 Roles (students, lecturers and HEI), 3.3 Responsibilities (students, lecturers and HE institutions), and 3.4 Experiences (Challenges and Benefits: students, lecturers and HE institutions). Furthermore, relating to these three data themes, various related data categories and sub-categories emerged from the analysis (Figure 3.1).

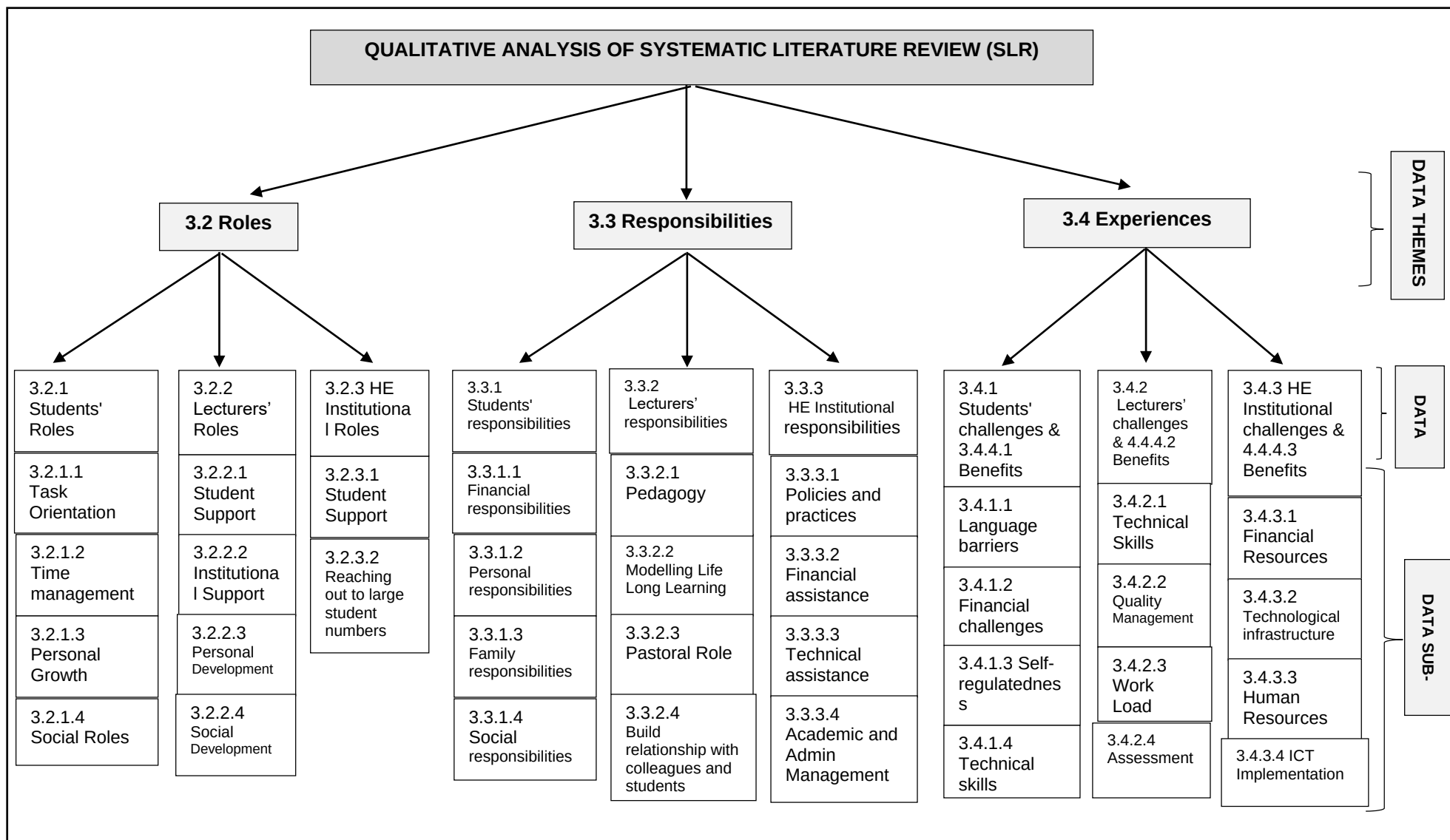


Figure 3.1: Themes, categories and sub-categories as identified from the qualitative analysis of the SLR

3.2 Roles of students, lecturers and higher education institutions

Roles in this context refers to the behaviour that is “appropriate for the situation and which will increase the likelihood” which would achieve the goals of an individual (Solomon *et al.*, 1985). This description is important to the study as it highlights the importance of human behaviour in their roles as stakeholders. Within the South African context, human behaviour often correlates with culture associations, for example *Ubuntu*; the African philosophy that depicts cultural behaviour of many Africans (§ 1.2.1-1.2.4). Stakeholders involved in ODL, i.e. students, lecturers and the HEI, have different roles in terms of student satisfaction (Mdakane, 2011). From the qualitative analysis of my SLR, I identified three categories of data pertaining to *Roles* (Figure 3.2), i.e. Students’ Roles (§ 3.2.1), Lecturers’ Roles (§ 3.2.2), and HE Institutional Roles (§ 3.2.3).

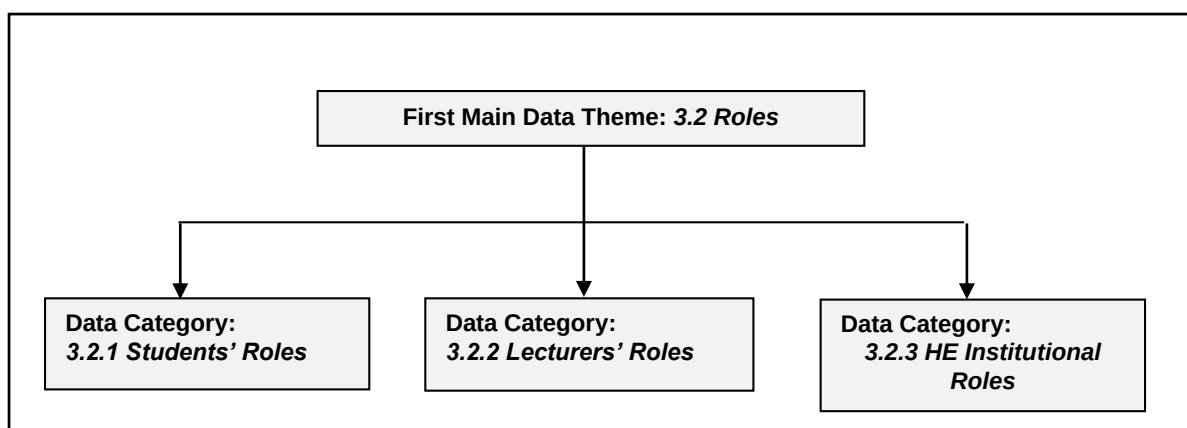


Figure 3.2: Categories relating to the roles of students, lecturers and the HEI

3.2.1 Student roles

Students enrolled in open distance learning for the first time have preconceived expectations about their roles as students, the lecturers, and the institution. Students’ roles in the ODL environment differ from those of traditional classrooms. Students’ previous experiences obtained from traditional classrooms influence their expectations. These may cause confusion and if not timeously dealt with, and these could be detrimental to the student (Paden & Stell, 2009). Behaviours such as being punctual for classes, taking part in class discussions, working together with lecturers and peers in a courteous manner, are some of the roles the students have to fulfil in order to succeed. For a majority of students an adjustment to distance learning is not a smooth process since they are already accustomed to the traditional form of learning (Paden & Stell, 2009). Such an adjustment tends to redefine students’ roles towards the particular demands of distance education.

Students enrolled in lessons delivered via an online platform may confront roles that differ from those encountered in traditional classrooms. (Paden & Stell, 2009). They must ensure that assignments and other learning tasks are submitted on time and are dealt with in the same manner as those of

traditional classrooms, although the manner of submission is different. Instead of directly handing submissions to the teacher, in ODL tasks must be emailed, or posted to a website, or uploaded on the learning management system (Abas, 2009).

As from the early 1990s, there has been speedy development involving ICT, which has facilitated online courses at HEIs as compared to that of face-to-face courses (Collin & Karsenti, 2011). A similar impact of ICT is found in the ODL context of teaching and learning. Even assessments have increasingly gone online. Subsequently, students' roles can be described in terms of four sub-themes: task orientated, personal growth, social roles and time management. Figure 3.3 indicates students' roles comprising four aspects, i.e. Task Oriented (§ 3.2.3.1), Personal Growth (§ 3.2.3.2), Social Roles (§ 3.2.3.3), and Time Management (§ 3.2.3.4).

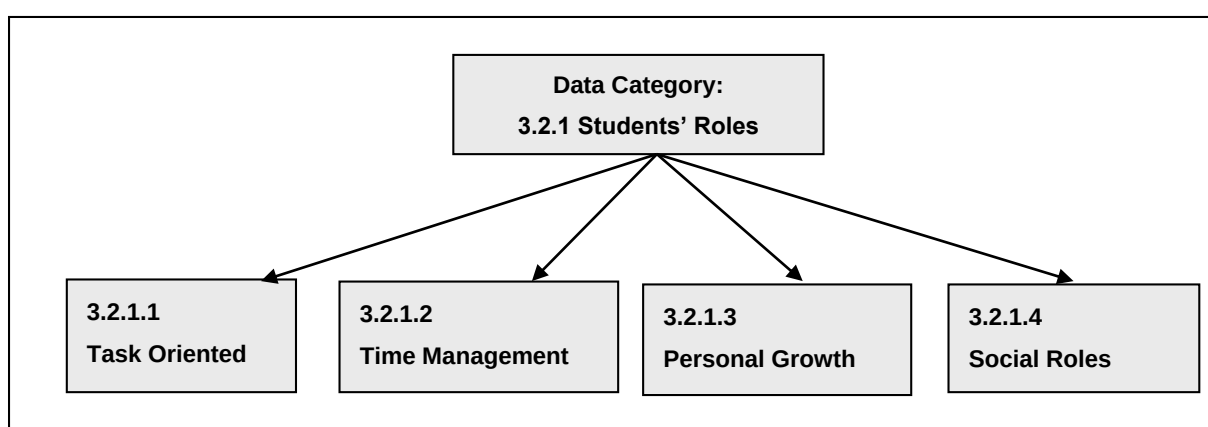


Figure 3.3: Category of student roles

3.2.1.1 Students' task orientation

It is compulsory for all students engage online in discussions with their tutors and classmates regularly (Abas, 2009). Students should not feel that it is the responsibility of the tutor to ensure that they go online to receive their online tutorials. Students are expected to respond to the issues posted by their tutors, and should contribute to the richness of the interactions online (Abas, 2009). Through students' interaction in the tutorial exercises, tutors/lecturers are assisted to ascertain where the students struggle, or what content areas they have problems with. The use of online communication also enables the students to get better clarification, and ensures that the enquiries they have can be answered timeously.

There are some roles that students have been accustomed to which they have acquired throughout their education. Some of these roles are inclined to the traditional form of education which includes social interaction amongst peers and being time sensitive to academic activities. As a benefit of social interactions, students learn the values of respects and tolerance. These values are integrated with the African value of Ubuntu. Making a shift from the traditional form of learning to that of an online form of

learning requires that these values that have arisen out of social interact become challenging to students. This is because some students rely on their peers to exercise their roles, and in the absence of their peers in an online environment keeping up with these roles become difficult for such students (Paden & Stell, 2009). The roles of students in these two different environments differ. Many students struggle with time management. Others may not even realise what their roles as online students should encompass.

In some services, such as education, the customer can be involved in co-creating the service (Paden & Stell, 2009). This means that the student should contribute towards the content encompassed in the online course. A customer's technical quality includes what he or she adds to the service and its functional quality based on how the student conducts him/herself during the online learning (Paden & Stell, 2009). When students do not participate in online discussions, they are diminishing the value of their online experience. Students could perform the roles of editor, summariser, task leader, group discussion leader, mentor, expert, moderator, or peer reviewer (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004). These roles are determined by the learning task. Online classes allow minimum errors on the side of the student, and this could subsequently result in anxiety. In education, students learn what it means to be an online student from their peers, family, their previous educational experiences, as well as from lecturers (Paden & Stell, 2009).

The lecturer assesses students' online written work (e.g. comments electronically submitted as part of an online discussion). Students may experience that it takes more effort to participate in written discussions when compared to speaking out in traditional classrooms (Paden & Stell, 2009). Students who are technologically challenged might not participate in the online class discussions. Students are expected to learn and study new content independently, and adjust to new ways of learning in a distance learning environment (Baloyi, 2014). This mode of learning is not for everyone; some are not able to transition from traditional classrooms to distance learning. In traditional education students use the library not only to get resources, but as a place to study (Baloyi, 2014). However, many students do not know how to search for resources in a physical library, and online resources pose similar constraints. Libraries are just a quiet place where they could study or complete tasks.

Students should access the internet; they require it for downloading study materials, uploading of assignments, and sending and receiving emails (Baloyi, 2014). They need the internet for searching information, and to find resources like articles. In this regard ODL poses strong potential for professional development and life-long continuing education. It is therefore no surprise that distance education is spreading rapidly throughout Africa, particularly for universities and continuing education programmes. The internet is especially suited to the provision of coaching outside of traditional classrooms, as well as reconciling students' studies with full-time or part-time jobs (Collin & Karsenti, 2011).

A successful ODL student is: (1) voluntarily seeking further education; (2) highly motivated and self-disciplined; (3) older; (4) willing to initiate calls to instructors for assistance; (5) demonstrating a serious attitude toward coursework; and (6) already a holder of a college degree (Brent & Bugbee, 1993; Palloff & Pratt, 1998). This indicates that there is a diverse student population who would be suited to enlist into the ODL system, with a variety of reasons for furthering their studies.

In general, students like to actively participate in classes, though many dislike group work. Introverted students prefer to study on their own, or have issues with group dynamics where some students in the group do not pull their weight and largely depend on others to complete learning tasks (Easton, 2003).

It is important for students to be self-directed, motivated and evaluative (Isman *et al.*, 2004) as they should search and design their activities from previous experiences on/in the subject and consequently construct activities, as well as self-evaluation strategies (Isman *et al.*, 2004). This requires that they solve problems through implementing available data. They therefore become the researcher (Isman *et al.*, 2004). Conducting research is an integral part of being a student. Through research, students improve their knowledge and view of the world. Students should be problem solvers. The trial and error method of learning is a form of finding appropriate solutions to problems. However, often the schedules of learning institutions do not allow time for trial and error and students who are not able to discern between different situations. Self-regulated students know how to learn, reflect on their learning, initiate learning, and how to manage time efficiently (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004). This requires that self-regulated students need to know themselves well. They need to know that time is an important aspect for their success in an ODL environment. Additional burdens of ODL students are that they may have to perform roles such as editor, summarizer, task leader, group discussion leader, mentor, expert, moderator, peer reviewer (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004).

3.2.1.2 Student time management

From their previous experiences, students may be competent in traditional classroom roles (e.g. coming to class on time), but not in the role of the online student (e.g. managing one's own time) (Paden & Stell, 2009). Mastery of these skills will enable online students to make efficient use of their time and the available online resources (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004). The downfall of many students of ODL is time management. Students may not realise how essential time management in the ODL environment is, until it is too late. If ODL students were able to control their learning with flexibility, they would be able to benefit from interaction with their lecturers, peers, and content (Kok & Blignaut, 2010). Distance learning allows much flexibility. However, combined with flexibility comes the responsibility of being able to manage time efficiently. An emerging pattern within life-long learning is that of meeting students' needs pertaining to times and places of their choosing. The availability of open and distance learning opportunities, based on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), seems best suited to achieving such flexibility. The use of ICT has greatly evolved

and students are now able to manage their learning flexibly (Enuku & Ojugwu, 2006; Osborne & Oberski, 2004).

Students can also interact in real time with subject experts (Suniti & Tara, 2012) as some educational institutions are able to provide real time online assistance to students. Within an online learning environment, more opportunities are afforded to learners to be individualized and flexible, thereby creating an increased demand for self-directed learning. Students in online learning environments require a set of well-developed life-long learning skills and strategies, such as goal-setting, action planning, learning-strategy selection assessment, resource selection and evaluation, reflective learning and time management (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004). As there are no compulsory set times for class attendance in distance learning, students are able to pace themselves, and also able to allocate the time that they require for their own specific study methods and for their lives and lifestyles. The students meet with their study group twice on a monthly basis (Baloyi, 2014). He further indicates that regular meetings with study groups are very helpful to students who have trouble managing their time and students who are not sure whether they are on the right track. The above statement indicates that assistance from peers is extremely beneficial in the ODL environment.

ODL enables students to arrange their learning schedules as they wish, and they do not have to study on certain days or hours which the HEI predetermine (Enuku & Ojugwu, 2006). They can also determine the pace at which they prefer to make progress (Enuku & Ojugwu, 2006). Through email, bulletin boards, or chat rooms, students communicate with peers, teachers, or their institutions (Fozdar & Kumar, 2007). Students should familiarise themselves with these modes of communication.

3.2.1.3 Student personal growth

Students must demonstrate a high level of self-discipline and time management in order to engage in self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning also assists the students in knowing themselves better, because they have to find study methods that work best for them. Students should become active students and seek active learning strategies in their learning (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004). They should not rely on study strategies that they have used in the past in the traditional classroom, as these differ from ODL which requires students to become active students. Self-regulation seems to be a general recurring theme throughout the literature. McLoughlin and Marshall (2000) note that effective learning necessitates a number of skills and cognitive capabilities that are not merely intuitive, nor can they be assumed in novice university students or those unfamiliar with learning online. Students should continuously engage actively in self-regulation and self-discipline. Vonderwell and Savery (2004) note that the skills students require include articulation, self-regulation, self-evaluation skills, and a repertoire of learning strategies. Open Educational Resources (OERs) provide opportunities for students to improve themselves and gain information that they could use to in order to make learning decisions. They must be aware of these opportunities and be able to identify them, specifically those applicable to their situation (Wright & Reju, 2012). Students have to determine their

learning objectives, self-direction, personal responsibility, personal experiences, and place of learning in order to solve problems and develop intrinsic motivation (Isman *et al.*, 2004). Extrinsic motivation does not play an important role in ODL (Isman *et al.*, 2004).

Students should remain students throughout their lives. They should know how to access and use available information (Isman *et al.*, 2004). Some students feel that it is the responsibility of the lecturer to ensure that they receive the necessary information. It is, however, not the responsibility of the lecturer to provide the information as students are responsible for their learning (Isman *et al.*, 2004). Choosing their field of study influences the performance of students. Choosing a field that they like increases their chances of success. Draves (1999) notes that self-direction and initiative are required for students to define their learning and systematically explore online context. Successful online students should be self-regulated as self-discipline assists them in their learning journeys (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004).

3.2.1.4 Student social roles

Students who are, for a variety of social, linguistic or cultural reasons, less likely to talk, discuss, or ask questions in traditional classrooms, could become quite articulate in online settings (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004). Online study assists students in being active in their learning as they feel that their persona is faceless. Students have to communicate with tutors and peers, though (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). Although ODL requires self-regulatedness; students need guidance from the tutors/lecturers or their peers to ensure seamless interaction. Students have to balance self-study, group activities and interaction with tutors/lecturers and peers. The lecturer is a guide to the students. Tutors, e-books as well as online resources are essential for the success of students.

Students interact with their online lecturers and peers in order to get feedback on their assignments and to ensure they are on the correct path (Isman *et al.*, 2004). A web of learning interaction will therefore develop between lecturers, students and peers for collaborative learning and construction of knowledge. Students should develop an online presence to become part of the online community and participate in dialogue. Inactive students often perform worse than those who actively participate in the online learning process (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004).

3.2.2 Roles of lecturers

Guri-Rosenblit (2005) states that many distance teaching universities have been established since the early 1970s and they are forerunners in redefining and reshaping the roles of academic staff in order to optimise their unique teaching and learning environments. Distance teaching requires academics to dedicate more time to the preparation of study materials than they would for a face-to-face classroom preparation (Blignaut & Trollip, 2003; Guri-Rosenblit, 2005).

Van Zyl, Els and Blignaut (2013) proclaim that the development and success of DE/ODL is determined by various components: (i) curriculum and interactive study material specifically designed for distance students while recognising their needs and expectations, barriers, and socio-economical context; (ii) an academic contract, explicit or implicit, between lecturers and student towards the achievement of specific learning outcomes; (iii) effective two-way communication between lecturers and students; (iv) some face-to-face classroom experience; (v) the implementation, integration, and use of various types of ICT; (vi) student e-readiness; (vii) effective logistics; (viii) continuous research and reflection; (ix) efficient delivery mechanism; (x) frequency of feedback; and (xi) testing. The roles of lecturers in distance education relate to:

- Lecturing ability
- Quality and content of the course materials
- Assignments and lecturers' response to quality and style.

In general, the roles of lecturers encompass four sub-themes, i.e.: student support, institutional support, personal development, and social development (Figure 3.4).

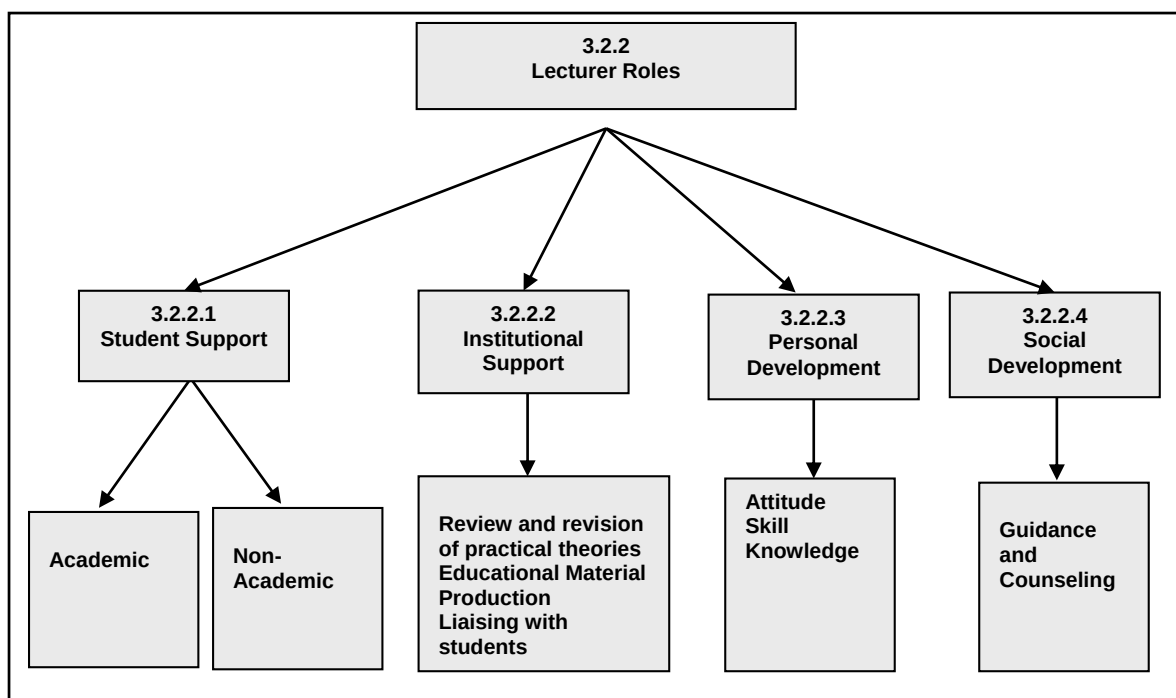


Figure 3.4: Lecturer roles

3.2.2.1 Lecturer support to students

Bridley, Walti, and Zawacki-Richter (2004) state that student support is defined in different ways for distance and online learning. Student support comprises two sub-themes, i.e. academic and non-academic support. Student support is particularly important for student success in ODL (Baloyi, 2014).

Dela Pena-Bandalaria (2007) suggests that support services like tutorials, library, guidance and counselling, as well as academic and administrative consultation, must be available in different digital modes. Lecturers support student learning, provide socio-emotional support, and general support, as well as instructor support for grading, course management and course supervision (Easton, 2003). Without sufficient support, students may fall behind academically as students also have diverse roles to fulfil.

3.2.2.2 Lecturer institutional support

Lecturers adhere to the policy of their institution' for the support of students (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004). Institutional support of distance learning provides for the division of labour where academics develop teaching and learning material; the organisational machine distributes these and lecturers/tutors provide support to students (Du Plessis, 2011). Makoe (2011) speculates that sustainable amendment in teaching practice can only transpire if professional development programmes require practitioners/lecturers to engage in discourse about practical theories of teaching and learning, in order to subject them to appraisal and amendment. He further states that, as with many things in this world, education and methods of teaching evolve, therefore it is imperative for the teaching staff to continuously revise practical theories.

The institution benefits when lecturers employ multimedia in designing educational materials as they would be able to design contextualised content, and lecturers are then able to customise the content without diminishing of the quality of the content (Okonkwo, 2012). It is more efficient to edit a recorded lesson for a specific audience than to change handbooks and study guides. Guri-Rosenblit (2005) states that the first phase is devoted to the development of quality self-study materials by teams of experts, especially when they are part of the teaching team. Makoe (2011) claims that senior lecturers are required to devote their effort to designing self-study courses, as well as being involved in the teaching process. Wright and Reju (2012) are of the opinion that OER has the potential to increase students' access to quality educational materials at a lower cost. This would mean that funds could be provided by governments to institutions, especially in the areas of student support, professional development, research by lecturers, and lecturers' recruitment and retention (Okonkwo, 2012).

3.2.2.3 Lecturer personal development

Personal development can be associated with mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and physical development. Berge and Collins (1995) declare that the ODL environment necessitates improved writing presentation skills, technical competencies, virtual management strategies, and the capacity to engage students through virtual communication on the part of lecturers. New teaching and learning settings require academic staff to embrace new responsibilities and to improve a range of their facilitation skills in order for them to keep up with modern development (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). The

lecturer's role requires cross-functional skills to provide seamless integration of learning content and facilitation (Easton, 2003).

In South Africa, many Africans embrace the philosophy of "Ubuntu." Ubuntu relates to the principle that students should feel free to contact the lecturers with regard to courseware issues when they require assistance. Easton (2003) opines that it is essential that lecturers build relationships with their students in order for them to feel comfortable to approach the lecturers. ODL and DE lecturers should display Ubuntu towards students in terms of their personal development; they should learn new skills, enrich their existing position, or pursue an alternative career path (Easton, 2003).

The role of the "mentor" is a primary role of the lecturers in online classes (Easton, 2003). He explains that the mentor is sometimes not the lecturer him/herself, but rather other staff members or students who have already passed that specific level well and are therefore able to assist the students. Easton (2003) indicates that the facilitation team often comprises various staff members at the learning institution. It is therefore important that facilitation skills be developed in group contexts.

Sarid (2003) indicates that knowledgeable lecturers/tutors are key in the creating of students' attitudes towards using learning technologies. Positive attitudes inherently influence students' interaction with the learning content, peers and lecturers. Negative attitudes result in students preferring interactions associated with traditional classrooms and they never fully adopt the advances made in ODL. Hoter, Shonfeld, and Ganayim (2009) indicate that a change in attitude does not always lead to a change in students' bias towards collaborative learning as encountered in ODL. However, when they see their peers are positive towards online interaction, they might become curious and follow the behaviour of their peers. Gradually their online skills will develop, and increasingly they will embrace the positive aspects of learning online. Continuous knowledge development is vital for lecturers in order to stay relevant and knowledgeable. Okonkwo (2012) affirms that ODL practitioners could gain from the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) in their courses and should also participate in creating OERs which again be used by others (Okonkwo, 2012).

Hoter *et al.* (2009) uphold that the Online Inter-group Contact Hypothesis (OICH) model not only constructs bridges among cultures, but also encourages advanced uses of technology and the internet for trainees' self-improvement and pedagogical goals. The model is unique in the way it stimulates the ongoing use of educational technology and types of communication while at the same time forming a collaborative environment, a high level of trust, and high-level thinking through the use of such tools as blogs and wikis (Hoter *et al.*, 2009). The repercussions are that these proficiencies (both old and new) will provide guidance and structure for formal and informal training for distance education practitioners using mobile learning (Makoe, 2011).

3.2.2.4 Lecturer social development

Isman, Altinay, *et al.* (2004) describe the areas of required social development of online lecturers as being (i) self-responsibility, (ii) self-evaluation, and (iii) effective communication. “Because ODL is so well suited for collaborative learning, the instructor plays an essential social role” (Easton, 2003, p. 90). Social responsibilities may include building a learning community, assisting students with working in groups, and establishing a culture for productive interaction between student peers and the lecturer. This could be achieved by providing students with group assignments that would encourage them to work collaboratively (Easton, 2003). The effective ODL lecturer keeps online discussions on track, intertwines in discussion threads, and preserves group harmony when disagreements occur during class discussions (Kearsley, Lynch, & Wizer, 1995; Rohfeld & Hiemstra, 1995). Easton (2003) is of the opinion that the online lecturer performs a variety of managerial responsibilities in terms of students and facilitation records. In virtual environments, monitoring student progress could be difficult. For example, “absences” in an online environment are not easy to track or explain (Easton, 2003). Although lecturers sometimes have the assistance of the tutors and administrative staff, the lecturer is ultimately responsible for the management of the online class. Students and teaching staff may need counselling from time to time during the interaction between students (Fozdar & Kumar, 2007; Guri-Rosenblit, 2005; Hoter *et al.*, 2009).

Makoe (2011) asserts that the basic level of training should rather focus on how learning technologies could be used during teaching learning. Learning technologies have reduced paperwork and administration for teaching staff. Isman, Altinay, *et al.* (2004) in their findings highlight the following as the teachers’ roles in the distance learning:

- Being responsible for the preparation of learning tasks
- Interacting immediately with students relating to their learning
- Being aware of students’ needs and preferences
- Motivating students
- Bridging prejudices on online learning
- Establishing an effective student-teacher interaction environment.

3.2.3 Roles of the HEI

Many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) around the world offer distance programmes through printed media and contact sessions. Examples are the Open University (2009), the University of South Africa (2009), the Unit for ODL at the NWU (2009) and many others. Various combinations of approaches to complementary course delivery modes, known as blended learning, are widely employed (Kelly *et al.*, 2009). The evolution of ICT, especially its application as digital teaching and learning, has become significant. It is the role of the higher institution to keep abreast of these changes (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). Tutorial classes at study centres employ a variety of modes of interaction.

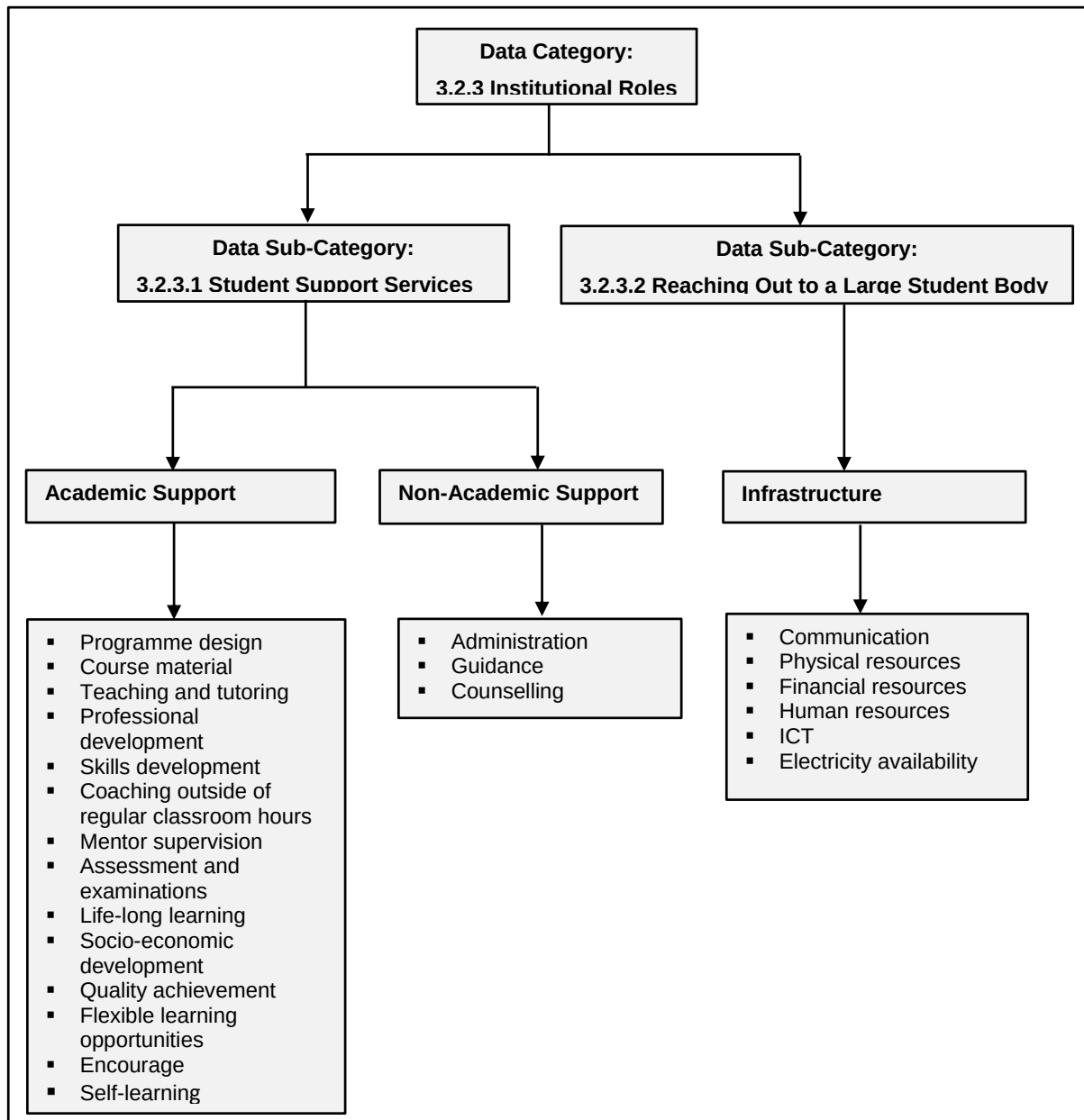


Figure 3.5: Roles of HEIs

3.2.3.1 HEI student support services

The pivotal element in ODL is student support (Baloyi, 2014). The category Student Support Services comprises two sub-themes, i.e. academic and non-academic support. Bridley *et al.* (2004) describe student support as the provision of learning material, teaching and tutoring, and non-academic components like administrative aspects, guidance and counselling. “Support services like tutorials, library, guidance and counselling, and academic and administrative consultations, must be available in a wide variety of forms, such as online and via SMS” (Dela Pena-Bandalaria, 2007, p. 8). These services support student learning, provide socio-emotional support, and provide general support to the

lecturer through assisting with grading—doing the “leg work,” and course supervision (Easton, 2003). However, the availability of more supportive aspects contributes towards the high fixed costs of distance education.

3.2.3.2 HEI servicing a large student body

Daniel (2005) upholds that ODL is an effective way of reaching out to large student numbers which inherently intensifies the management of online infrastructures. Perraton (2000) states that ODL institutions generally have high dropout and low pass rates. Distance teaching universities are therefore compelled to modify their organisational infrastructure and management structures, as well as local and regional learning centres, in order to maximise student success. Teaching and learning systems should be flexible and should respond quickly to changes in subject matter, technology and student needs (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005) to ascertain the best student success.

3.3 Responsibilities

Responsibilities are actions to fulfil different roles. The following section discusses student, lecturer and institutional responsibilities as stakeholders of distance education (Figure 3.6).

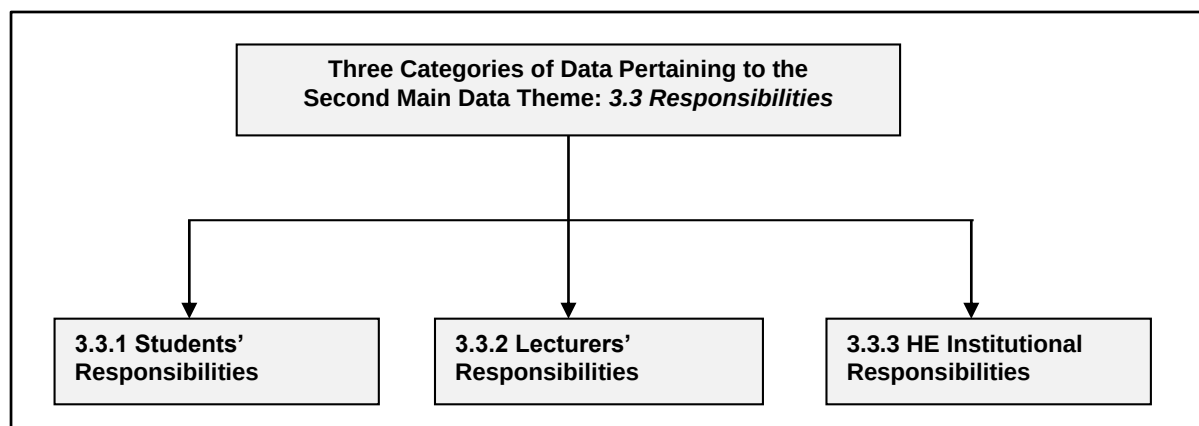


Figure 3.6: Responsibilities of students, lecturers and HEIs

3.3.1 Student responsibilities

Student responsibility emerges when students are actively involved in their learning; when they acknowledge their accountability for their academic success. Figure 3.7 displays the student responsibilities identified during the SLR.

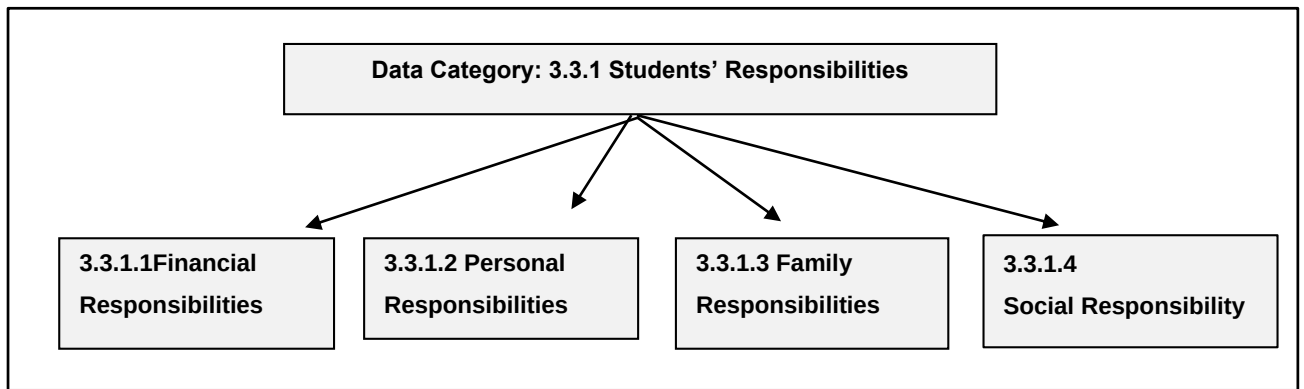


Figure 3.7: Aspects of students' responsibilities

3.3.1.1 Student payment of tuition fees

Van Zyl *et al.* (2013) claim that students reported that financial barriers prevented them from travelling in order to attend contact classes. Some students declared that they were parents with matric or tertiary students and they regarded paying their children's fees as important (Van Zyl *et al.*, 2013).

3.3.1.2 Student personal responsibility

Suniti and Tara (2012) posit that the most successful ODL students: (1) voluntarily seek further education; (2) are highly motivated and self-disciplined; (3) are older; (4) are willing to initiate calls to instructors for assistance; (5) possess a serious attitude toward coursework; and (6) are holders of a degree. Dela Pena-Bandalaria (2007) argues that such adult students in online learning environments, must take responsibility for their learning paths. Collin and Karsenti (2011) encourage students to form study groups, and they should make themselves available to participate in learning groups,

It is the responsibility of the students to contact programme leaders for any required approvals, accreditations, clarification of the University's rules and regulations and for guidance in academic planning (Abas, 2009). Students have the responsibility to make the online environment work for them and they should subsequently determine their pace of learning within such a network (Enuku & Ojugwu, 2006). It is also the student's responsibility to ensure that his/her proposed programme of study poses no lecture or examination timetable clashes (Abas, 2009).

3.3.1.3 Student family responsibilities

Fozdar and Kumar (2007) state that ODL students have an array of family responsibilities. Van Zyl *et al.* (2013) indicate that students have challenges with attending scheduled contact classes as they often have responsibilities at their schools, as well as family responsibilities, which prevent them from attending.

3.3.1.4 Student social responsibility

Fozdar and Kumar (2007) state that, unlike traditional on-campus students, students studying through ODL systems are typically adult part-time students, juggling their studies with fulltime jobs and family responsibilities. Hoter *et al.* (2009) posit that HEIs create social environments to assist such students in constructing their own knowledge within a safe social learning environment. Van Zyl *et al.* (2013) report that during scheduled face-to-face tutorials, lecturers and facilitators review important module content. Students can then share their personal circumstances, be assisted with courseware issues, and they have the opportunity to network with one another. They are encouraged to form study groups and they are responsible for communicating with other group members.

3.3.2 Lecturer responsibilities

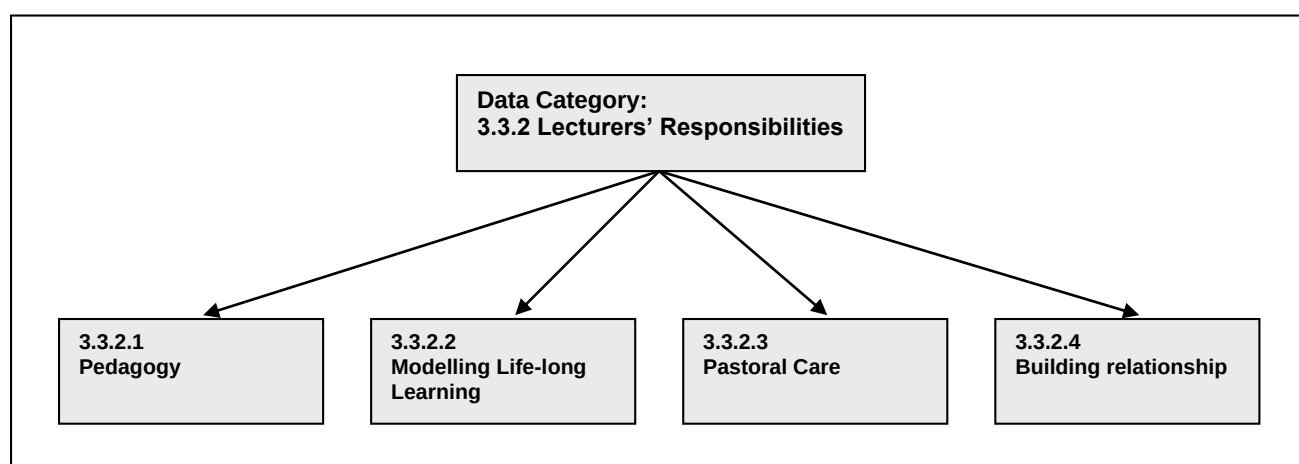


Figure 3.8: Aspects of lecture responsibilities

3.3.2.1 Lecturer pedagogy

Hugo (2011) indicates that the pedagogy of the ODL model relates to socio-constructivism that establishes social communities of practice. This entails learning as a social process, and that learning should be contextual. In addition to rapid changing technology, the demography and needs of the students in higher education have shifted. This impels a reassessment of online pedagogy (Easton, 2003). Collin and Karsenti (2011) claim that across Africa, the pedagogical integration of technology should take into account the scarcity of digital learning technology in the hands of the typical ODL student.

A major responsibility of lecturers in ODL is to facilitate and enhance learning at a distance; ensure that students remain life-long learners; support students in time of need, be available for consultation;

design and upgrade quality learning material; assess students' assignments and provide timely feedback; and improve their (lecturers') personal technology skills.

3.3.2.2 Lecturing modelling for life-long learning

Du Plessis (2011) points out that ODL is an approach which combines the principles of student centredness, life-long learning, flexibility of learning provision, the removal of barriers to access learning, the recognition for credit of prior learning experiences, the provision of student support, and the construction of learning programmes. Eneku and Ojugwu (2006) state that lecturers should, in their courses, provide a broad range of life-long learning opportunities to adult students who missed out on, or dropped out of earlier opportunities for study.

3.3.2.3 Lecturer pastoral care

Easton (2003) claims that, just like the traditional classroom lecturer, the online lecturer should be vigilant about students' personal circumstances and where necessary, alert the institution's student development section regarding the issues that certain students may be experiencing.

3.3.2.4 Lecturer building relationships with colleagues

Easton (2003) further indicates that, because ODL is so well suited to collaborative learning, lecturers have the social responsibility of participating in professional practice groups, build learning communities, and establishing a culture for productive interaction among their lecturing peers.

3.3.3 HEI responsibilities

This section discusses institutional responsibilities focusing on policy and practices, financial assistance, technical assistance, academic and administrative management (Figure 3.9).

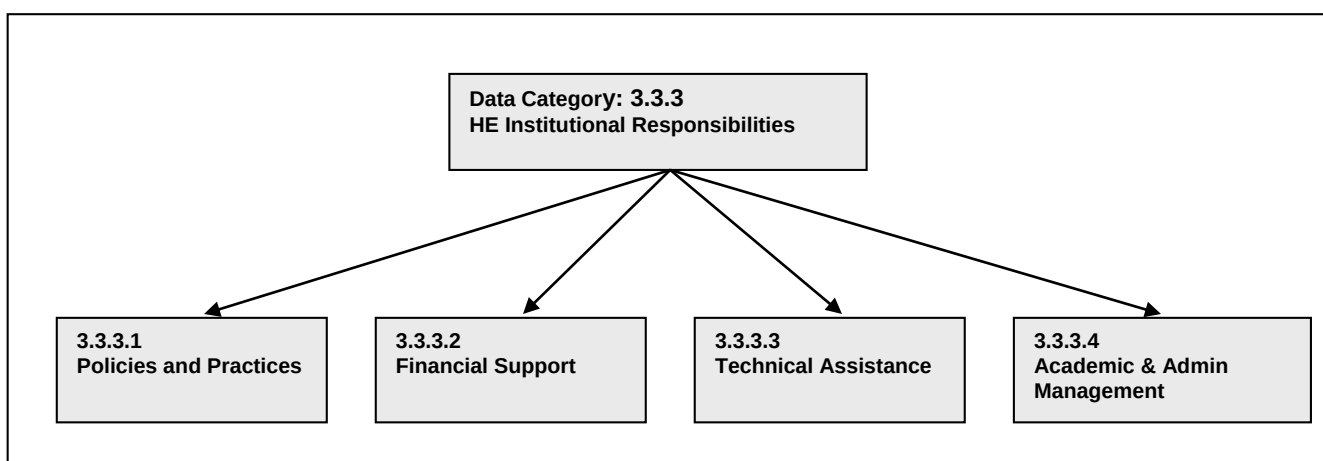


Figure 3.9: Aspects of institutional responsibilities

3.3.3.1 HEI policies and practices

The Department of Education explains “open learning as an approach which combines the principles of student centredness, life-long learning, flexibility of learning provision, the removal of barriers to access learning, the recognition of credit of prior learning experience, the provision of student support, and the construction of learning programmes. For sustainable ODL quality financing, quality should be in place for ODL students to succeed, as well as rigorous quality assurance of the design of learning materials and support systems” (Department of Education, 1995, p. 24). Abas (2009) argues that it is the responsibility of the HEIs to develop ODL policies and ensure implementation in order to promote effective teaching and learning. An ODL institution should provide timely, accurate and helpful information on the programmes offered. Abas (2009) claims that “policies are important right from the start to support decisions made about e-learning. Furthermore, investments in e-learning are substantial and the absence of policies to support its successful implementation will lead to failure. Consequently, policies will foster the enculturation of e-learning, while ensuring that facilities and resources are available in order to produce a positive e-learning environment.”

Du Plessis (2011) argues that the Policy Framework for Education and Training outlines a vision of a future with a well-designed and quality distance education system based on the principles of open learning (African National Congress, 1994). The dimensions of South Africa’s learning deficit are vast in relation to the needs of the people. The constitutional guarantee of the right to basic education and financial constraints on infrastructural development on a large scale necessitate a fresh approach to the provision of learning opportunities (Department of Education, 1995). Du Plessis (2011) argues that the institutional policy should be in line with the government policies. The Department of Higher Education and Training (2004) and the National Council for Higher Education policy documents are current examples (1996).

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa published two policies on Distance Education. The White Paper for Post School Education and Training (2014) and the Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities in the Context of an Integrated Post-school system (2014) guide the delivery of ODL. The White Paper states that by 2030 there should be a total enrolment of about 1.6 million students at South African universities. It will not be possible for traditional universities to accommodate such student numbers and therefore ODL should play a significant role in the future.

3.3.3.2 HEI financial support

Du Plessis (2011) points out that the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) report places particular emphasis on the cost-effectiveness of DE (1996). It provides reasons for proposing to expand DE by citing relatively lower costs per qualifier. The policy also suggests the increased use of OERs in order to curb overhead costs. UNESCO (2008) posits that education budgets often decrease, thus increasing the interest in and importance of ODL in sub-Saharan Africa.

3.3.3.3 HEI technical assistance

Technical assistance of HEIs refers to the procurement, maintenance and delivery of learning managements systems comprising hardware, software, networks, infrastructure, information, and applications to the ODL delivery system (Isman *et al.*, 2004). How these components are organised, managed and maintained is critical to the success of e-learning (Easton, 2003). Enuku and Ojugwu (2006) suggest that in order to curb the resistance to the adoption of learning technologies, adequate training should be in place for all stakeholders to ensure the success of the ODL delivery. “Regretfully, at most ODL institutions the effectiveness of new technologies (i.e. mobile technologies) is typically not well researched prior to adoption to determine whether—and to what extent—mobile technologies can be deployed for educational purposes” (Fozdar & Kumar, 2007, p. 3). Such technical support could also be provided through a third party where the HEIs do not have the capacity. This also includes the development of facilities at remote teaching and learning sites. It is critical that technical support be adaptable and responsive to changes in subject content, technology, and student clientele needs.

3.3.3.4 HEI academic and administrative management

Academic staff and operational management have the responsibility for the implementation of curriculum aspects such as e-assessment strategies, policies, and accountability for the e-assessment (Osuji, 2012).

3.4 ODL experiences

The theme experience revealed two aspects, namely challenges and benefits (Figure 3.10).

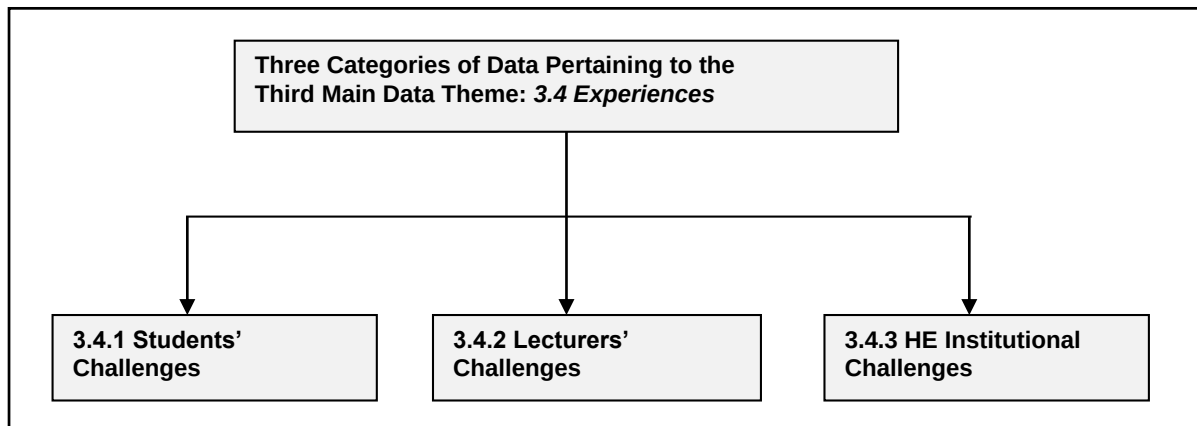


Figure 3.10: Experiences of students, lecturers and HEIs

The sections below explain each of the above sections in Figure 3.10.

3.4.1 Student challenges

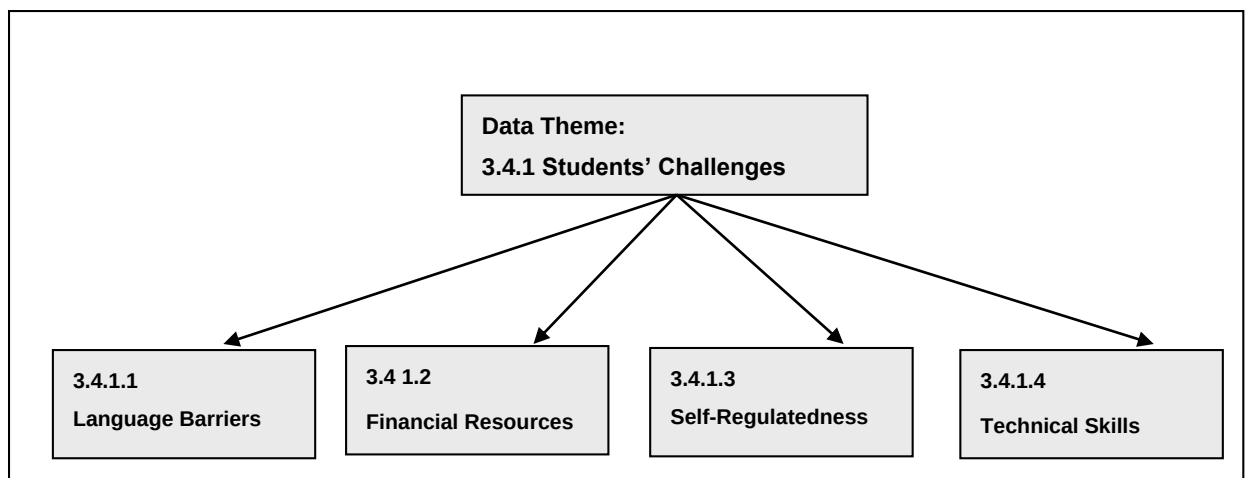


Figure 3.11: Student challenges

Students have different challenges which include language barriers, financial resources, self-regulatedness, and technical skills. Self-regulatedness is an important characteristic required of ODL students. Unprepared students, or students who are not self-regulated and from disadvantaged backgrounds, could require elaborate assistance to succeed in HE (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). Language of teaching and learning is one of the main challenges for students. Baloyi (2014) indicates that Africans often originate from rural areas, poor backgrounds, and disadvantaged schooling systems, which results in limited proficiency in English. Osuji (2012) affirms that the cost of personal computers makes it difficult for students to own one (Osuji, 2012). Pilkington and Sanders (2014) opine that the social aspects of ODL distract students from the completion of their assignments. Baloyi (2014) points

out that the most of students do not have access to the Internet, owing to cost factors, as well as their fear of technology.

3.4.2.1 Lecturer challenges

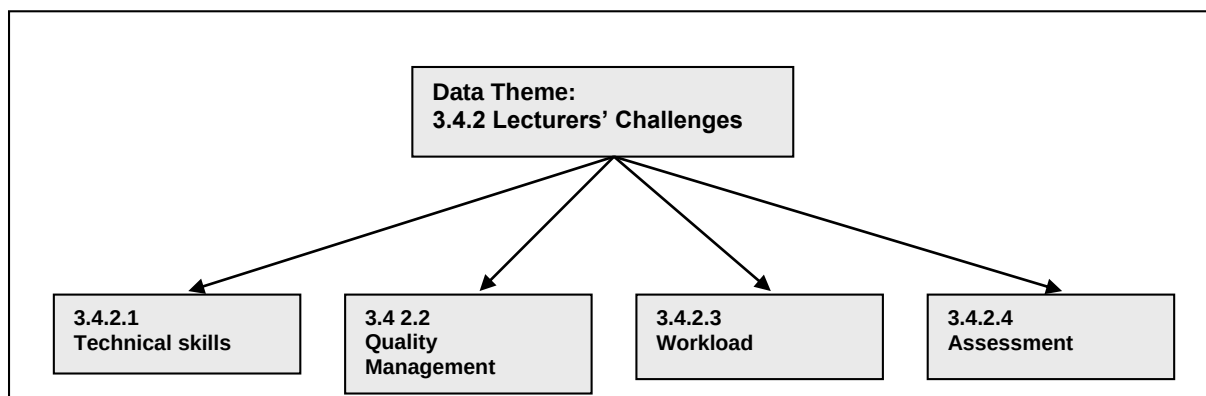


Figure 3.12: Indicates the challenges that lecturers face during the delivery of ODL.

Baloyi (2014) points out that most lecturers have not fully mastered the learning technologies offered at their respective HEIs and required for online teaching and learning. Baloyi (2014) explains that most lecturers are not motivated to master the technologies under the pretence that they do not have enough time to do so. Lecturers also fear the organisational aspects of ODL, the different workload, and the pace of work (Collin & Karsenti, 2011). Osuji (2012) claims that lecturers view equipment failure, greater efforts, manipulation security, legal security and loss of quality as challenges. Lecturers, especially in the beginning, grapple with the absence of visual cues while teaching online. They are not sure when to send and receive messages, make quick assessments, or take corrective action (Baloyi, 2014). Enuke and Ojugwu (2006) uphold that the adoption of ICTs in teaching and learning has created a new set of anxieties and fears in lecturers. They fear the different manner of facilitation, being left behind or replaced with others who have adopted the relevant technological skills (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004). These fears lead to insufficiently trained educators and lecturers in developing countries where there is little to no technological training currently available. Blended learning programmes that involve ODL as well as face-to-face learning provide bridging to just ODL (Evawoma-Enuku & Enuke, 2000). Nevertheless, Makoe (2011) indicates that lecturers, after some time, realised and acknowledged that ODL played a positive role in their skills development and for their careers.

3.4.3 Institutional challenges

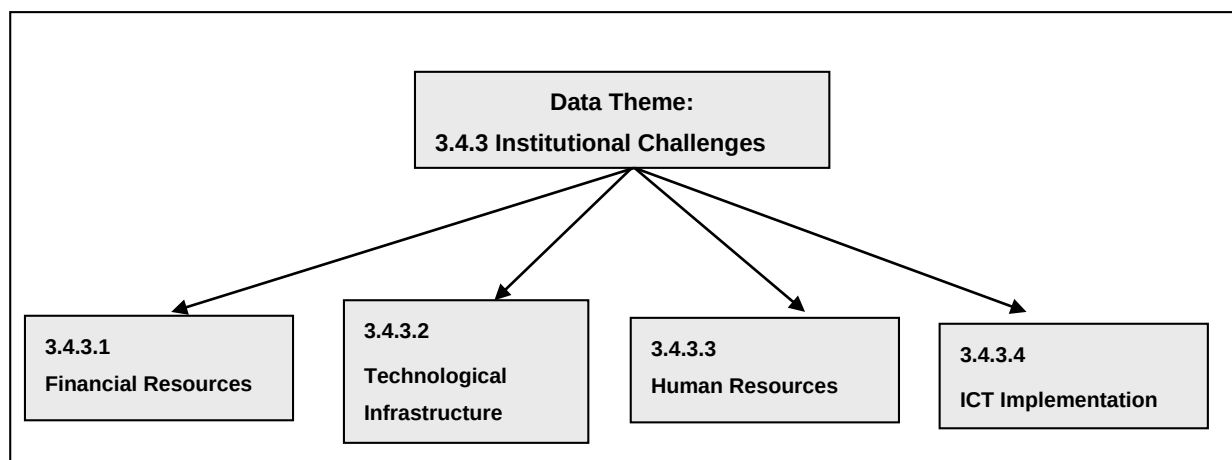


Figure 3.13: Indicates the challenges which HEIs generally face.

HE institutions face challenges relating to financial resources, technological infrastructure, human resources and ICT implementation. Baloyi (2014) argues that generally the objective of ODL is to amplify participation and to overcome geographical, social and economic barriers. Du Plessis (2011) argues that improvement in DE relies heavily on unsustainable sources of funding, particularly donor funding, which causes a challenge for institutions. Collin and Karsenti (2011) indicate that financial planning is needed for the direct costs of a course and programmes. ODL requires well-established and effective technology infrastructure. As most students do not have access to the Internet, HEIs still have to rely on printed materials, which add to the cost of course delivery (Baloyi, 2014). Nenge *et al.* (2012) state that the development of learning technologies for ODL institutions provides many challenges, such as erratic electricity supply, inadequate ODL policy, and limited participation in global ICT cooperation and coordination.

3.4.4.1 Student benefits of ODL

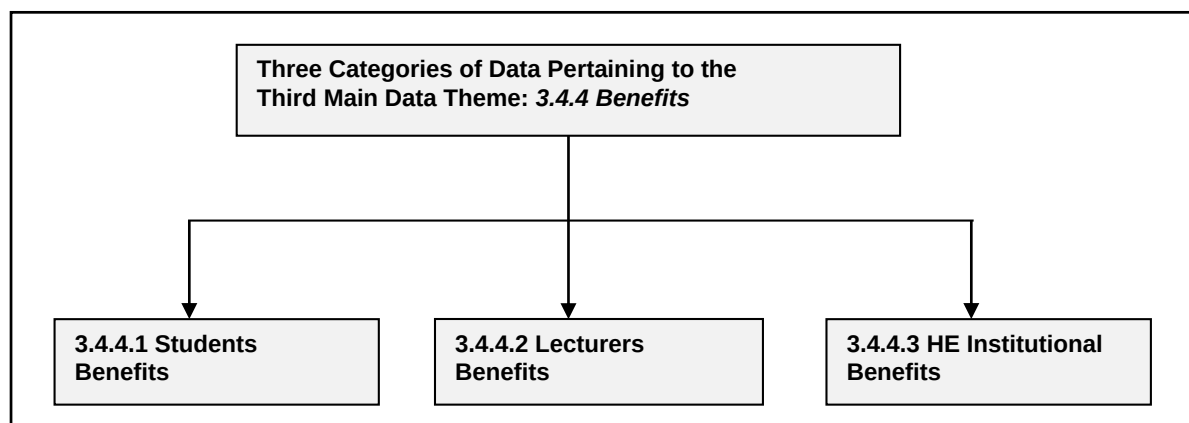


Figure 3.14: Outlines the benefits which ODL holds for students.

ODL provides students the opportunity to obtain a qualification without attending traditional classes, as full-time students need to do. ODL is a mode of teaching in which the students are not required to be physically present at the specific venue. Teaching and learning sessions are conducted via Whiteboard and are recorded for use at a later stage. ODL students are usually assessed by means of assignments and examinations (Enuku & Ojugwu, 2006). Dela Pena-Bandalaria (2007) states that students' use of ICTs enables them to better control their learning environment and they also access their results electronically. Benefits for students relate to:

- Examination results are available sooner and more easily
- There are self- assessments whenever and wherever needed
- There is a quality assurance of the assessment elements (Osuji, 2012).

Dela Pena-Bandalaria (2007) points out that the use of learning technologies lowers the costs of qualifications to students due to the scale of delivery. Tutorial classes at learning centres provide students with additional opportunities to interact with the content, their peers and lecturers; to ask questions and be motivated Van Zyl *et al.* (2013).

3.4.4.2 Lecturer benefits of ODL

Dela Pena-Bandalaria (2007) mentions that lecturers can design courses that are flexible and take advantage of students' existing experiences. in order to link and cross reference some modules and save time. By providing students a clear picture of content through digital storytelling, online facilitation could become more meaningful and reduce chances of too much repetition. Sadik (2008) argues that the use of ICTs assists lecturers in enhancing their skills and knowledge which help the enhancement of teaching. Osuji (2012) summarizes the benefits of e-assessments to lecturers:

- The process demands for more assessments which help lecturers to identify students with challenges soon and offer immediate intervention.
- There is a cost reduction because of the reusability of assessments which make large-scale testing convenient for lecturers.
- It saves time because of the automatic validation and readability of the items as lecturers do not have to mark, give outcomes, feedback and validate the e-assessments.
- There is statistical and qualitative assurance which reduces the time and efforts of the lecturers.
- There are new possibilities with multi-media elements. Using multimedia in the classroom helps the lecturer engage students and helps the students to be more involved and retain more information from the lesson.

3.4.4.3 HEI benefits

ODL appears to be highly useful for the delivering professional training across Africa. Collin and Karsenti (2011) indicate that in Africa, ODL is considered a necessity for students and educators alike, because it offers broader access to higher learning, where many universities have limited capacity. Du Plessis (2011) indicates that distance learning is used in a variety of settings and for various purposes. Distance learning could increase access to higher education, upgrading of skills, and assist students to keep abreast of rapidly advancing technologies while bettering their professional development and enhancing their careers. ODL frees students from the constraints of time and place, and offers flexible learning opportunities to students (Patru & Khvilon, 2002). Baloyi (2014) indicates that ODL has been successful in increasing the number of students, but unsuccessful in obtaining satisfactory throughput rates. Students may feel isolated from their lecturers as they are often unprepared for higher education. Baloyi (2014) argues that ODL has been acclaimed for providing access to higher education for students previously denied this privilege. Collin and Karsenti (2011) argue that ODL in Africa poses a potential solution to the long-standing and unfortunate dilemma for academic managers.

3.5 Summary

The chapter presented a review of literature regarding the roles and responsibilities of ODL students. Table 3.2 provides an outline of how the themes and categories from the qualitative analysis contributed towards the interview questions for student and lecturers (Addendum 3.1 and 3.2).

Table 3.2: Outline of the contribution of qualitative themes and categories to the structure of interview schedules

Data themes	Data categories	Interview schedule for students	Interview schedule for lecturers
Roles (§ 3.2)	Students' roles (§ 3.2.1) Lecturers' roles (§ 3.2.2) HE Institutional roles (§ 3.2.3)	What are your roles as ODL students? What are the roles of lecturers? What are the HE institutional roles?	What are the roles of ODL students? What are your roles as ODL lecturers? What are the HE institutional roles?
Responsibilities (§ 3.3)	Students' responsibilities (§ 3.3.1) Lecturers' responsibilities (§ 3.3.2) HE Institutional responsibilities (§ 3.3.3)	What are your responsibilities as ODL students? What are the responsibilities of ODL lecturers? What are the HE institutional responsibilities?	What are the responsibilities of ODL students? What are your responsibilities as ODL lecturers? What are the HE institutional responsibilities?
Experiences (§ 3.4)	Students' experiences (§ 3.4.3) Lecturers' experiences (§ 3.4.2) HE Institutional experiences (§ 3.4.3)	What are your experiences as ODL students? What are your experiences regarding ODL lecturers? What are your experiences with regard to the HEI?	What are your experiences regarding ODL students? What are your experiences as ODL lecturers? What are your experiences with regard to the HE institution?

Chapter Four provides an analysis of the voices of the focus group participants presenting their perspective on the roles and responsibilities of open distance learning students.

Chapter Four

Voices of the focus group participants

4.1 Background to the analysis

Chapter Two explained and justified the research design and methodology, the selection of research participants, as well as the data collection strategies used in this investigation. In order to realise the first research sub question of this study, as outlined in the research methodology. Chapter Three, provides a SLR pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of ODL students. These themes were subsequently explored through open-ended, semi-structured questions directed to ODL students and lecturers (Addenda 3.1 and 3.2) during focus group interviews, so as to address the second and third research sub-aims of this investigation. They explore the roles and responsibilities of ODL students according to ODL students, as well as how lecturers perceived the roles and responsibilities of ODL students.

Besides the codes and the four themes derived from the SLR (§ Chapter Three), supplementary codes emanated from the qualitative analysis of the data collected during the focus-group interviews. The four main data themes were Roles, Responsibilities, ICT, and Indicators. In order to address the two sub questions stated above, the codes were re-interpreted and concatenated as two main themes of indicators of (i) the roles of students during ODL; and (ii) responsibilities of students during ODL. Accordingly, this chapter reports on the findings gained from the qualitative analysis which I performed on the combined integrated dataset collected from the SLR and the focus group interviews. It also provides an integration with the world view according to an African theoretical framework (§ Chapter One). Figure 4.1 provides a combined network view of the two main themes, indicating the six related data categories and twenty-six data codes which emerged from the qualitative analysis of the focus group interview data. Verbatim narratives of participants (collected during the focus group interviews) provide evidence to support the eventual findings, while giving voice to the participants' individual viewpoints, experiences, perceptions, and anticipations regarding both their roles and responsibilities during ODL. Chapter Four concludes with a summary of the core findings of my qualitative analysis, as well as a critical review of my findings.

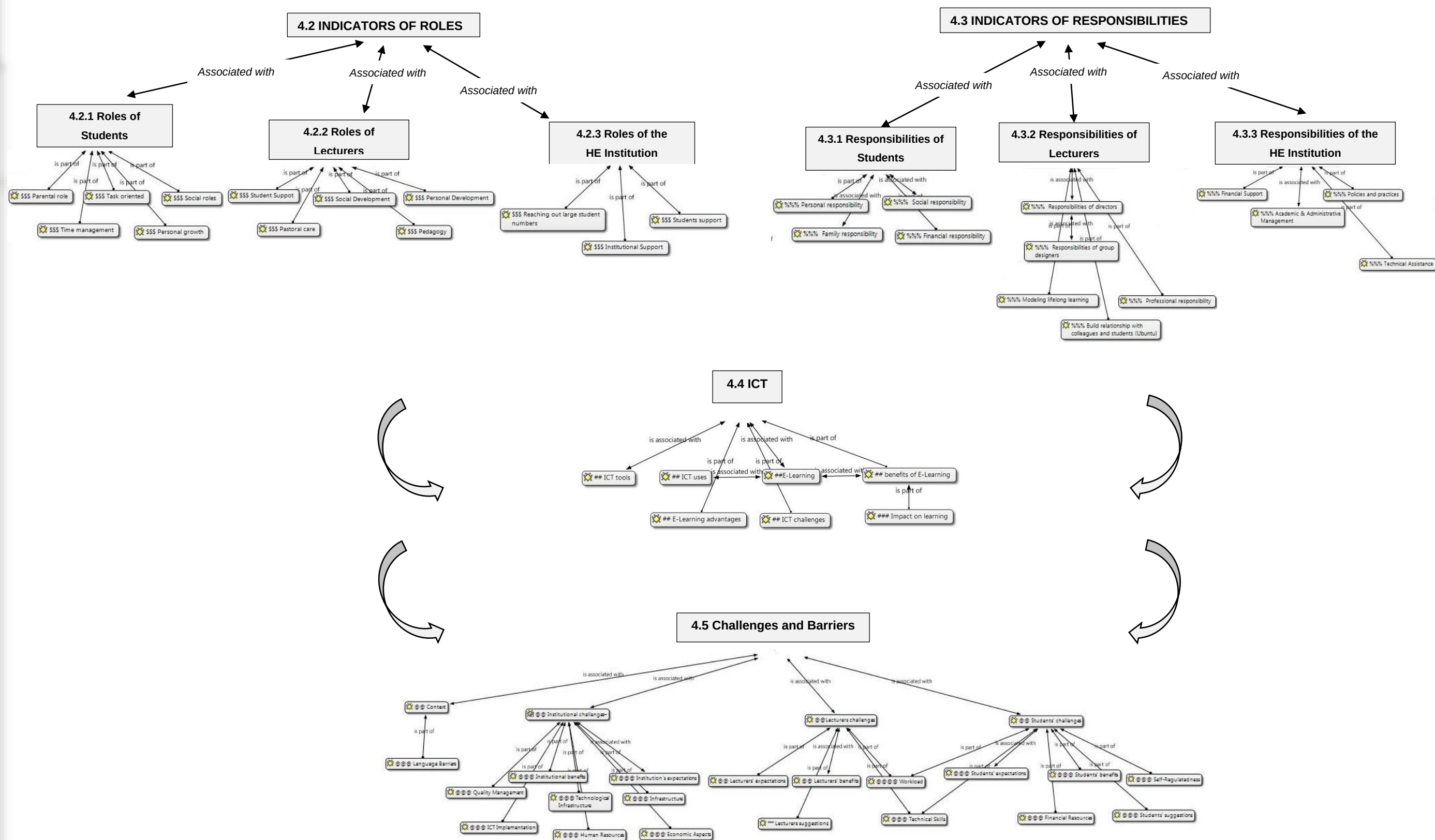


Figure 4.1: Combined network view of the two data themes, six categories of data, with related data codes, which emerged from the qualitative data analysis.

4.2 Introduction to the roles of students during ODL

A role could be described as social norms that guide and direct individual behaviours that are suitable for the situation and which will intensify the prospect that the individual strives for and is expected to attain (Solomon *et al.*, 1985).

The theme *indicators of roles* comprises three aspects: (§ 4.2.1) roles of students, (§ 4.2.2) roles of lecturers and (§ 4.2.3) roles of the HE institutions. The SLR (§ 3.2) delineates these concepts.

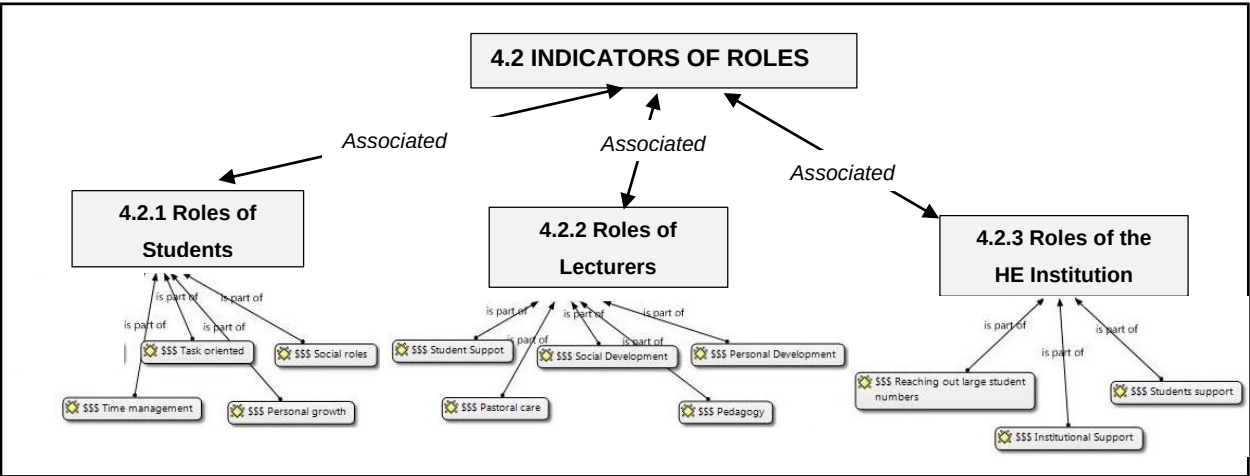


Figure 4.2: Network view of the coding structure of the three data categories related to the first data theme indicators of roles

Figure 4.2 illustrates the network view of the coding structure of the data theme Indicator of Roles, and the categories that arose from the set of data: Roles of Students. Roles of Lecturers and Roles of the HE Institution. Aspects of institutional roles and lecturers’ roles also emerged from the data but they will not be discussed in this explanation of findings as they do not relate to the focus of this study. Although only the students’ roles are discussed according to the research question, pertinent reference is made to the roles of the institution and lecturers. ODL students wear many hats, e.g. they are students, teachers, facilitators, mentors, experts, parents, social entrepreneurs, decision makers, planners, administrators, leaders, etc. The discussion will focus on their roles as ODL students as the concept emerged from the qualitative data. The following section provides evidence of roles of students in Figure 4.2.

4.2.1 Indicators of the roles of students

The data analysis revealed the experiences of students as part of their learning and fulfilment or attainment of the course for which they are registered. The following are the roles as indicated by the students and the lecturers.

4.2.1.1 Task Orientation

Task oriented means focusing on the completion of particular tasks as a measure of success. Baloyi (2014) defines task-oriented students as students who are expected to learn and study new material independently, as well as to adjust to new ways of learning in an open distance learning environment. An outgoing, task-oriented individual will be focused on getting things done, accomplishing tasks, getting to the bottom line as quickly as possible, and making things happen. It is compulsory for all students to go online to regularly participate in discussions with their tutors and classmates (Abas, 2009). Behaviours such as arriving for classes on time, participating in class discussions, interacting with lecturers and other students in a respectful and informative manner are part of the roles that students are accustomed to and

skills they have learned throughout their education (Paden & Stell, 2009) (§ 3.2.3.1). In distance education there are some differences but the commitment remains. The research participants mentioned that:

It is to study my books and do my work (P36:3-4).

... our roles, we must study (P39:25).

Is to do my assignments and post them before the due date (P36:5).

... our roles as open distance learning students is to prepare for the examination (P36:23).

It is my role to see to it that my work as a student is in good standard (P37:206).

When students are task oriented, they succeed in their learning and they are able to fulfil their roles. Task oriented students are self-directed and self-regulated they do not need to be pushed and coached to study and complete their assignments. They are highly motivated and passionate about their work. A participant emphasized that role modelling is important:

I think it is my role to remain a role model, I am their role model being a student at this stage of growing every time I stand before them as a teacher they know that I am also studying further as a role model I am inspiring them to say look in life you cannot say I have grown and have reached the end but you learn for life (P39:90-92).

Role models are often part of people's lives in a variety of ways. These comprise educators, civic leaders, mothers, fathers, clergy, peers, and ordinary people encountered in everyday life, but the most influential is a teacher. The task of the lecturer is to ascertain that each student, as an individual, fulfils his/her potential and talent, and to assist them to discover and develop this potential. There are many reasons why students regard lecturers as role models. According to one participant, it is critical for lecturers to behave as role models in order to inspire their students to fulfil their responsibilities. Participants reported that they as students, were aware that they were studying, aiming to become life-long students; they would also be motivated to study and achieve their self-development goals. From the data, it emerged that task-oriented students were committed to task orientation in order to yield best outcomes of their studies. A lecturer commented on the task orientation of her students:

I have students who phone me they say that they have got 80% and they want more, especially the Indian students as they are hardworking (P40:196).

A participant shared an important cautionary:

Ask your lecturer when you do not understand do not wait until it is late (P40:232).

Also, to do our class activities as given to us by our lecturers and I think it is also good to be involved in decision making on issues that affect us as students thank you (P38:4).

Evidence of ODL students' task orientation relates to their submitting of assignments on time, asking when they do not understand, or sufficiently preparing for examinations. Task-oriented students will be motivated to achieve their learning outcomes, accomplish tasks, and obtain deep understanding of an aspect. As ODL students, they have to accomplish many roles, ranging from completing assignments and tasks (i.e. editor, summarizer), to leader (group tasks or group discussion leader), to assisting students who are left behind (mentor, expert, moderator, peer or reviewer) (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004).

On the other hand, students who are not task oriented tend to be demotivated and drop out, or even fail their studies. They often expect lecturers to provide them with information instead of exploring the learning material in order to solve the problem a certain task demands. They tend to not accept their responsibility as they expect lecturers to provide even more assistance in order for them to accomplish their learning tasks. They tend to become discouraged and drop out when their expectations are not met. Slower students expect lecturers to organize extra classes to assist them:

...and we acknowledge that our lecturers cannot spoon feed us but can just direct us well in our studies (P37:190).

When I am slow, I think the lecturer has the responsibility to take me through like organizing extra classes to assist those students who struggle (P38:150).

4.2.1.2 Time Management

The failure of many ODL students relates to their inability to manage their time well. They often do not comprehend how critical time management in the ODL environment is until it is too late. Students who can manage their learning with the flexibility in the ODL environment, gain through interaction with their lecturers, peers and content (Kok & Blignaut, 2010). This analysis revealed the importance of time management during the fulfilment of students' roles:

I have to juggle my time and my studies (P37:150).

To sum up this our roles as students is to manage our time well (P37:189).

...from setting my standards. I had a luxury of giving myself some timeline to say by such a time I should be through (P39:158).

When students are able to "juggle their time" in order to accommodate their roles and responsibilities, they have a better chance to succeed, especially when they are able to manage their time effectively. Paden and Stell (2009) support this statement by saying that students could be competent in traditional classroom roles (e.g. coming to class on time), but not in the roles of the online student (e.g. managing one's own time). They further indicate that behaviour like arriving on time for class, participating in class discussions, interacting with lecturers and their peers in a respectful manner, are all integrated in the roles that students were familiar with as they have learned these roles throughout their educational journey (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). An important role which emerged from the analysis was to complete and submit assignments on time.

...is to do my assignments and post them before the due date (P36:5).

Students are also expected to be punctual for tutorial classes, as well as with the submission of assignments. Late submission of work at their individual institutions exacerbates this bad behaviour, negatively impacting the grades they earn for assignments. Thus, it is important for students to maintain discipline and understand and develop their time management actions. The analysis revealed that the lecturers expect the ODL students to be self-regulated and self-directed as part of their time management:

I think our role especially for distance education is a lot more of a facilitator than a teacher and that's what she said we must support them and at the end try and get them to be self-directed if they are not there yet and I think very few of them are. (P40:12).

...this is now going to depend on the way they are going to apply self-regulation or self-regulatedness... (P40:79).

I strongly believe that they should start with a module or something that just help them to apply self-regulation to help develop self-regulated skills and that should form the basis of all the studies ... (P40:80).

According to ODL lecturers, requiring students to become self-directed by offering facilitation and assigning them assignments will help them enhance their self-direction and self-regulation skills. When students are not self-regulated and self-directed, they cannot excel in or even fulfil their roles as ODL students, which subsequently will hamper their success. The lecturers raised their concerns on the issue of self-directedness:

...I expected them to be self-directed and explorative... (P40:170).

Self-regulation and self-directedness I think are a real problem (P40:200).

Some lecturers maintained that students often fail, not because of the difficulty of the assignments, but owing to students' insufficient self-directedness. A lecturer shared her opinion that self-regulation and self-directedness are pertinent challenges as most students require the skills of self-directedness and self-regulation. Some lecturers are of the opinion that, when students meet their expectations, they would successfully accomplish their roles, which will contribute towards the completion of their studies. Baloyi (2014) affirms this opinion when he states that most DE students are experienced adults who should be highly motivated and self-directed. A lecturer indicated that students are also expected to work at their

own pace and in their own time to achieve their goals.

...as an educator and then in other words it means that it is expected out of you, to act accordingly or to conduct yourself in order for a specific goal to be achieved... (P38:40).

It is expected that if students conduct themselves in an orderly, organised manner and work hard to realise their roles they will achieve their specific goals. Students act accordingly when they maintain punctuality in their study period, and use resources and opportunities afforded to them as open and distance learning students. ICT, as a time management facilitator and promoter of ODL flexibility, enables students to efficiently fulfil their tasks.

Enuku and Ojugwu (2006) and Osborne and Oberski (2004) posit that the use of ICT has greatly improved the ability of students to become flexible in their studies. The availability of ODL opportunities based on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) seems to be a good match in achieving learning flexibility. Issues from the analysis revealed the positive impact of e-learning:

...so that we can phone them when we need their help (P36:21).

Every time we come here the administrator from the university will e-mail us the information and timetables (P39:127).

There is overwhelming evidence that the use of technology could be an effective tool in supporting teaching and learning at a distance (Baloyi, 2014). ICT affords a number of benefits which include interactivity, adaptation, simulation, demonstration and integration. ICT allows students active involvement in their learning rather than passive learning associated with conventional classroom-based facilitation modes (Enuku & Ojugwu, 2006). A further benefit of ICT could be to disperse the feelings of isolation ODL students often experience (Parra, 2013).

Students appreciate that they can phone their lecturers when they need assistance in completing their assignments. This practice ensures a fast and effective means of communication. The use of email for communication is also a positive aspect as feedback is usually prompt. Lecturers also refer students to websites with important information for the completion of assignments:

It is important to indicate, to look for website where students can find such experiment because now of late you can access the experiment... (P40:92).

The UODL offers learning programmes via e-learning by means of the learning management system (LMS) known as e-Fundi. Lecturers upload resources, lessons and notices on the LMS and students in turn upload their tests, communication and assignments on the site at their own pace within the limits provided. The role of the student has now expanded to that of an e-student. Baloyi (2014) supports the use of technology when there is substantial evidence that the use of technology could be an effective tool in supporting teaching and learning at a distance. Easton (2003) stipulates that the lecturers often use technologies that extend instructional resources to their students. These include threaded discussion boards, websites, chat rooms, email, list servers, newsgroups and internet research. Lecturers shared some advantages of e-learning which support students in achieving their learning outcomes:

What I do is I create documents in drop box which I often get queries on and I place in drop box when they e-mail me I give them all the links to the specific queries so that they can go and access my answers in the drop box because it is impossible with 3000 students in the programme to give that support it is difficult in distance education to give that continuous support (P40:52-54).

...by doing the recordings, good lectures and more detailed lectures just and we actually force them to go and watch them (P40:75).

...in the way you present the content, in whatever way that you have prepared, it can be a PowerPoint presentation, do it in such a way that you want to leave a mark in the minds of these student teachers... (P39:196-197).

e-Learning offers a number of advantages because it enables students to access large volumes of information at any time. The UODL acknowledges the receipt of assignments via SMS, and also informs

students about their assignment and examination outcomes. The UODL also uploads tutorial letters, examination information briefs and previous examination papers on the website to assist students to achieve positive learning outcomes. Mbatha and Naidoo (2010) affirm the advantages of e-learning as the interaction and engagement that students have with the learning content, their lecturers, and peers, in order to obtain their qualifications.

The analysis indicated that some of the students were insufficiently technologically skilled, although they regarded such skills as important. Lecturers indicated that there were different technologies that could be used to support ODL students in their learning, but insufficient technology skills are a major barrier. Ways to overcome these barriers were highlighted and one participant suggested that students attend a bridging course. Mafenya (2014) indicates that another barrier to education is insufficiently trained educators in developing countries where there is little technological training available. Easton (2003) indicates that the students return to classrooms for personal enrichment, to learn new skills, to enhance their existing skills, or to pursue an alternative career path. A lecturer shared that:

...we actually provide support, but it is not helping because they do not have a skill or access (P40:86).

Is the answer not a bridging course? For the students that were low on basic skills, basic literacy, basic numeracy, IT skills... (P40:294).

The interviewed students indicated that their ICT skills were not good enough to meet the expectations of the institution and this impeded the attainment of their learning goals. The lecturers indicated that they tried to assist the students in remote areas:

If they have no internet access that is the problem. It won't be the problem if we can develop material that they can have on a USB, and they don't have to go to the internet for access in our content in the Grade R for example... (P40:97).

We need to be creative to be able to provide for those who have no cellphone signals and do not have internet access (P40:105).

I think something that we must guard against is being discouraged. I realise that our students are very diverse and they come from very different contexts and we do have those who live in Cape Town and Jo'burg and Pretoria and those who live in Lusikisiki and beyond but I don't think the context must hold us back from moving forward especially with things like ICT development so we need to be creative to be able to provide for those who have no cellphone signals and do not have internet access and what have you but it must not hold us back from trying new things and doing new things for those who do have access (P40:102-106).

The lecturers stated that to overcome the ICT challenges in remote areas, where there is no electricity, internet access, water on tap, etc., they provide them with a Universal Serial Bus (USB) which contains important materials to assist them to succeed in their studies. Some students were able to access the internet due to the support and skills the lecturers provided. Nenge *et al.* (2012) state that during the integration of learning technologies in ODL, institutions have to face many challenges. They also explain that in Southern Africa, some of the challenges stem from inconsistent electricity supply which directly impacts on ICT. In other areas in Africa, the situation is worse owing to insufficient capacity to implement and enforce public-interest policies. This also limits participation in global ICT negotiation, and cooperation and coordination at regional level. An important suggestion came from a lecturer:

I think one other thing is to develop their environment in such a way that the students can be able to learn effectively, by environment I mean because we do not have a physical contact with them. The only means we can come in contact with the students is through the ICT whiteboard sessions, so it should be in such a way that even in the absence of us as lecturers they can be able to learn and develop based on the outcomes you have provided for them (P40:15-19).

Well-equipped Learner Support Centres (LSCs) with functional computers, white boards and free Wi-Fi enable students to fulfil their roles and responsibilities so as to achieve success in their studies. Technical infrastructure should afford each student the same opportunity to communicate with the lecturer and fellow students and access resources, Baloyi (2014) postulates that within the context of this programme, the majority of students do not have access to the internet and they still rely on the print-based materials. The

majority of students have no internet access, or find it too costly or too difficult to access.

4.2.1.3 Personal growth

Personal growth is self-improvement or self-growth. Personal growth is an ongoing process of improving habits, behaviour, actions and reactions. Personal growth teaches one on how to integrate one's experiences into a new and better self which boosts one's self-esteem. Knowles (1975, p. 18) describes self-directed learning (SDL) as a "process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without help from others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating goals, identifying human and material resources, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes." Zimmerman (1989, p. 329) declares that "students can be described as self-regulated to the degree that they are meta-cognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally active participants in their own learning process." Self-regulated learning (SRL) is an impetus proceeding where the student obtains and pleases the desire to be independent in his/her learning. They set learning goals, monitor their goals, regulate their cognition, motivation and behaviour towards achieving their set goals (Pintrich, 2000). The following emerged from students' utterances as characteristics of students' personal growth:

It is to study my books and do my work (P36:3).

When I am attending classes (P36:16).

My role is to make sure that I achieve my goals that I have set for myself as I understood the goals (P38:17).

The most important role of students in ODL is in terms of their own learning. ODL students attend classes at the LSC closest to them in order to obtain support as the centres are equipped with course resources and mini libraries. The qualitative findings reveal that students' main motivation for contact class attendance involves the information they receive during classes, as well as the opportunity to ask lecturers or other facilitators questions (Van Zyl *et al.*, 2013). The lecturers, during their focus group interviews, raised a concern regarding the distances of LSCs to students' homes. Students who are too far away to attend then lose the opportunity to receive additional information, ask questions and access the support materials that the UODL places at the centres:

I think that is a big problem our students being so far away from any learning facilities like libraries... (P40:24).

ODL students should be intrinsically motivated in order to foster student-centredness. Enuke and Ojugwu (2006) claim that ODL increasingly focuses on the needs of the individual student and consequently has a more student-centred approach. They further indicate a student-centred approach includes a student determined location for learning. A participant commented:

...mine might be a little bit different to say as an individual one needs to look into the education specifically in enhancing one's ability (P38:26).

Class attendance, reading of books, completing assignments, and studying ensure personal development and eventually change of behaviour. When students understand how they should perform to achieve their goals, their understanding could lead to personal growth which again improves students' confidence. Some participants demonstrated understanding of how furthering their studies assisted them in development and growth. When students grow personally, they improve professionally, and will subsequently become better teachers, and improve teaching practices at their schools. Teachers belong to communities and their personal growth could also contribute positively to these communities. Students enrol for higher education studies in order to develop professionally, for promotional benefits, but also to develop personally:

The role that I am playing for my own is developing my own self (P39:54).

I will not be like the slogan of "many are called but very few are chosen" I want to be one of the chosen (P39:123).

Self-directed students become dedicated and committed, which again will assist them to succeed. Personal growth can assist in all areas of life: it could assist one at work; it could change one's attitude toward work, and therefore, open new opportunities for advancement. Lecturers were of the opinion that ODL students should be self-directed and self-regulated as part of their personal growth:

They have to be self-directed and self-regulated (P40:229).

I think our role especially for distance education is a lot more of a facilitator than a teacher and that's what she said we must support them and at the end try and get them to be self-directed if they are not there yet and I think very few of them are (P40:12).

This is now going to depend on the way they are going to apply self-regulation or self-regulatedness... (P40:79).

I strongly believe that they should start with a module or something that just help them to apply self-regulation to help develop self-regulated skills and that should form the basis of all the studies... (P40:80).

I expected them to be self-directed and explorative... (P40:170).

The lecturers specified that it is their role to prepare the students to be self-directed through assignments which will improve their skills in order to become self-directed and self-regulated. They were of the opinion that students who were not self-regulated and self-directed could not meet the requirements of their roles as ODL students which in turn would hamper in their successful completion of their qualifications. Self-regulated students know how to study. Another lecturer raised his/her opinion on self-direction by stating that students do not fail owing to difficult assignments, but owing to insufficient self-directedness. Student self-regulation is a constant theme in the literature. McLoughlin and Marshall (2000) note that efficient learning requires numerous skills and cognitive capabilities that are not entirely inherent, nor can they be assumed in beginner university students or those foreign to learning online (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004). Students should actively and relentlessly engage in self-regulation and self-discipline. For self-regulated learning, students need to have a great deal of self-discipline and time management skills. Self-regulated learning also assists the students in acquiring better knowledge of themselves, because they have to unearth inquiry techniques that work best for them. Students, in their learning need to learn to become active students and seek active learning strategies. Students should advance from classroom-based skills to those required by ODL: i.e. students have to become active students (§ 3.2.3.2):

Motivated and inspired students learn and obtain good results (P39:235)

Therefore, successful personal growth requires motivation, the desire to improve, and the willingness to strive to make changes.

4.2.1.4 Social Roles

A student, who for a variety of social, linguistic or cultural reasons, is less likely to talk, discuss, or ask questions in a face-to-face classroom, may become very articulate in an online setting (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004) (§ 3.2.3.3). "Because ODL is so well suited for collaborative learning, the instructor plays an essential social role" (Easton, 2003, p. 90) (§ 3.1.2.4). Even though ODL is mainly self-regulated, students still require the guidance and leadership of lecturers, as well as of their peers, in order to ensure that they are making progress with their studies. Social interaction with lecturers and their peers is essential, especially in virtual environments (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005) (§ 3.2.3.3):

It is my role to interact with other students and ask for help from them when I do not understand (P36:17).

We are also the social beings and we are able to engage socially with other stakeholders be able to reach others in order to work with those who are on the lowest level, middle class and highest level understanding the dynamics within all the three levels of the people at large (P38:82-84).

It can be respecting the instructions from the higher authority (P38:42).

A participant said that social interaction is a required role of ODL students in order to succeed in completing their qualifications. Being part of a learning community demands to become a team player:

It can also be a product driven or results orientated you might not expect to empower someone with a skill that he will not be able to use to benefit the entire community so we are looking into global partnership in this case to say while at the same time you are studying but you should know that you would become a role player within a global organization... (P38:76-79).

A common belief among students is that they are social beings, subsequently they constantly wish to socially engage with their peers. Showing respect is an integral part of this social role. Although some students prefer to work alone, students interact socially with their peers when they work in groups, which enhances the spirit of team work. However, to ensure success, they should find a balance between self-study, group activities and interactions with the lecturers and tutors (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). During such teamwork, lecturers also learn from students, thus creating learning communities which assist students in establishing a culture for productive interaction (Easton, 2003). This may be achieved by providing the students, in group context, assignments to complete.

The effective ODL instructor keeps online discussions on track, weaves discussion threads, and maintains group harmony (Kearsley *et al.*, 1995; Rohfeld & Hiemstra, 1995). The students need to be guided by the teacher, but even in such cases, some disagreements may surface and the teacher is here to maintain peace and harmony among the group members (§ 3.1.2.4). Students should be present and trustworthy in the learning community, initiate dialogue, and, if necessary, mediate communication. (Vonderwell & Savery, 2004). Stagnant and inactive students usually perform than those who are active in their learning process (§ 3.2.3.3). In a distance education context, learning technologies should provide the platform for online communication:

Most importantly, as lecturers we need to be available in different modes and means, like telephone, internet, [and] e-mails... (P40:43).

Easton (2003) claims that lecturers should build relationships with their students so they could feel comfortable approaching them with questions. Learning technologies ensure that lecturers can respond to students' requests almost immediately. South Africa is one of the few countries that experience *Ubuntu*; therefore, the development of *Ubuntu* is essential for the students to feel free to contact the teachers concerning educational issues or study problems. Some African students did not experience the aspect of *Ubuntu* from the university and this had an effect on the way they fulfil their roles and responsibilities as students.

4.3 Indicators of student responsibilities

Responsibility is the state or fact of being responsible, answerable, or accountable for something within one's power, control, or management (Dictionary.com, 2020).

The second theme, the *indicators of responsibilities*, comprises three relating aspects, (§ 4.3.1) responsibilities of students, (§ 4.3.2) responsibilities of lecturers and (§ 4.3.3) responsibilities of the HE institution. The SLR (§ 3.3) defined and discussed the concept responsibilities.

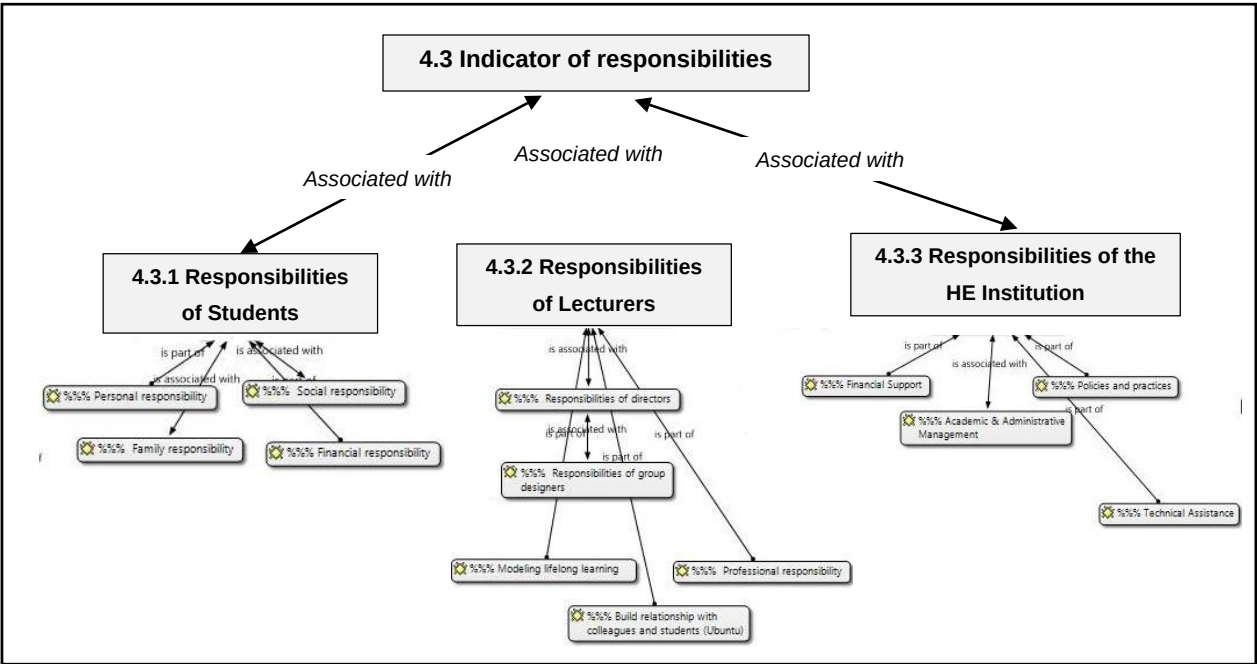


Figure 4.3: Network view of the coding structure pertaining to the three data categories of the second data theme indicators of responsibilities

Figure 4.3 illustrates the Atlas™ hermeneutic network view of the coding structure of the theme Indicators of Responsibilities that emerged from the data set: Responsibilities of Students, Responsibilities of Lecturers, and Responsibilities of the HE Institution. Only the responsibilities relating to students will be discussed, according to the focus of this study. The responsibilities of lecturers and the institution were thoroughly scrutinised in the thesis of Mdakane (2011) titled Student Satisfaction in Open Distance Learning in a B.Ed. Hons Programme and thus falls outside the academic dilemma addressed in the current investigation.

4.3.1 Introduction to the responsibilities of students in an ODL environment

Student responsibility transpires when students take an active part in their learning by acknowledging that they are liable for their academic success. Responsibilities are clearly demonstrated when they make choices and take actions which could lead towards attaining their educational goals. Responsible students take ownership of their actions by exhibiting the following behaviours: they attend classes, participate in discussions, complete and submit assignments on time, comply with institutional rules and regulations, develop their language skills, develop their ICT skills, develop learning strategies required for ODL, communicate with lecturers and fellow students, are respectful to lecturers and peers, pay their study fees on time, organize reliable transport to classes, purchase data for online interaction, and lastly, but not least, care for their families. Therefore, my analysis comprised the aspects of family responsibility, financial responsibility, personal responsibility and social responsibility.

4.3.1.1 Financial responsibilities

The one aspect which the research participants mentioned most frequently during the interviews was the issue of financial responsibilities. The analysis revealed that students were fully aware of their financial responsibilities:

I must pay my fees (P36:15).

Students with no bursaries as financial support have to pay their study fees from their own pockets. However, they also have financial responsibilities towards their parents and children (Van Zyl *et al.*, 2013).

When students are unsuccessful in terms of modules, they are offered a second opportunity to write the examination. This, however, has additional financial implications in the form of re-examination fees. They also should ensure that the proof of payment reaches the institution before the re-examination:

When you have failed you need to pay the money and fax proof of payment before you can write the examination for the second time (P36:26-28).

All the time I have been coming here I have been driving I would drive from Nelspruit, to come here you spend almost R2000 00 (P39:175).

Students do not only pay tuition fees; they also pay for transport to the LSCs where they attend interactive white board sessions. Van Zyl et al. (2013) posit that the financial barriers of distant contact, as well as family responsibilities are the main challenges preventing them from regularly attending contact classes. This validates why face-to-face classroom contact should not be compulsory for ODL distance learning. The financial constraints of study have the implication that budgets had to be re-adjusted to accommodate the expenses of ODL:

I think that is a big problem our students being so far away from any learning facilities like libraries (P40:196).

It is difficult for them, and I realize that you know even if they get teacher salary, they probably are supporting the whole family with that salary so I feel sorry for them but that is difficult (P40:135-136).

...it means you must readjust your family budget to cater for travelling or driving to the place, so it has a financial impact but through proper budgeting and planning ahead of time... (P39:176).

The lecturers acknowledged that students generally lived far from the LSCs, and many did not have the means to get there. They often relied on public transport to attend interactive whiteboard sessions:

Finances have a negative impact on my roles and responsibilities (P37:145).

Students who teach in African languages are expected to develop resources in English for their assignments, spend money on them even though they are not able to use them in their classes and working context:

...it is actually unfair to those students who are teaching in African languages they spend money to laminate resources and work cards in English and it is not usable (P40:199).

Many participants commented on the financial constraints they experience while studying through ODL:

Finances have a negative impact on my role and responsibilities (P37:145).

Unemployment, maybe your brother loses a job, your brother becomes dependent on you. You try to do something, cover up maybe after school you sell tomatoes. When I try to cover for that I am actually losing all the time that was supposed to be free, to be using for my studies (P38:106).

...when it gets to the remuneration it becomes a challenge (P38:112).

...because teachers are not remunerated correctly, as "meneer" was saying that at times you try to augment what you are earning, by trying to augment what you are earning you are automatically putting more burden into your shoulders at the end of the day (P38:113).

Although the vast majority of ODL students earn a salary, their salaries were not sufficient to cover the financial responsibilities as well as their studies. They are often forced to make unpopular decisions as they do not have enough money. A lecturer indicated his/her support for the students:

I realise that, you know, even if they get teacher salary, they probably are supporting the whole family with that salary. I feel sorry for them but that is difficult... (P40:135-136).

I chose that school as it was close to where I stay and the only Primary school that has Grade R. My decision was influenced by financial implications (P37:143-144).

A student shared her story that she did not perform her Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in a school close to her home because the teachers did not support her there. This meant that she spent additional money on transport to fulfil her WIL obligations.

4.3.1.2 Personal responsibilities

Students' responsibilities became clear through their dedication to their personal educational goals which relate to attending classes, actively participating in discussions, on-time submission of assignments and studying for the examinations:

It is my responsibility to attend classes (P36:11).

It is my responsibility to attend Interactive Whiteboard sessions and participate in class (P36:44).

It is my responsibility to rely to myself on my studies as open distance learning student and use dictionary or internet for clarity (P36:41-42).

When students understand their assignments, it is likely that they will attain good grades. Those students who were unable to attend IWB sessions could download the lessons on their phones. They therefore indicated that it is their responsibility to browse the internet or online dictionaries. However, some phones have limited capacity to store large volumes of information. Although most ODL students have cell phones, some rural areas have no cell phone reception and therefore no internet access. In this regard, el a Pena-Bandalaria (2007) points out that cell phones can only handle so much information. The level and cost of synchronous interactions is also a factor, which can be prohibitive to the potential of students. In this regard, lecturers mentioned that they have to be creative in order to support students who cannot access the internet:

...we need to be creative to be able to provide for those who have no cell phone signals and do not have internet access (P40:105).

A student mentioned that it is his responsibility to develop his language skills. Although South Africa has eleven official languages, only two languages are mediums of instruction in education, i.e. English and Afrikaans. ODL students' study in a (to them) second or third language which poses language barriers. While English is the only medium of instruction used during the IWB sessions, examination question papers and study guides are available to students in both English and Afrikaans. Students can choose one of these two languages in which to complete their assignments and examinations. However, neither English nor Afrikaans is their first language. When students are taught in English, he/she may not actively participate in modules owing to insufficient understanding. They often feel alienated. Geographical isolation impacts severely on students' access to spoken and written English. In rural areas students do not have access to libraries:

In South Africa the language barrier is handicapping our students and they really want to be successful but sometimes the language does not allow them to, as it is not their mother tongue... (P40:37-38).

It is my responsibility to develop my language skills and computer skills so that I can type my assignments (P36:48).

Being taught in a language that is not your first language influences your roles (P37:60)

They are living sometimes in rural areas where they do not have access to English, so it is very difficult... (P40:39).

It is imperative for ODL students to be able to learn independently. They cannot learn when they do not understand the language. The result of this is that students seem uninterested, incapable or lazy, while the reality is that their personal contexts prohibit them from actively interacting with their learning:

There is a serious challenge which is language proficiency which makes lecturers sometimes to think that you did not study or read (P37:207-208).

I think something that we must guard against is, I realise that our students are very diverse, and they come from very different contexts which impacts in language (P40:102).

Lecturers sometimes use difficult words without providing an explanation. A lecturer stated that some students struggled to express themselves in English when asking questions telephonically or in writing:

They use big words that need us to look for meanings as they sometimes do not give meanings for those words. You now have to look for the word and bring it to context so that you can be sure that it is the correct meaning, which makes studying to take long. A

paragraph can take you a day but it becomes easy when you read something that was presented in a whiteboard session first (P37:36-40).

I also experienced that when they phone and ask me questions, they do not understand, they struggle even when they write sentences...you sometimes cannot make up what it is, they want to say (P40:47).

Lecturers should take into consideration that students are from diverse contexts and they struggle with English. Teachers in the rural areas, working in the foundation phase, teach in their home language. It is difficult for them to use English in their higher learning.

The participants complained that lecturers do not use the same terms in assignments and examination papers. In most cases, lecturers use different action verbs (synonyms) in question statements which confuse the students. Students reported that it demotivates them to interact with study material written in typical academic language. Because of students' insufficient language proficiency, they do not understand the concepts, terms and content, especially when lecturers use synonyms, and that confuses them. Spoken language differs from the academic language, which causes students to become demotivated when they read their study material written in typical academic language, as it becomes difficult for them to understand. When students are demotivated, it becomes difficult for them to learn. Baloyi (2014) indicates that Africans, mainly from rural areas, come from poor backgrounds and a disadvantaged schooling system, and have limited English proficiency.

What I picked up was that the lecturers do not use the same terms during assignments and exams and that frustrated me, and makes one confused (P37:58-59).

It is very demotivating if you try to read a study guide, and it is written in high academic language (P40:289).

A lecturer expressed the opinion that ODL students should have good learning strategies in order to effectively achieve their studies. Baloyi (2014) affirms that when students enter higher education, they are expected to learn complex new material independently and adjust to new ways of learning in distance learning environments:

A student should comply with what they are expected... (P38:54).

Immediately when a student register with the university, what is mostly important is that the university will expect the student to pass and secondly to even abide with the rules and regulations of that particular institution and to conduct himself or herself in a better manner that puts inside the issues of submission of assignments on time, being punctual with whatever that has been given to him as a task, but one other thing that the university can expect is that we as students must actually acquire the knowledge and information that will not only end in us but that will also assist the people, particularly the future leaders and generations so that understanding the fact that the leaders of tomorrow rely too much to the students [sic. student teachers] who are currently engaged particularly in the institutions of higher learning...so for that not to happen therefore the students are expected to behave optimal and make sure that they abide by the rules and regulations of the institution (P38:60-73).

The open distance learning students are expected to have good learning strategies (P36:29).

Higher education institutions have rules and regulations that guide them and students are expected to abide by them in order to succeed in their studies. When students are faced with situations that make them unhappy it is their responsibility to follow the correct and acceptable channels:

...but I think it is the expectation of the university that when we have dissatisfactions, we follow the right channels in terms of reporting our grievance (P38:128).

4.3.1.3 Family responsibilities

The demands of family responsibilities relate to the care of a person for his/her dependent children, single adults or siblings seeking for housing, employment, or further education. Fozdar and Kumar (2007) state that, unlike students enrolled in traditional education, ODL students are typically adult, part-time students,

juggling their education with fulltime employment and family responsibilities. In the African culture, Teffo (1992) says, when you have parents, you are expected to take care of them:

We are three sisters and I am the only one with a car sometimes when I sit down to study, they ask me to take them somewhere and that affects me on my roles and responsibility as a student (P37:146).

We also have our own parents to take care of (P37:15).

I can say I am a family man... (P39:1).

The students consider their family responsibilities important, and that could affect their time needed to study. Studying makes it difficult for students to integrate socially and academically, causing them to contemplate dropping out. Students who prioritise family or school work, often do not have enough time to study or attain good grades. Parental responsibility is complicated when studying, specifically related to the upbringing of children. Parents are responsible for the mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and social development of their offspring, and such responsibility may consume much of the parents' time and attention. Being an ODL student is not easy because of the vast variety of responsibilities to tend to:

As a parent is to take care of my children and at the same time make time for my studies so that I can get good results (P36:35).

The reason is that we are all working mothers (P37:13-14).

I am a working mother and I still have my mother who is in hospital and I have to juggle my time and my studies suffer sometimes (P37:148).

I felt this as the opportunity that they [students] were going to have three or four years to really enrich themselves, so, I tried to give them as many resources as possible so that they have as much information so that they can be developed. I think it was demotivating because it is exactly overwhelming and that is how they feel (P40:168-169).

From the quote above it becomes clear that students are aware of their demanding role as parents and being a student at the same time. Taking care of children consumes time—from the limited time they could use to study. ODL students have different roles: students indicated that they are all working mothers; they work in order to provide for their children, take care of elders while they are expected to execute their role as students to the fullest. They therefore have to manage their time well. In the light of these responsibilities, it is not surprising that students feel that they receive too much learning content to struggle through:

...the amount of work given is too much and there is not enough time to do all the work, and that is why we do not always do everything as they [sic. lecturers] expect (P37:5-10).

...our students are practicing teachers (P40:7).

Students claimed that the time they have for their studies was not enough as they were employed and had many other commitments. A lecturer disputed that students were given too much work, saying they have to manage their time better in order to accomplish their dream of further education and thereby hope to increase their salaries.

...because teachers are not remunerated correctly as "meneer" was saying that at times you try to augment what you are earning, by trying to augment what you are earning you are automatically putting more burden into your shoulders at the end of the day (P38:113).

In general, South African teachers often complain that they are not properly paid in order to take good care of their families. The UODL students were mostly practising educators, who increased their workload in order to increase what they earn by offering extra classes to their learners for additional income—which again decreases their available time to study.

4.3.1.4 Social responsibilities

Most students were of the opinion that it is their responsibility to encourage one another, be open and humble, to be approachable in order to promote group work and ultimately accomplish their responsibilities. While some students interact well in a group context, others easily become distracted.

Pilkington and Sanders (2014) agree that social aspects of online collaborative environments could distract students from the task at hand (Hoter *et al.*, 2009):

It is also my responsibility as an ODL student to encourage my colleagues that because you have got some sort of a qualification it does not mean the end of the world; it means you can further your studies (P39:74)

...it is also my responsibility to open myself to my colleagues and my classmates to be humble (P39:83).

4.4 Information and Communication Technologies

ODE is becoming more popular due to economic constraints, as well as the affordances of new learning technologies. “The development of a knowledge economy will require computer savvy workers. Given such needs, it is imperative that institutions equip their graduates with the necessary ICT skills” (Abas, 2009, p. 98). Enuke and Ojugwu (2006) state that ICT offers substantial advantages over formal lectures as it enables the students with opportunities to learn at their own location, in their own time and at their own pace.

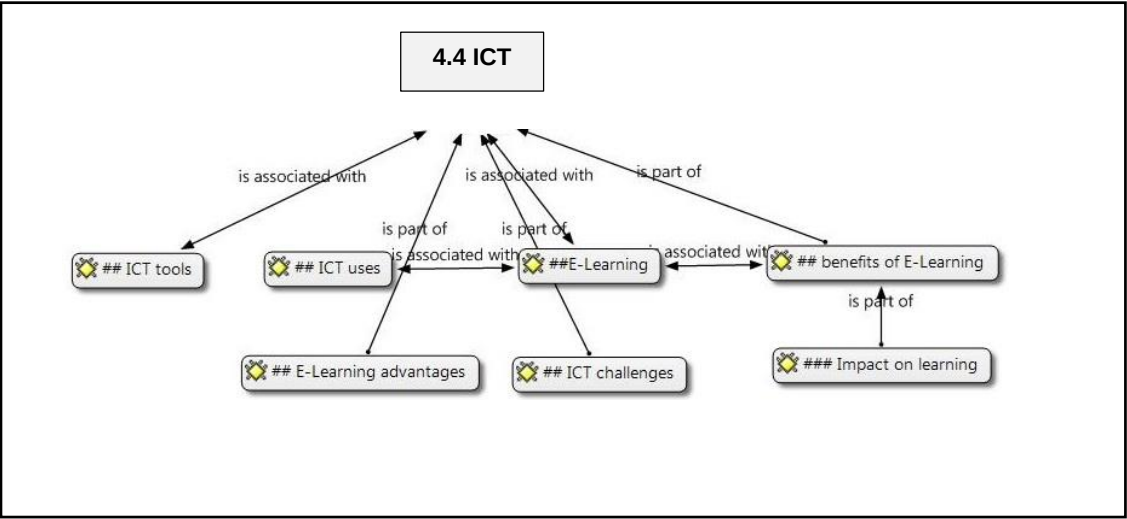


Figure 4.4: Network view relating to ICTs

Figure 4.4 illustrates the Atlas™ network view of the coding structure pertaining to ICTs that emerged from the qualitative analysis. The ICT codes that were identified are: (i) ICT tools, (ii) ICT uses, (iii) ICT challenges, (iv) e-learning, (v) e-learning benefits, (vi) e-learning advantages and (vii) Impact on learning.

The previous sections alluded to the checks and balances of using learning technologies as part of ICTs relating to ODL students’ roles and responsibilities.

4.5 Challenges and barriers

Various challenges and barriers also became apparent from the analysis of the focus group interview data. These barriers and challenges present the aspects that contribute towards students’ struggles and hindrances in order to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as ODL students.

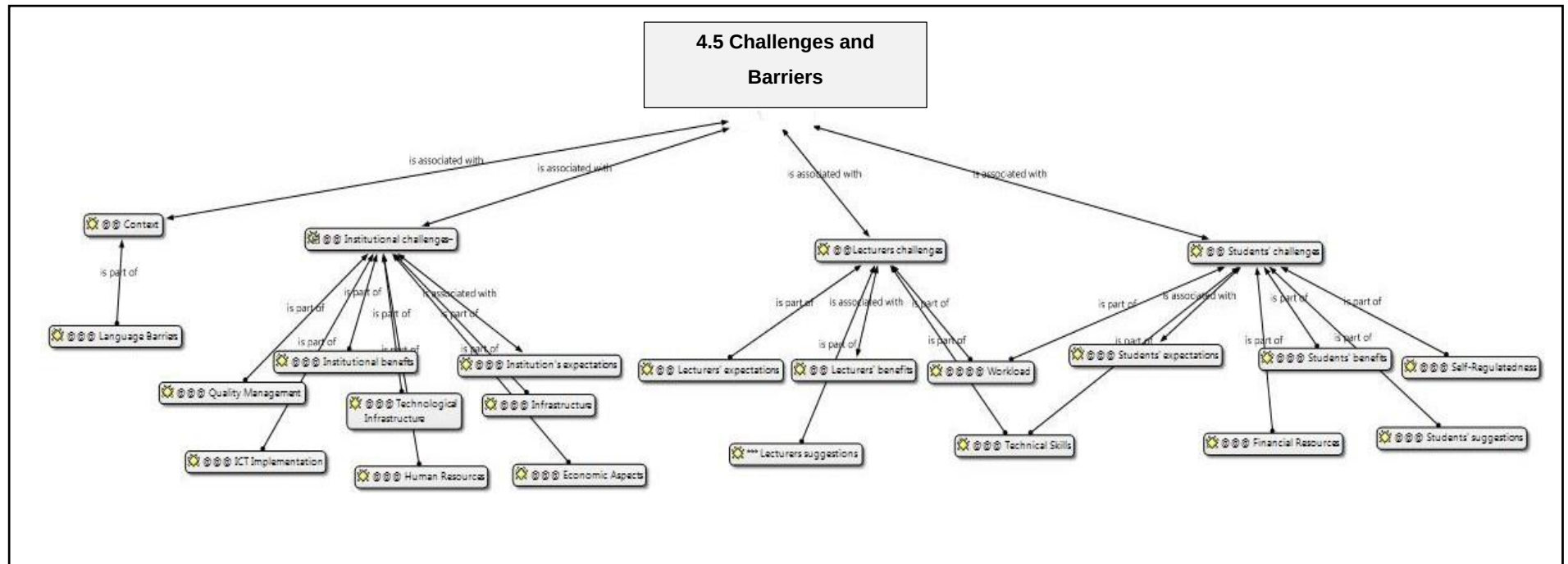


Figure 4.5: Network view of the coding structure pertaining to challenges and barriers

Figure 4.5 illustrates the network view of the coding structure identified for challenges and barriers. Specific groups of related codes pertaining to barriers and challenges are: (i) Context, (ii) Institutional Challenges, (iii) Lecturers' Challenges, and (iv) Students' Challenges.

The students strongly indicated that the issue of students' roles and responsibilities were important topics. They believe that if learning about these upon enrolment, could assist them in taking cognisance of these aspects:

One participant said the question of students' roles and responsibilities is an important question which must be asked during registration. I don't know if this is appropriate but it is very strong in me and it is suggestive that now that the question has been asked about roles and responsibilities, one realizes that maybe it is for us a bit late, as we are in the end of our course. Had this question been asked a bit earlier or maybe discussed earlier, it was going to help us with the level of commitment. I think this is a very important question that should be asked again and again especially during registration not just to be told sign here, sign here, and ok, fine we will e-mail you your timetable or send you the information (P38:84-89).

It was clear that students understood their roles and responsibilities superficially as they indicated that if they were only made to analytically understand their roles and responsibilities when they registered for their studies. Students suggested that the implications of part time ODL should be explained to them before registration.

4.6 Implications of the roles and responsibilities for ODL students

This section is intended to provide an initial indicator relating to the roles and responsibilities of ODL students in order to address the gap that the students indicated in their understanding of what the implications for part time higher education would entail.

Despite clear different definitions of role and responsibilities, from the analysis, I came under the impression that the ODL students did not discriminate adequately between the roles and responsibilities of students. Even in the current literature, these terms are discussed interchangeably. In this chapter I forced the analysis into the two themes in order to better understand the constructs. It is understandable that authors merge the two concepts. For example: as an ODL student has his/her pertinent role as student, they simultaneously have responsibilities as the caretaker of their families. Also, it is an important role of a student to ensure payment of institutional fees; however, they also have responsibilities as the breadwinner for an array of dependents. The cognisance of their roles and responsibilities as ODL students, often cause that they feel overwhelmed. However, students also indicated that the support from their peers often carry them through the dire landscape of ODL.

4.7 Summary of findings of students' roles and responsibilities

This chapter reported on the findings derived from my qualitative analysis conducted on the combined integrated dataset of literature and focus group interviews with ODL students and lectures. The initial analysis resulted in three categories of indicators of roles i.e. roles of students, roles of lecturers and roles of the HE Institutions. Only the roles of students were further explored as the focus of the study relates to the roles and responsibilities of ODL students. In her thesis, Mdakane (2011) extensively describes the role of HEIs in terms of ODL. Four codes emerged: task oriented, time management, personal growth and social roles. Exploring the theme of Responsibility, three categories emerged: responsibilities of students, responsibilities of the lecturers, and the responsibilities of the HE institution. Four codes were revealed concerning the responsibilities of the students: Financial responsibilities, personal responsibilities, family responsibilities and social responsibilities. I further explored the barriers the ODL students experienced during their learning. Table 4.1 summarizes the findings from the qualitative analysis.

Table 4.1: Identified students' roles and responsibilities

Students' Roles	Students' Responsibilities
Being self-directed	Pay fees
Being self-regulated	Contact lecturers for help
Being an individualistic student	Use resources available
Being responsible for their studies	Attend IWB sessions and engage
Being hard workers	To study
Being orderly	To show acts of Ubuntu
Being compliant to university rules and regulations	To do assignments and submit them on time
Developing learning strategies	
Managing time effectively	

The Table 4.1 serves to provide ODL students' perceived roles and responsibilities which when effectively fulfilled help students to realize their goals.

Table 4.2: Student roles, perceptions of students regarding their roles and responsibilities

Student Roles		Student Responsibilities	
Identified roles	Perceived roles	Identified responsibilities	Perceived responsibilities
Attend classes	Considered as non-essential	Be there for families in time of need	Prioritise social responsibilities
Submit their own assignments on time	Non-individualised approach to assignments	Payment of study fees	Feeling of entitlement
Be motivated despite the challenges	Succumbed/magnify to challenges	Purchase data	Expect data to be free or provided at no cost
Be prepared for class	Alternative amongst other options	Responsible for own transport costs to contact sessions	Expect transportation cost to be subsidised by the university
Reach out and engage with fellow students (Ubuntu)	Considered necessary	Interact with fellow students (Ubuntu)	Reach out to peers
Reach out and engage with lecturers (Ubuntu)	Underpinned by fear and being withdrawn	Interact with peers (Ubuntu)	Acknowledges the importance

Student Roles		Student Responsibilities	
Identified roles	Perceived roles	Identified responsibilities	Perceived responsibilities
Manage time effectively	Procrastination and work under pressure		

4.7.1 The relatedness of African philosophy in terms of ODL students' perceived roles and responsibilities

The following two sections conclude this chapter by first looking at how students performed their roles and responsibilities in terms of the African philosophy.

4.7.1.1 Roles of students as influenced by African philosophy

Van der Walt (2006) posits that African society typifies communalism which gives high regard to social groupings, above that of the individual. On the contrary, ODL functions in an individualistic manner, where students are expected to submit individual assignments, never or hardly ever see their fellow students or lecturers, and the initiative of an individual is highly regarded. Even though students are allowed to work in pairs or in groups when discussing, brainstorming or sharing ideas and studying with friends, compiling and submitting their assignments is considered as individual tasks wherein they exercise their roles as individuals (§ 4.2.1.1). Although Ubuntu as discussed by Le Roux (2000, pp. 43-46) and Teffo (1998), it is explained in (§ 1.2.1), and (§ 1.2.2) and is evidently articulated in HE document (Daniels, 2001), its implications in teaching of ODL students have not been adequately conceived. Looking at the discussion in Eneku and Ojugwu (2006) (§ 3.4.4.1), disagreement arises in that the African philosophy looks at how people work together as a community, serving each other for a purpose, even exchanging ideas, whereas ODL focuses on individualism as an exercise of students' roles. A student finds himself/herself in a situation which impacts him/her negatively because s/he comes from that background whose philosophy is communal, and the initiative of an individual is not applauded.

Venter (2004) states that communalism is an awareness of the fundamental interdependence of people. This view characterizes the African perspective that supports caring and interdependence as a social role manifested in the sharing of recourse and social responsibilities. This social role is extended to the sharing of ideas by students when preparing for assignments and exams (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005) (§ 4.2.1.4). But the nature of writing up individualised academic tasks in ODL remains in transition between working as individuals and working as community. This could be a possible reason for why these students understand their roles differently from what is expected of them. The social groups of ODL African students appear to be more important and have an effect on how they perform their individualised academic tasks (Blignaut & Kok, 2010) (§ 4.2.1.2). During the colonial period, Africans experienced a great deal of Western civilization, of which education was essential. This has obviously affected their orientation, culturally and socially; also, their philosophical disposition to reality as a whole (Letseka, 2000). Social groups are more important than individual

rights and privileges. As indicated earlier on, our HE institutions promote individualism which yields individual independence whereas African communalism promotes dependence on people (Van der Walt, 2006).

The African phenomenon of time is concrete, bound to space and events; each moment in time is unique. Universities have timelines and timetables for activities such as classes, submission of assignments, and exams. Time management as discussed in literature by Paden and Stell (2009) in (§ 3.2.1.2) indicates how students deal with time management. The social context of the students is often surrounded by activities that are not necessarily structured with a particular timeline or timetable. Van der Walt (2006) in one of his studies concludes that the African as well as the Western concept of time is one-sided. He compares the African concept of time to the modern Western concept and concludes that Africans believe that time is in abundance, and because of its abundance the time needed can be made. The Western concept asserts that because time is limited it has to be used. This understanding of time affects the manner in which ODL students exercised their role in that much of their time especially during weekends was dedicated towards funerals, weddings and other social engagements as discussed in Paden & Stell (2009) (§ 4.2.1.2). Letseka (2000) emphasizes that belonging to a community comprises the very foundation of African life.

Students' social role as discussed in Easton (2003) (§ 4.2.1.4) also impacts negatively on the fulfilment of their other roles. Students warrant a kind of sacrifice to manage their time, because of that social context where they find themselves. Universities appear not to have taken into consideration the fact that majority of the ODL students are from African cultures (Letseka, 2015). This is seen as classes are scheduled for Saturdays and that puts the students in a conflict where they now have to choose between the roles of engaging in either social or individual activities. The dilemma of students is that if they attend classes on a particular Saturday that means they cannot take part in the society occasions but can play catch-up in their social roles which they could not perform as they attended classes. This is not only about attending classes but also for time to study as the nature of ODL is more or less flexible as students have other commitments, as some are working full time, some are house wives etc. The issue of time management does not really take into consideration the context, and especially the Africanness of the context, of students. Dissent portrayed in the way time management is structured, conceptualized and presented in ODL (Letseka, 2015).

Broodryk (2002) describes Ubuntu as a comprehensive ancient African worldview based on the value of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion, and associated values. Likewise, Letseka (2000, p. 180) attests that "Ubuntu has normative implications in that it encapsulates moral norms and values such as altruism, kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy, and respect and concern for others." Mbigi (1997) confirms that Africans, from early in their childhood, are socialized to understand that arduous goals and tasks can only be accomplished collectively. As discussed by Baloyi (2014) and Bridley *et al.* (2004) in (§ 3.2.3.1), an individual or an institution has roles to perform in order to achieve its goal. For both university and students there are two things

here that are seen as goals: to graduate and to obtain a qualification. Various authors Baloyi (2014, pp. 97-112), Easton (2003, p. 88) and Palloff and Pratt (1998, p. 2) (§ 1.3.3) indicate characteristics of ODL students which show that students have personal goals. However, from the African perspective, you achieve that goal from the perspective of Ubuntu (human interdependency). I am because of you and you are because of me. As indicated from the above, students indicated their roles, which will support them in realizing their goals.

African philosophy asserts that joy is experienced in social relationships (Van der Walt, 2006). The qualification one obtains is celebrated and owned by the whole community. The university on the other hand sees the goal as an individualistic goal that a student has achieved, but at the same time the person achieving the goal sees the community as part of his/her success as discussed by Baloyi (2014) (§ 4.2.1.1). This brings a clash or disjointedness between the African perspective and university rules or way of doing things. The person studying has a disjointed objective in that it is her/him who is studying and receiving the certificate at the end, but that credential represents something different to his/her family and community. For the university it is only based on you as a student; the fact that students see their achievements as communal makes them bring other goals which are social and short term. Micro goals are part of what you are expected to do as a community member. During your graduation other members of the community will do the same for you. The concept of interdependence, as expressed by Ubuntu, is reflected in your certificate and the help you receive from family, friends, and relatives who look after your children while you attend lessons according to Vonderwell and Savery (2004) in (§ 4.2.1.4).

The problem is to what extent is self-directedness individualistic within the context of Africanness or African philosophy? Self-directed learning is seen as a primary quality of successful distance learning students. Compounding the challenge faced by students who feel isolated and disconnected is that self-directed learning skills are developed in a social context. SDL as described above by Knowles (1975) (§ 4.2.1.3), creates the contradiction between the African perspective and university expectations. In studying, you grow with the community members, and the things you do with them as an individual help you as a student not to grow alone. As you grow with your community, the people around you are the basis of the things you do so that you do not feel neglected/isolated. Here you will find self-directed in a context where that same self is the same individual directed by the African context (Tutu, 2004).

To what extent is self-directed learning individualistic in the context of African philosophy? Minimally! Our understanding of self-directedness comes from an individualistic space and it is being applied in a space where it is communal, creating the difference again between what is done in an African context and what is not done. All these student roles are torn between two perspectives. They are expected to play a certain role coming from an individualistic perspective, and it is expected that they should play this role in a communal area or communal perspective where their circle of socialization of their learning is interdependent. Just by being part of those social activities, one is playing an important

role. Even if they did not contribute financially, their presence means much. This is something students cannot distance themselves from as they are part of the community (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005) in (§ 4.2.1.4). Being expected to do academic tasks as individuals does not necessarily fit to the paradigm of Ubuntu, and this philosophy of Africanness becomes a problem. This is one of the reasons why students do not fulfil their roles as expected by the university. Also, being a student at an institution where the expected roles or expectations disagree with the notion of African perspective is problematic. Looking at roles in reverse, Africanisation explains why students only have a rudimentary understanding of their roles since they do not fit into their circle of thinking or circle of socialization. The social role strongly emerges and has an impact all other roles when using the African worldview.

4.7.1.2 Responsibilities of students as influenced by African philosophy

Van der Walt (2006) declares the importance of sharing with others in an African culture by citing the Venda proverb: Children share the head of a locust. Financial responsibility of ODL students as discussed by Van Zyl *et al.* (2013) (§ 4.3.1.1) is cumulative in the sense that for those who are working, their money is not their own, because from an African perspective they are expected to do certain things for the community not because they are mandated to but because they take responsibility for that. They make contributions and at the same time they need to focus on individual responsibility which is to pay for their studies which include transport, logistics, stationery, etc. This becomes an added responsibility from the old existing social one, so it depends now on the affordability: considering the studies that they are doing, they are not expected to have enough money because it is for the same reason that they are studying. Students study for different reasons, some study for personal enrichment, for promotions, in order to earn better salaries. The individual financial responsibility becomes an add-on to the social contribution which results in the clash of worldviews.

Mbiti (1975) explains that “in traditional African life, an individual lives in or is part of an extended family, is a microcosm of the wider society which presupposes a broad spectrum of associations, including children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces and other distant relatives.” Social responsibility cuts across all the other responsibilities as it depicts Ubuntu which is the African worldview. Personal responsibility is discussed by Baloyi (2014) in (§ 4.3.1.2) and clearly shows the need for a student to take full responsibility of his/her personal development and growth in order to achieve an educational goal. The question arises: how do you become personal when you are communal? As much as the students may see their responsibility as personal, philosophically it clashes with their world view. Family and parental responsibilities put more pressure on students because of their family structures (Fozdar & Kumar, 2007) in (§ 4.3.1.3).

4.7.1.3 Interactions between roles and responsibilities

The discrepancy in the lack of expression of an African identity by the university and the expectations of students account for the reason why students understand their roles and responsibilities superficially. When it comes to roles and responsibilities, Africanisation explains why students only have a rudimentary understanding of their responsibilities since these do not fit within their circle of thinking or circle of socializing. Traditional African values foster a communalistic worldview towards life. Nobody in an African context lives for himself/herself (Freeman, 2014) and (Taylor, 1992).

To be self-directed, self-regulated, hardworking, orderly, compliant with the university rules and regulations, and to have learning strategies are the roles students are expected to fulfil. The participating ODL students indicated the following roles which were not mentioned by the ODL lecturers: to be motivated despite the challenges they face, reaching out to and engaging with fellow students in terms of Ubuntu.

The responsibilities which were in agreement between the ODL lecturers and students are payment of fees and communicating with lecturers for help. The participating ODL lecturers indicated the following responsibilities which were not mentioned by the ODL students: use all available resources and study. The participating ODL students indicated the following responsibilities which were not mentioned by the ODL lecturers: to be there for families in time of need, buy data, be responsible for transport costs to contact sessions.

The above findings clearly indicate that the ODL students understand their roles and responsibilities superficially as they do mention them but do not fulfil them. This prompted me to pursue this study in order to raise awareness of ODL students on their roles and responsibilities.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter, I presented an analysis of students' experiences as they participated in focus group interviews. The chapter started with an analysis of students' experiences of their roles. This was followed by an analysis of the students' experiences of their responsibilities. The findings that emerged were then synthesized, with the help of Africanisation, which further revealed additional insights about the implications of Western perspectives on distance education and that of Africanisation. An African perspective is the predominant world-view which ODL students' experiences are drawn from as they engage in their studies. The implications of the findings link to the contributions of the decolonisation discourse as indicated in Figure 1.1.

Chapter Five

Synopsis of student roles and responsibilities from an African theoretical perspective

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study in order to address the research question of: *What are the views of the roles and responsibilities of open distance students at a higher education institution?* (§ 1.3). This chapter also presents an overview of the research journey. In this chapter, I pose an overview of the antecedent chapters followed by the overview of significant findings. I discuss the contribution of this study and list possible limitations of this study. I also present the viability of and recommendations from the study. Lastly, I share my reflections of my research journey.

5.2 Overview of the previous chapters

The following sections provide executive summaries of the Chapters One to Four in terms of the research question which underpinned the study.

5.2.1 Chapter One: Epistemological and ontological orientation on the roles and responsibilities of open distance learners

Chapter One outlined the comprehensive overarching plan for this research. I presented the African epistemological and ontological lens for this study, scrutinized the initial literature which revolved around the important aspects of the study. The statement of the problem and motivation of the research, as well as stating the research question, was followed by the research aim and objective of the study. The chapter also mapped the research design and methodology, participant selection, data collection strategies and data analysis to be adopted in this study. The chapter concluded with an explanation of the ethical considerations for this study, and finally presented the chapter division.

5.2.2 Chapter Two: Research design and methodology

This chapter explained the choices the researcher made on the design and methodology. The chapter commences with an explanation of the world view for this study which was rooted in the interpretivist paradigm. This was followed by a qualitative case study research design. The research design and methodology of this study described the research plan and methods used during this study as a detailed explanation in order to address the research question of: *What are the views of the roles and responsibilities of open distance students at a higher education institution?*

The chapter explicated the research design and methodology of this study and provided a detailed description of the process of my SLR, as well as the qualitative data analysis strategies with ATLAS.ti™ in order to build theory. It further explained trustworthiness, validity and reliability of the qualitative data. The ethical considerations were taken into account. I explored my role as a researcher, and lastly clarified the limitations of the qualitative phase of the study.

5.2.3 Chapter Three: Systematic literature review (SLR)

Chapter Three presented the findings that I obtained by concluding a SLR on the available corpus of knowledge pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of open distance learning students. The SLR revealed three themes: roles, responsibilities and experiences as encountered in the systematic literature searches. In each theme categories and sub-categories of students were discussed. The first theme was that of roles, with students' roles, lecturers' roles and institutional roles which emerged as categories. I discussed the sub-categories of students' roles only. The first category of the first theme was students' roles, and in the following sub-categories task oriented, time management, personal growth and social roles (Ubuntu) were discussed. The second theme was that of responsibilities. Only the students' responsibilities were discussed as delineated as the main focus of the study. The focus was on: financial responsibility, personal responsibility, family responsibility, and social responsibility (Ubuntu). The third theme was experiences of students. In this theme, challenges and benefits emerged. The discussion was brief, focusing on students' benefits and challenges.

5.2.4 Chapter Four: Voices of the focus group participants

Chapter Four reported on the findings derived from the qualitative analysis conducted on the combined integrated dataset of literature and focus group interviews with ODL students and lecturers. The initial analysis resulted in three categories: indicators of roles, viz. roles of students, roles of lecturers and roles of the HE Institutions. Subsequently the roles of students were further explored as the focus of the study in line with the research question (§ 1.3). Four codes emerged: task oriented, time management, personal growth and social roles through the lens of Ubuntu. Exploring the theme of responsibility, three categories emerged: responsibilities of students, responsibilities of the lecturers, and the responsibilities of the HE institution. Four codes were revealed concerning the responsibilities of the students: financial responsibilities, personal responsibilities, family responsibilities and social responsibilities in the context of Ubuntu. I further explored the barriers that the ODL students experienced during their learning. The findings from the qualitative analysis of ODL students' perceived roles and responsibilities are summarized in Table 4.1.

5.3 Synopsis of the significant findings of the study

The table below provides an overview of the significant findings of the study. These findings are described from most significant quotations generated from the data.

Table 5.1: Synopsis of significant findings

	Findings	Conclusion	Significant evidence
Roles	Task oriented	When students are task oriented, they succeed in their learning and they are able to fulfil their roles	<i>It is my role to see to it that my work as a student is in good standard (P37:206)</i>
	Time management	When students are able to “juggle their time” in order to accommodate their roles and responsibilities, they have a better chance of succeeding, especially when they are able to manage their time effectively	<i>...as an educator [student] and then in other words it means that it is expected out of you, to act accordingly or to conduct yourself in order for a specific goal to be achieved... (P38:40)</i>
	Personal growth	They set learning goals, monitor their goals, regulate their cognition, motivation and behaviour towards achieving their set goals (Pintrich, 2000)	<i>My role is to make sure that I achieve my goals that I have set for myself as I understood the goals (P38:17)</i>
	Social roles	Even though ODL is mainly self-regulated, students still require the guidance and leadership of lecturers, as well as of their peers, in order to ensure that they are making progress with their studies	<i>It is my role to interact with other students and ask for help from them when I do not understand (P36:17)</i>
Responsibilities	Financial responsibility	Students have to re-adjust their budgets in order to accommodate the expenses of ODL which impacts on their finances as they experience financial constraints	<i>All the time I have been coming here I have been driving I would drive from Nelspruit, to come here you spend almost R2000 00 (P39:175)</i>
	Personal responsibility	Those students who were unable to attend IWB sessions could download the lessons on their phones	<i>It is my responsibility to rely to myself on my studies as open distance learning student and use dictionary or internet for clarity (P36:41-42)</i>
	Family responsibility	Fozdar and Kumar (2007) state that, unlike students enrolled in traditional educational institutions, ODL students are typically adult, part-time students, juggling their education with fulltime employment and family responsibilities	<i>We are three sisters and I am the only one with a car sometimes when I sit down to study, they ask me to take them somewhere and that affects me on my roles and responsibility as a student (P37:146)</i>
	Social responsibility	Most students were of the opinion that it is their responsibility to encourage one another, be open and humble, to be approachable in order to promote group work and ultimately accomplish their responsibilities	<i>...it is also my responsibility to open myself to my colleagues and my classmates to be humble (P39:83)</i>

Table 5.1 presents the findings of the analysis of the two separate entities of ODL students' roles and responsibilities. It also designates the conclusion for each finding supported by the most significant quote, and indicates the views of ODL students concerning their roles and responsibilities at a higher institution. At the commencement of the study, roles and responsibilities seemed a single entity (§

Chapter Three). After deliberations on the data and from the systematic process of analysis, it became clear that roles and responsibilities were indeed separate aspects. During the analysis, the data were grouped according to these two aspects (Table 5.1). However, from the voices of the research participants, it became clear that the participants, in their minds, did not distinguish the underlying differences well. For example, I indicated overlapping findings relating to the research participants' perceptions of personal growth and personal responsibilities. Due to these ubiquitous perceptions of the two aspects, I concatenated these aspects as depicted in Figure 5.1. From this point forward I would treat roles and responsibilities as single aspects due to the similarity of these aspects in the minds of the research participants. Therefore, Figure 5.1 culminated into Figure 5.2.

5.4 Addressing the research question

The research question which underpinned the research, *What are the views of open distance students with regard to their roles and responsibilities at a higher institution?* was initially addressed in Chapter Three through the SLR. The SLR documented current literature in relation to ODL students' roles and responsibilities. Three themes emerged: roles, responsibilities and experiences. Students' roles, responsibilities and experiences were included as they were the focus of the study.

The research question was subsequently further addressed in Chapter Four, which focused on the analysis of focus group interviews of students and lecturers. Four themes emerged when the codes were re-interpreted and subsequently integrated as two main themes, roles and responsibilities, in order to address the research question (§ 1.3). Therefore, the implications listed in Table 5.1, culminated in Figure 5.1 as frame of reference for the following sections of the study: conclusions from study (§ 5.5); contributions of the study (§ 5.6); recommendations from this study (§ 5.9); and questions for future research (§ 5.10).

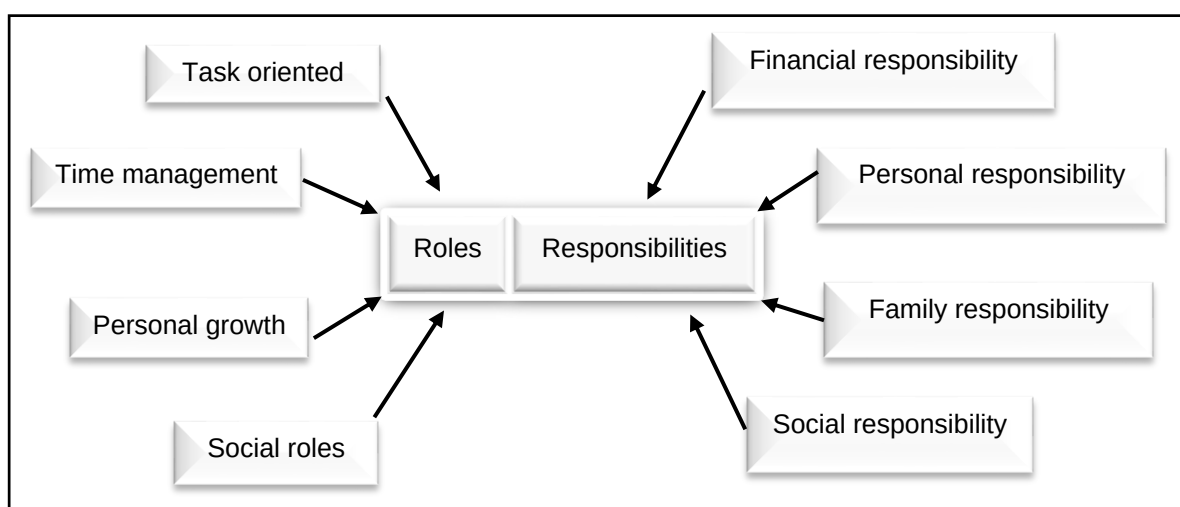


Figure 5.1: A synoptic depiction of the findings of ODL student's roles and responsibilities

5.5 Conclusions

The conclusions relating to the addressing of the research question are according to the conceptual framework, presented as Figure 5.1.

5.5.1 Conclusion 1: Students' superficial understanding of roles and responsibilities

It was evident from the findings that students understood their roles and responsibilities superficially (Table 4.1; § 4.7.1.3 and Table 5.1). The analysis indicated a superficial understanding of how students' understood aspects of task orientation, time management, and social roles. Students who are task oriented demonstrated a vivid understanding of their roles, and this eventually contributes to their academic success. The students who understood their roles superficially, tend to confuse their social roles with time management for academic activities. For this reason, much of their time available for study is redirected towards attending to family responsibilities (§ 4.3.1.3 and Table 5.1). This created a disjointed understanding on the part of students in terms of their expectations as ODL students (§ 4.7.1). The Africanised perspectives predominantly shapes their understanding of their roles and responsibilities (§ 4.7.1.3), and this has resulted in ODL students' superficial understanding of their roles and responsibilities in an ODL environment.

5.5.2 Conclusion 2: Time management of ODL students

ODL students are expected to study at their own time, pace and space. The inability of students to "juggle their time" so as to oblige their roles and responsibilities, contributes to the ineffective fulfilment of their goals. Students who manage their time effectively complete and submit their assignments on time (§ 3.2.1.2 and § 4.2.1.2). Most ODL students are full time employees, parents, community representatives, etc. These responsibilities receive more attention than their commitment to their roles as students, especially regarding their time management (§ 4.3.1.3). Distance learning inherently provides much flexibility; however, with the luxury of flexibility, comes the responsibility of effective time management.

5.5.3 Conclusion 3: Motivation of ODL students

Motivation helps students to acquire the ability to be self-directed and self-regulated, which leads to personal growth. Personal growth relates to self-improvement or self-growth as an ongoing process of improving habits, behaviour, actions and reactions. It was evident that ODL students perceived their personal growth differently. Personal growth enlightens students' understanding of how they should execute their roles and responsibilities in order to achieve their goals, which improves students' confidence (§ 4.2.1.3). Self-regulated learning also assisted the students in knowing themselves better, because they have to find study methods that work best for them (§ 3.2.1.3).

5.5.4 Conclusion 4: ODL students' dilemmas regarding social roles

ODL students constantly experience the dilemma of performing both their roles as students and taking responsibility for their studies (§ 4.7.1.1 and § 4.7.1.2). Students expect lectures to guide them regarding their roles as students at the higher education institutions. They expect lecturers to provide even more assistance in order to accomplish their learning tasks. Slower students expect lecturers to present extra classes to further assist them (§ 4.2.1.1). Meanwhile, the dilemma also manifests when students experience conflict between engaging in social and family responsibilities while their studies demand effective time management and task orientation from them (§ 4.2.1.2; § 4.2.1.1; Table 5.1; and Figure 5.1). African students, due to a variety of social, linguistic or cultural reasons, are less likely to talk, discuss, or ask questions in a formal classroom setting. With English as the predominant language of learning and teaching, language has become a barrier to their learning, as African students are expected to engage and communicate in English in terms of all teaching and learning activities (§ 4.3.1.2 and § 4.5). Although some students seem to understand the language, they are often not comfortable completing assignments in English. They often need help with language issues and they internalise self-doubt and incompetency.

5.5.5 Conclusion 5: Financial constraints of ODL students

ODL students are intensely aware of their financial responsibilities and they often experience difficulties in fulfilling them. These students experience financial constraints due to their family and personal obligations (§ 3.3.1.1). They have to readjust their budgets to be able to fulfil such responsibilities (§ 4.3.1.1) and this often results in them not attending IWB sessions at their LSCs (§ 3.3.1.1).

5.5.6 Conclusion 6: Personal development of ODL students

Students are personally responsible for setting their personal educational goals which relate to attending classes, being active participants in discussions, timely submission of assignments and preparing for examinations (§ 4.3.1.2). Effective fulfilment of personal responsibilities develops personal skills. This was evident when students who did not attend IWB sessions took it upon themselves to download the lesson presentations, study and surf the internet in search of difficult words. Although the language of teaching and learning is predominantly English, it was evident from the findings that when students understood their responsibility for personal development, they were also able to overcome barriers associated with the use of English as a language of teaching and learning.

5.5.7 Conclusion 7: Family responsibilities of ODL students

ODL students are generally adults and part-time students, who juggle their education with fulltime employment and family responsibilities. It emerged from the findings that ODL students were unable

to attend classes organised on Friday afternoons and Saturdays due to their family and employment responsibilities (§ 3.3.1.3). Students who focus on fulfilling family responsibilities, compromise on the time for their studies and are unlikely to obtain good grades (§ 4.3.1.3). Family responsibilities hinder the effective learning of ODL students (§ 4.3.1.1). Students often regard family responsibilities as more important due to their African context, and this might affect their studies (§ 4.3.1.3).

5.5.8 Conclusion 8: Ubuntu as a social responsibility of ODL students

From the findings, it emerged that ODL students could not dissociate their social roles and responsibilities from the social expectations of the African philosophy of Ubuntu, which prescribes their cultural behaviour (§ 1.2.1-1.2.4). Ubuntu constituted the driving force which enabled some students to feel free to contact the lecturers at any moment in time or to ask for help concerning educational issues. They also expect their lecturers to reciprocate the acts of Ubuntu towards their students (§ 3.2.2.3). Ubuntu, as a social responsibility, became more apparent when students worked cooperatively in groups. They would often ask assistance from their peers for clarity on administrative or academic issues (§ 4.3.1.4).

5.6 Contribution of this study

The contributions resulting in the outcomes of this study are formatted according to the conceptual framework presented as Figure 5.1 and as deducted from Table 5.2. While Mdakane (2011)) focused on the roles and responsibilities of HEIs and lecturers relating to ODL, Table 5.2 highlights, from a communal African perspective, the contribution of the current study in terms of the analysis of ODL students' perspectives of their roles and responsibilities. The research participants' voices provide significant evidence of a contribution to the theory of ODL students' distance learning experiences.

Table 5.2: Contributions of the study in terms of its findings

Findings	Significant evidence	Contribution of the study
Task orientation	<i>I think it is my role to remain a role model, I am their role model being a student at this stage of growing every time I stand before them as a teacher they know that I am also studying further as a role model I am inspiring them to say look in life you cannot say I have grown and have reached the end but you learn for life (P39:90-92).</i>	Students are expected to be task oriented to be successful in their studies. This study indicated that task orientation was influenced and shaped by their African perspectives, where African communities or societies, share tasks. Academic work, especially in ODL, to a great extent is individualistic. Developers of ODL assignments should highlight the challenges or experiences and difficulties of students in order for them to cooperatively undertake group assignments which could contribute towards community development.
Time management	<i>...from setting my standards. I had the luxury of giving myself some time to say, by such a time I should be done (P39:158).</i>	Time management is important for academic success. From an African perspective, time is endless. In terms of ODL, time is structured and limited. This is in direct contrast to the understanding of the students. This directly affects how they approach schedules and

		activities, which often do not correspond with the demands of being ODL student.
Personal growth	<i>...mine might be a little bit different to say. As an individual one needs to look into the education specifically in enhancing one's ability (P38:26).</i>	Students should personally grow in order to progress in terms of their studies. Personal development is often not considered important as growth is related to the context of community growth, which is a collaborative aspect. We grow together; not alone.
Social roles	<i>We are also the social beings and we are able to engage socially with other stakeholders be able to reach others in order to work with those who are on the lowest level—middle class or highest level understanding the dynamics within all the three levels of the people at large (P38:82-84).</i>	Part of being a student, is a social activity. The social aspect of being student is not prominent in ODL, when compared to social activities within their communities. Social roles relating to their communities overshadow students' roles as students.
Financial responsibility	<i>...because teachers are not well remunerated, as "meneer" was saying that at times you try to augment what you are earning, by trying to augment what you are earning you are automatically putting more burden into your shoulders at the end of the day (P38:113).</i>	Most ODL students are working adults and therefore they bear the brunt of being financially responsible. Particularly where people share what they have, the breadwinner (the student) who is the financially responsible person, becomes burdened as they have to be share with others (Black tax).
Personal responsibility	<i>It is my responsibility to develop my language skills and computer skills so that I can type my assignments (P36:48).</i>	To become a student demands individualism. However, within an African community demands that, because I am here, the community is more important than me. Students have to fulfil certain community roles as the community is more important than the individual. Personal responsibility could become affected as they apply their knowledge and skills to the community.
Family responsibility	<i>I am a working mother and I still have my mother who is in hospital and I have to juggle my time, and my studies suffer sometimes (P37:148).</i>	ODL students belong to families. Some students are parents themselves. They are expected to execute their extended family responsibilities. In an African culture, ODL students are expected to firstly take care of elders and siblings. ODL HEIs should take cognisance of this phenomenon which impacts on the time and energy of students.
Social responsibility	<i>It is also my responsibility as an ODL student to encourage my colleagues that because you have got some sort of a qualification it does not mean the end of the world; it means you can further your studies (P39:74).</i>	ODL students are social beings and tend to support one another. Within the African community, it is expected that an individual's gains should benefit the whole society. This may be detrimental to an individual's responsibilities as ODL student.

5.7 Limitations of this study

In any research, study limitations are embedded, regardless of how cautious the planning and implementation have been. These limitations emerge on the theoretical level, as well as in the practical implications experienced at ground level.

This study stemmed from a qualitative perspective, firmly placed within the Interpretivist paradigm. This was the case as little literature was available, especially on how African students perceived their roles and responsibilities of ODL. This provided groundedness for the initial documentation of an important issue on the South African research horizon. I acknowledge that a fully mixed sequential

equal status bounded case study could have provided a wider perspective of the social issue, but not a deeper understanding as achieved with the Interpretivist qualitative study. The findings of the qualitative findings are context sensitive to the ODL environment specifically at the NWU, and can therefore not be generalised or transferred to other ODL institutions. However, many of the findings could overlap.

On the practical level, the students who attended the focus group interviews were students living relatively close to Potchefstroom and attended IWB sessions there. None of the other 56 learning sites, or even other ODL institutions could be included

5.8 Trustworthiness of the study

The research was conducted in a capable, detailed, and systematic way and it was transparent to gain socially acceptable knowledge. The researcher followed the method as indicated in chapter three of the study. The participants were registered students of ODL in North West University and lectures also were members of staff at the Unit for Open Distance Learning. ATLAS.ti™ was used for data analysis. The findings accurately reflect the data, one of the colleagues who was observing the focus group interviews read through them. The quotations that were used were presented from the perspective of the participants and, support the findings.

5.9 Recommendations for further research

The recommendations from this study are formatted according to the conceptual framework presented as Figure 5.1. From the current study the researcher recommends the following:

- A study should be carried out on how ODL institutions take cognisance of the issues surrounding students' superficial understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This study will help enhance the existing support structures in place to assist ODL students in better understanding the demands of distance education.
- A study must be undertaken to understand how ODL students can best manage their time effectively. The importance of this study will compel ODL students to draw up a time table and stick to it in order to succeed in their studies.
- Research should be carried out that is focused on understanding how students can be better motivated to improve on their ability to become self-directed and self-regulated. Such a study will help students aspire for better academic performance because they will have a goal to work toward that is specifically focused on academic issues.
- Future research needs to be dedicated to investigating how social roles and responsibilities of ODL students are influenced and shaped by an Ubuntu/African worldview and Philosophy of

Education. Such a study will take an ethnographic research design since issues of Ubuntu/African worldview are culturally embedded.

- A study should be carried out in order to understand the relationship between ODL students' financial constraints and the possible effects on academic performance. Such a study will assist students in seeking solace during times of financial constraint, thereby reducing the potential financial impact of such a situation on their studies.
- There is a need for a study that will focus on assisting students in developing their personal educational goals which relate to attending classes, being active participants in discussions, timely submission of assignments and preparing for examinations. Such a study will be beneficial for students to understand the importance of setting goals related to personal and academic achievements.
- A study should be done on how ODL institutions can accommodate particular needs of the variety of students, such as part-timers, parents, workers etc. A study of this nature will benefit a wide range of ODL students' needs, some of which are family responsibilities.
- A study should be carried out on the functionality of Africanisation in students' conceptualisation of their roles and responsibilities. This study will inform universities on how to best understand their students' worldview, and through such a worldview, universities would be able to provide services that highlight the students' context and their roles and responsibilities within this context.

5.10 Questions for future research

These questions for future research are formatted according to the conceptual framework presented as Figure 5.1. The Interpretivist paradigm considers that reality is multiple-layered and intricate and a single phenomenon can have multiple interpretations. Through this study the researcher identified the following possible aspects for research regarding the roles and responsibilities of ODL students:

- How do ODL institutions provide support services that could enhance students' understanding of their roles and responsibilities?
- How can ODL students be assisted to better manage their time?
- How can ODL students be better motivated to improve on their ability to become self-directed and self-regulated?
- How are roles and responsibilities of ODL students influenced by Ubuntu/African worldview and Philosophy of Education?
- What is the relationship between ODL students' financial constraints and the possible effects on academic performance?
- How can students be provided more assistance that would help them attain personal and academic goals?
- How can ODL institutions accommodate particular needs of the variety of students?

- What is the functionality of Africanisation in students' conceptualisation of their roles and responsibilities?

5.11 Reflection on the researcher's journey

My doctoral research journey began when I was an ODL lecturer at the NWU, where my interactions with a large number of ODL students sparked questions that turned into an issue. A clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of ODL students could enhance the quality of teaching-and-learning of students at a distance. As a researcher, I was introduced to SLR as a reliable method of collecting appropriate literature to enrich my study with pertinent literature. The librarian from the Faculty of Education assisted me in searching the multiple databases for relevant documents. Executing the SLR was challenging, but intriguing. I analysed the many possible documents, concentrated them into a focused literature on the research phenomenon. This resulted in themes which constituted the analysis framework for the coding of the transcribed focus-group interviews. I have developed skills which, in future, could also be beneficial to colleagues and students: Endnote™, a software program for managing references and bibliography, enabled me to manage the vast array of literature documents. It provided me with a structured and organized way to develop and compile a bibliography for my study while ensuring references were correct across all chapters of this study. Qualitative research strategies instilled patience and compassion in me for the research participants as I was confronted with their hardships, challenges and disappointments. Conducting focus group interviews was invigorating and informative as the participants showed enthusiasm and willingness to share their experiences. I attended workshops on Atlas.ti™ and I learnt how to analyse and interpret the coded data. Atlas.ti™ provided the supportive tools that enabled me to analyse my qualitative data. The research process did not only address the research question, it also helped me to develop as a person, researcher and an ODL lecturer. In the beginning I was hesitant to employ Ubuntu as a frame of reference, but I now realize that it underpinned the entire journey. I am now more committed to the African perspectives of Ubuntu for all aspects of life.

References

- Abas, Z.W. (2009). E-Learning in Malaysia: Moving Forward in Open Distance Learning. *International JI. on E-Learning*, 8(4), 527-537.
- African National Congress. (1994). *A Policy Framework of Education and Training* Dept. African National Congress.
- Alford, P., & Lawson, A. (2009). *Distance Education Student Primer: Skills for Being a Successful Online Learner*: IT Training and Education: Bloomington.
- Asante M., & K., A. (1985). *African culture: The rythms of unity* (Molefi K. Asante & K. Welsh-Asante Eds. Illustrated ed.). University of Michigan: Greenwood Press.
- Ashby, C. (2005). *Distance education: Growth in distance education programs and implications for federal education policy: Testimony before the United States General*. Florida: Information AGE Publishing Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d021125t.pdf>.
- Baloyi, G. (2014). Learner Support in Open Distance and E-Learning for Adult Students Using Technologies. *Journal for Communication Education*, 5(2), 127-133.
- Bapir, M.A. (2012). Is it possible for qualitative research to be properly valid and reliable? <http://www.academia.edu/997438/ValidityandReliabilityinQualitativeResearch>
- Barratt, H. (2011). The hierarchy of research evidence: From well conducted meta-analysis down to small case series, publication bias. Retrieved from <http://www.healthknowledge.org.uk/public-health-textbook/research-method/1a-epidemeology/hierarchy-research-evidence> website:
- Belawati, T., & Baggaley, J. (2009). *Distance education in Asia: The PANdora guidebook* (1st ed.). Asia.
- Berge, Z.L., & Collins, M.P. (Eds.). (1995). *Computer mediated communication and the online* (Vol. 1). Cresskill, N J: Hampton Press.
- Birch, P.D. (2002). E-learner competencies. *Learning Circuits*.
- Blignaut, A.S., & Kok, I. (2010). Towards using e-portfolio in an ODL development state. *South African Journal for Open Distance Learning Practice*, 32(1 2010), 94 -110.
- Blignaut, A.S., & Trollip, S.R. (2003). Developing a taxonomy of faculty participation in asynchronous learning environments: An exploratory investigation. *Computor & Education*, 41(2), 149-172. doi: 10.1016/S0360-1315(03)00033-2
- Bodgan, R., & Taylor, S. (1975). *Introduction to qualitative research methods*. New York: Wiley Publishers.
- Boeije, H. (2002). A purposeful approach to the constant comparative method in the analysis of qualitative interviews. *Quality and Quantity*, 36(4), 391-409. doi: 10.1023/A:1020909529486
- Boston University. School of Public Health. (2016). What is culture? Retrieved 14 March, 2019, from <https://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/mph-modules/PH/CulturalAwareness/CulturalAwareness2.html#:~:text=Culture%20can%20be%20defined%20as,%2C%20religion%2C%20rituals%2C%20art>.
- Brent, F.L., & Bugbee, A.C. (1993). Study practices and attitudes related to ecademicsuccess in a distance learning program. *Journal for Distance Education*, 14(1), 97 - 112.

- Bridley, J.E., Walti, C., & Zawacki-Richter, O. (2004). The current context of learner support in open, distance and online learning: An introduction. In J. E. Bridley, C. Walti & O. Zawacki-Richter (Eds.), *Learner Support in Open Distance and Online Learning Environments*. BIS-Oldenburg: Verlag der Carl von Ossietzky.
- Briner, R.B., & Denyer, D. (2012). Systematic review and evidence synthesis as a practise and scholarship tool. In D. Rousseau (Ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Evidence-Based Management* (pp. 112-129). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Broodryk, J. (2002). *Ubuntu: Life lessons from Africa*. Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy.
- Burke, J., & Christensen, L. (2014). *Educational Research. Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Approaches* (Fifth ed.): SAGE Publications.
- Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* London: Heinemann Books.
- Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1994). *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis*. Alderhot, England: Arena.
- Clayton, J. (2003). *Assessing and researching the online learning environment*. Paper presented at the ascilite, adelaide. <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/adelaide03/docs/pdf593>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research Methods in Education (5th Edition)* (seventh ed.). London: Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Collin, S., & Karsenti, T. (2011). *Portrait of ODL in Africa: Results of a three-year longitudinal study (2007–2010)*. Paper presented at the Global Learn, Melbourne, Australia.
- Council on Higher Education. (2004). *Policy Advice Report: Advice to the Minister of Education on Aspects of Distance Education Provision in South Africa Higher Education*. Pretoria: CHE.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. London: SAGE.
- Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating qualitative and quantitative research* (4 ed.). Essex: Pearson.
- Creswell, J.W., & Poth, C.N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Daniel, J. (2005). *Open and Distance Learning and the Developing World* Paper presented at the Canadian Association for Distance Education/ Association canadienne de l'éducation à distance, 2005 Annual Conference / Congrès annuel 2005, CADE and COL / L'ACED et COL, Mot de bienvenue.
- Daniels, J.E. (2001). Africentric social work practice. *International Social Work*, 44(3), 301-309.
- Dela Pena-Bandalaria, M. (2007). Impact of ICTs on open and distance learning in a developing country setting: the Philippine experience. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 8(1), 1-15.

- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2011). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-21). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2013). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research* (pp. 1-41). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Department of Education. (1995). *White Paper on Education and Training*. Cape Town: Government Gazette Retrieved from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/16312gen1960.pdf.
- Department of Education. (2004). *White Paper on e-Education: Transformation learning and teaching through information and communication technologies*. Pretoria: Government Printer Retrieved from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/267341.pdf.
- Department of Higher Education and Training. (2014). *Policy for the provision of distance education in South African universities in the context of an integrated post-school system*. Pretoria: Government Printer Retrieved from https://www.saide.org.za/documents/Distance_education_policy.pdf.
- Department of Higher Education and Training. (2014). *White paper for post-school education and training: Building an expanded, effective and integrated post-school education system*. Pretoria: Government Printer Retrieved from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/37229gon11.pdf.
- Dictionary.com. (2020). ResponsibleDictionary.com. Retrieved from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/responsible>.
- Draves, W.A. (1999). Why learning online is totally different? *Lifelong Learning Today*, 3, 4-8.
- Du Plessis, P. (2011). Towards sustainable ODL in the developmental state: financing quality distance education. *Progressio*, 33(1), 262-280.
- Dunnion, B., & Knox, S. (2004). *Understanding and managing corporate brands: A system dynamics perspective*. Paper presented at the Irish Academy of Management Annual Conference, Dublin. <http://dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk/handle/1826/3271>
- Easton, S.S. (2003). Clarifying the instructor's role in online distance learning. *Communication Education*, 52(2), 87-105.
- Els, C.J., & Blignaut, A.S. (2013). *A framework for mixed method evaluation of educational technology research and development suited to open and distance learning* Unpublished Manuscript.
- Enuku, U.E., & Ojugwu, C.N. (2006). ICT in the service of National Open University of Nigeria. *Education*, 127(2), 187-195.
- Evawoma-Enuku, U., & Enuku, O. (2000). Breaking down the walls: computer application in correctional/prison education. *Pakistan Journal of Education*, 17(1), 91-103.
- Fozdar, B.I., & Kumar, L.S. (2007). Mobile Learning and Student Retention. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 8(2), 1-18.
- Fraenkel, J.R., & Wallen, N.E. (2003). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Freeman, M. (2014). *The priority of the other: Thinking and living beyond self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Given, L.M. (2008). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

- Graburm, H.H.N. (2001). What is tradition? *Museum Anthropology*, 24(2/3), 6-11.
- Gravett, S. (2004). Teaching and Learning: establishing communities of enquiry and interpretation. In S. Gravett, Geysesr, H. (Ed.), *Teaching and Learning in higher education*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Gray, C.C. (2001). *Africentric Thought and Praxis: An Intellectual History* (Illustrated, reprint ed.). University of Michigan: African World Press.
- Greenberg, G. (1998). Distance education technologies: Best practices for K-12 settings.
- Guasch, J.C., & Ugas, L. (2007). The digital gap in Maracaibo city in Venezuela. *Telematics and Informatics* 24, 41 - 47.
- Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1988). Do inquiry paradigms imply inquiry methodologies? In D. M. Fetterman (Ed.), *Qualitative approaches to evaluation in education* (pp. 89-115). New York, NY: Praeger.
- Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks: CA: SAGE.
- Gunawardena, C.N., & Mclsaac, M.S. (2004). Learning technology through three generations of technology enhanced Distance Education pedagogy. In D. H. Jonassen (Ed.), *Handbook of research for educational communities and technology* (2nd ed., pp. 355 - 396).
- Guri-Rosenblit, S. (2005). 'Distance education' and 'e-learning': Not the same thing. *Higher Education*, 49(4), 467 - 493.
- Hammond-Tooke, W.D. (1974). *The Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa*: Routledge & K Paul.
- Hemingway, P., & Brereton, N. (2009). What is a systematic review?
<http://www.medicine.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/painres/download/whatis/syst-review.pdf>
- Higgs, P., & Smith, J. (2000). *Rethinking our world*. Johannesburg: Juta.
- Hoter, E., Shonfeld, M., & Ganayim, A. (2009). Information and communication technology (ICT) in the service of multiculturalism. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 10(2), 15.
- Hugo, A. (2011). Exploring ICT possibilities to create a community of reading teachers. *Progressio*, 33(1), 245-261.
- Ilieva, J., Baron, S., & Healey, N.M. (2002). Online surveys in marketing research: Pros and cons. *International Journal of Market Research*, 44(3), 361-376+382. doi: 10.1177/147078530204400303
- Isman, A., Altinay, Z., & Altinay, F.I. (2004). Roles of the Students and Teachers in Distance Education. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 5(4), 97-106.
- Isman, A., Dabaj, F., Altinay, Z., & Altinay, F. (2004). Roles of the students and teachers in distance education. *International Journal of Instructional Technology & Distance Learning*, 1(5).
http://www.itdl.org/Journal/May_04/article05.htm
- Ivankova, N.V., Creswell, J.W., & Stick, S.L. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 3-20. doi: 10.1177/1525822x05282260
- Jesson, J.K., Matheson, L., & Lacey, F.M. (2011). *Doing your literature review*. London: SAGE.
- Kanuka, H., & Conrad, D. (2003). The name of the game-why "distance education" says it all (pp. 385 - 393).

- Kearsley, G., Lynch, W., & Wizer, D. (1995). The effectiveness and impact of online learning in graduate education. *Educational Technology*, 35(6), 37-42.
- Kelly, M., Lyng, C., McGrath, M., & Cannon, G. (2009). A multi-method study to determine the effectiveness of, and student attitudes to, online instructional videos for teaching clinical nursing skills. *Nurse Education Today*, 3, 292-300. doi: 10.1016/j.nedt.2008.09.004
- Kitchenham, B. (2004). Procedures for performing systematic reviews (pp. 27). Eversleigh: Department of Computer Science, Keele University.
- Knowles, M.S. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. New York: Association Press.
- Ko, S., & Rossen, S. (2001). *Teaching online: A practical guide* (Illustrated edition Edition ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Koerten, H. (2008). Assessing the organisational aspects of SDI: Metaphors matter. In J. Crompvoets, A. Rajabifard, B. Van Loenene & T. Delgado (Eds.), *A multi-view framework to assess SDIs* (pp. 235-254). Melbourne: s.n.
- Kok, I., & Blignaut, A. (2010). Towards using e-portfolios in an ODL development state. *Progressio*, 32(1), 94-110.
- Kruger, C.J. (2010). *Latest ICT trends in enhancing education*. Paper presented at the Southern African Computer Lecturers' Association (SACLA), Pretoria.
<http://web.up.ac.za/ecis/sacla2010pr/sacla2010/papers/sacla>
- Le Roux, J. (2000). The concept of "Ubuntu": Africa's Most Important Contribution to Multicultural Education *Multicultural Teaching*, 18(2), 43-46.
- Leech, N., & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2009). A typology of mixed methods research designs. *Quality & Quantity*, 43, 265-275. doi: 10.1007/s11135-007-9105-3
- Letseka, M. (2000). African Philosophy and Educational Discourse. In C. Balchin (Ed.), *African Voices in Education* (pp. 179-191). Cape Town: Juta.
- Letseka, M. (Ed.). (2015). *Introduction: Open Distance Learning (ODL) and the Philosophy of Ubuntu*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- MacIntosh, C. (Ed.). (2005). *Perspectives on distance education. Lifelong learning and distance higher education*. Vancouver and Paris: COL and UNESCO.
- Mafenya, P.N. (2014). A South African Distance Learning Case Study: Reducing Distance through Mobile Technology. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(14), 276.
- Mahajan, S.L. (2002). Information Communication Technology in Distance Education in India:A Challenge. *Indian Journal of Open Learning*, 11(2), 269 - 277.
- Makgoba, M., & Seepe, S. (2004). Knowledge and Identity: An African Vision of Higher Education Transformation. In S. Seepe (Ed.), *Towards an African Identity of Higher Education* (pp. 200). Pretoria: Vista University and Skotaville Media.
- Makoe, M. (2011). Academics going mobile: new roles for new technologies. *Progressio*, 33(2), 174-188.
- Mbatha, B., & Naidoo, L. (2010). Bridging the transactional gap in Open Distance Learning (ODL): the case of the University of South Africa (Unisa). *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 64-69.
- Mbeki, T. (2001). *State of the Nation Address of the President of South Africa*. Cape Town: Retrieved from <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2001/0102131223p1001.htm>.
- Mbigi, L. (1997). *Ubuntu, the African dream in management*. Pretoria: Sigma.

- Mbigi, L. (2000). *In Search of the African Business Renaissance: An African Cultural Perspective*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources.
- Mbigi, L., & Maree, J. (2005). *UBUNTU: The Spirit of African Transformation Management*. Randburg: Knowres Publishing (Pty) Ltd.
- Mbiti, J. (1975). *Introduction to African religion*. London: Heinemann.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1990). *African religions and philosophy* (2nd rev. & enl. ed.). Johannesburg: Heinemann.
- McKenney, S., & Reeves, T.C. (2018). *Conducting Educational Design Research* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- McLoughlin, C., & Marshall, L. (2000). *Scaffolding: A model for learner support in an online teaching environment* Paper presented at the Flexible Futures in Tertiary Teaching, Perth.
- McMillan, J.H., & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction* (Fifth ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc.
- Mdakane, M. (2011). *Student satisfaction in open distance learning in an BEd Hons programme*. (PhD), North-West University, Potchefstroom.
- Mekada, J.G. (1999). The African-centred worldview: toward a paradigm for social work. *Journal of Black Studies*, 30(2), 53-59.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (xxx ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S.B., & Tisdell, E.J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mikre, F. (2011). The Roles of Information Communication Technologies in Education. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science*, 6(2).
- Moore, M., & Kearsley, G. (2005). *Distance Education: A System View* (2nd ed.). Thomson Wadsworth.
- Morgan, D.L. (1997). *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (2 ed.). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Mswela, M. (2009). Cultural Practices And HIV In South Africa: A Legal Perspective. *PER (Online)*, 12(4), 172-213.
- Munyua, H. (1998). *Application of ICTs in the agricultural sector in Africa: A gender perspective with special reference to women*. Paper presented at the The African Women and Economic Development: Investing in our Future. [www.uneca.org/eca_resources/Major ECA Websites/eca40th/doc.htm](http://www.uneca.org/eca_resources/Major_ECA_Websites/eca40th/doc.htm).
- Mwenda, K.K., & Muuka, G.N. (2004). Towards best practices for micro finance institutional engagement in African rural areas: selected cases and agenda for action. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 31(1/2), 143-158.
- Nair, P.A.P., & Pillay, J. (2004). Exploring the validity of the continuous assessment strategy in higher education institutions. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 18(2), 302-312.
- National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE). (1996). *A framework for transformation*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

- Nenge, R.T., Chimbadzwa, Z., & Mapolisa, T. (2012). ICT Implementation Challenges and Strategies For ODL Institutions: The Zou's National Centre Academic Staff Experiences. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 13(4), 112-124.
- Neuman, L.W. (2011). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- North-West University. School of Continuing Teacher Education. (2009). About us. from <http://distance.nwu.ac.za/af/content/unit-open-distance-learning-oor-ons>
- Okonkwo, C.A. (2012). A needs assessment of ODL educators to determine their effective use of open educational resources. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 13(4), 293-312.
- Osborne, M., & Oberski, I. (2004). University continuing education: The role of communication and information technology. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 28(5), 414-428.
- Osuji, U.S.A. (2012). The use of e-assessments in the Nigerian higher education system. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 13(4), 140-152.
- Paden, N., & Stell, R. (2009, February 2009). *Student Roles and Expectations in the Distance Delivery Process*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of ASBBS Annual Conference, Las Vegas.
- Palloff, R., & Pratt, K. (1998). *Effective teaching and learning in the virtual classroom*. Paper presented at the World Computer Congress: Teleteaching, Vienna/Australia and Budapest/Hungary.
- Paras, J. (2001). Crisis in mathematics education, student failure: challenges and possibilities. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 15(3), 66-73.
- Parra, J.L. (2013). Developing technology and collaborative groupwork skills: supporting students and group success in online and blended courses. . *Cutting-Edge Technologies in Higher Education*, 6, 287- 337.
- Patru, M., & Khvilon, E. (2002). *Open and distance learning: Trends, policy and strategy considerations*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Perraton, H. (2000). *Open and Distance Learning in the Developing World*. New York: Routledge.
- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2006). *Systematic reviews in the social science: A practical guide*.: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Picciano, A. (2009). Blending with purpose: The Multimodal Model. *Journal of The Research Center Educational Technology*, 5(1 (2009)), 4 - 14
- Pilkington, C., & Sanders, I. (2014). An online collaborative document creation exercise in an ODL research project module. *Computers & Education*, 77, 116-124.
- Pintrich, P.R. (2000). The role of goal orientation in self-regulated learning. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation* (pp. 451-502). San Diego CA: Academic Press
- Quek, C., & Wong, A.F.L. (2003). Evaluating e-learning environments in Singapore. . In M. Khine & D. Fisher (Eds.), *Technology-rich learning environments: A future perspective*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- Reiter, B. (2017). Theory and methodology of exploratory social science research. *International Journal of Science and Research Methodology*, 5(4), 129-150.
- Roberts, D.V. (2006). Funding for success in higher education: A mechanism to meet national challenges. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 20(2), 219-231.

- Rohfeld, R.W., & Hiemstra, R. (1995). Moderating discussions in the electronic classroom. In Z. L. Berge & M. P. Collins (Eds.), *Computer mediated communication and the online classroom* (Vol. 3, pp. 91-104). Cresskill, N J: Hampton Press.
- Sadik, A. (2008). Digital storytelling: A meaningful technology-integrated approach for engaged student learning. *Educational Technology Research and development*, 56(4), 487-506.
- Saldana, J. (2011). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: SAGE.
- Sarid, A. (2003). *Students' attitudes towards the implementation of new technologies in course teaching*. Tel Aviv: Open University Press (in Hebrew).
- Shafiul Alam, S.M. (2010). The Role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Delivering Higher Education - A Case of Bangladesh. *International Journal of Education Studies*, 3(2), 97 - 106.
- Sherry, L. (1995). Issues in Distance Learning. *International Journal of Educational Telecommunication*, 1(4), 337 - 365.
- Sikwibele, A.L., & Mungoo, J.K. (2009). Distance Learning and Teacher Education in Botswana: Opportunities and Challenges. *International Review of Research in Open Distance Learning*, 10(4).
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data*. London: SAGE.
- Silverman, D. (2011). *Qualitative Research. Issues of Theory, Method and Practice*. London: SAGE.
- Singh, K. (2007). *Quantitative social research methods*. London: Sage.
- Solomon, M.R., Carol Surprenant, J.A., Czepiel, J.A., & Gutman, E.G. (1985). A Role Theory Perspective on Dyadic Interactions: The Service Encounter. *Journal of Marketing*, 49(Winter), 99-111.
- Spamer, E.J. (2016). North-West University Unit of Open Distance Learning: Message from the Executive Director. Retrieved from <http://distance.nwu.ac.za/content/unit-open-distance-learning-directors-message> website:
- Suniti, N.-G., & Tara, J. (2012). The Pan African e-network project: A new learning culture. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 13(3), 198-211.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2003). Major issues and controversies in the use of mixed methods in the social and behaviour sciences. *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research*, 3-50.
- Taylor, C. (1992). *Sources of the Self*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Teffo, L.J. (1992). "African philosophy in a human context in dialogue with Western Philosophy". Paper presented at the 22nd congress of the Philosophical Society of Southern Africa, Durban: University of Natal.
- Teffo, L.J. (1996). The other in African experience. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 15(3), 101-104.
- Teffo, L.J. (1998). Botho/ubuntu as a way forward for contemporary South Africa. *Word and Action*, 38(365), 3-5.
- Thabede, D. (2008). The African Worldview as the basis of practice in the helping profession. *Sociawork Journal*, 44(3), 233 - 245.
- The Open University. (2009). Distance learning. Retrieved 29 September 2009, from www.open.ac.uk/news/distancelearning.shtml
- Thiong, N.W. (1993). *Moving the centre: the struggle for cultural freedom*

- Tutu, D. (2004). *God has a dream: A vision of hope for our time*. Cape Town: Africa: Image Books/Doubleday.
- Tutu, D. (2011). *God is not a Christian: Speaking Truth in Times of Crisis*. Johannesburg: Rider Books.
- Udeani, C.C. (2000). *The search for meaning in the traditional African World-view (Upper Austria/Caritas Integration Project)*. Linz, Austria: Kepler University.
- Umoh, J.O. (2005). *Elements of Sociology of Religion*. Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria: Iwoh and Sons Enterprise
- UNESCO. (2008). Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). from <https://uil.unesco.org/partner/association-development-education-africa-adea>
- University Of South Africa. (2009). Retrieved 29 September 2009, from <http://www.unisa.ac.za>
- Van der Walt, B.J. (1997). *Afrocentric or Eurocentric? Oour Task in a Multicultural South Africa*. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys.
- Van der Walt, B.J. (2006). *When Africa and Western cultures meet: From confrontation to appreciation*. Potchefstroom: The Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa.
- van Heerden, E. (1997). Cultural diversity and schooling. *South African Journal for Education*, 18(3), 138-160.
- van Niekerk, L.J. (2004). Distance as a function of African community. *South African Journal for Higher Education*, 18(3), 185 - 195.
- van Niekerk, L.J., & Higgs, P. (2008). *Rethinking open and distance Learning and teacher development in Africa*. Paper presented at the NADEOSA, UNISA.
- Van Zyl, J.M., Els, C.J., & Blignaut, A.S. (2013). Development of ODL in a newly industrialised country according to face-to-face contact, ICT, and e-readiness. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 14(1), 84-105.
- Venter, E. (2004). The Notion of Ubuntu and Communalism in African Educational discourse *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 23(2/3), 149-160. doi: 10.1023/B:SPED.0000024428.29295.03
- Vonderwell, S., & Savery, J. (2004). ONLINE LEARNING: STUDENT ROLE AND READINESS. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology – TOJET*, 3(3).
- Williams, C. (2011). Research methods. *Journal of Business & Economics Research*, 5(3), 65-71. doi: 10.19030/jber.v5i3.2532
- Willis, J.W., Jos, M., & Nilakanta, R. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approach* London: SAGE.
- Wood, J.M. (2007). WPE WebPsychEmpiricist: Understanding and computing Cohen's kappa: A tutorial. <http://wpe.info/vault/wood07/Wood07.pdf>
- Wright, C.R., & Reju, S. (2012). Developing and deploying OERs in sub-Saharan Africa: Building on the present. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 13(2), 181-220.
- Zachariadis, M., Scott, S., & Bearret, M. (2013). Methodological implications of critical realism for mixed-methods research. *MIS Quarterly*, 37(3), 26.
- Zariski, A., & Styles, I. (2000). Enhancing student strategies for online learning. In A. Hermann & M. M. Kulski (Eds.), *9th Annual Teaching Learning Forum: Flexible Futures in Tertiary Teaching*, 2-4 February. Perth: Curtin University of Technology.

Zimmerman, B.J. (1989). A social cognitive view of self-regulated academic learning. *Journal for Educational Psychology*(81), 329-339 doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.81.3.329.

Addendum 2.1: Ethical clearance certificate



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Fax: 018 299-4910

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

**Senate Committee for Research
Ethics**

Tel: 018 299-4849

Email: nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee (EduREC)**, this committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: A qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities of open distance students at a higher education institution

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof AS Blignaut

Student / Team: N Kgati (PhD student – 12717762), Mr C Els

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	0	0	3	2	-	1	5	-	A	2
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Institution

Study Number

Year

Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A

Application Type: Project Authorisation

Commencement date: 26 March 2015

Risk:

Low

Expiry date: 25 March 2020

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable)

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor/principal investigator/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EduREC:*
 - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
 - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*

- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EduREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRC and EduREC reserves the right to:*
 - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;*
 - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;*
 - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
 - *any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;*
 - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EduREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;*
 - *submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or*
 - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*

The EduREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EduREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof JAK Olivier
Chairperson NWU Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm 8 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\DSS1\8533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethics\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 ES-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docm
5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

Addendum 2.2: Students' consent form



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

Faculty of Education Sciences

Private Bag X6001
POTCHEFSTROOM, 2520
South Africa
Tel (018) 299 4594
Fax (018) 285 2080
E-Mail: Nozi.Kgati@nwu.ac.za
18 August 2016

Curriculum Development Innovation and Evaluation student

School for Professional Studies
North West University
Potchefstroom
South Africa

Dear Sir / Madam

Invitation to participate in research

I, Noziphiwo Cleopatra Kgati, am enrolled for a PhD study at the Faculty of Education, Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University. In my research I am investigating the experiences of ODL students' on their roles and responsibilities at a higher education institution. This study is meant to make ODL students aware of, and fully comprehend their roles and responsibilities as ODL students. The title of my thesis is: *A qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities of Open Distance students in a higher institution.*

You are cordially invited to take part in the above-mentioned research project. This will be in a form of a focus group interview. This will be for about 45 minutes, your participation in the project will be highly appreciated.

I pledge to maintain the professional and research ethical codes. This signifies that:

- Your participation in this research remains voluntary and you may, at any time, withdraw from the research without any penalty
- Your personal information will at all times be treated as confidential
- No demands will be made on your academic teaching programme
- No sensitive personal questions will be asked
- No harm will be inflicted
- Should you be interested; the research findings will be made available to you electronically.

The Ethical clearance number for this study is NWU-00032-15-A2.

Could you please provide me with your written consent by filling in the section on the next page? Your participation is voluntary. Your input and opinions will be greatly appreciated!

Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely

N. C. Kgati

Noziphiwo Cleopatra Kgati
PhD Candidate, North-West University

Seugnet Blignaut

Seugnet Blignaut
Promotor

Student number: 12717762
Tel: 018 – 299 4594
Email: Nozi.Kgati@nwu.ac.za

[Tel: 016 - 910 3514](tel:016-9103514)
Email: Seugnet.Blignaut@nwu.ac.za

Informed Consent to participate in Research Project:

A qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities of Open Distance students at a higher education institution.

LETTER OF PERMISSION: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT (STUDENT)

I, _____, (name and surname)

a student from the North West University hereby give my permission to participate in the above mentioned research project. I am aware that my participation in this study remains voluntary and that I, at any time, may withdraw from the research. I understand that if I do not wish to participate in this research, it will not be held against me, as participation is voluntary. I also understand that all personal information will be treated as confidential by the researchers.

Signature

Date

Addendum 2.3: Lecturers' consent form



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

Faculty of Education Sciences

Private Bag X6001
POTCHEFSTROOM, 2520
South Africa
Tel (018) 299 4594
Fax (018) 285 2080
E-Mail: Nozi.Kgati@nwu.ac.za
18 August 2016

Curriculum Development Innovation and Evaluation student

School for Professional Studies
North West University
Potchefstroom
South Africa

Dear Sir / Madam

Permission to participate in research

I, Noziphiwo Cleopatra Kgati, am enrolled for a PhD study at the Faculty of Education Sciences, Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University. In my research I am investigating the experiences of ODL students' on their roles and responsibilities at a higher education institution. This study is meant to make ODL students aware of, and fully comprehend their roles and responsibilities as ODL students. The title of my thesis is: *A qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities of Open Distance students at a higher education institution.*

You are cordially invited to take part in the above-mentioned research project. This will be in a form of a focus group interview. This will be for about 45 minutes, your participation in the project will be highly appreciated.

I pledge to maintain the professional and research ethical codes. This signifies that:

- Your participation in this research remains voluntary and you may, at any time, withdraw from the research without any penalty
 - Your personal information will at all times be treated as confidential
 - Should you be interested; the research findings will be made available to you.
- The Ethical clearance number for this study is NWU-00032-15-A2.

Could you please provide me with your written consent by filling in the section on the next page? Your participation is voluntary. Your input and opinions will be greatly appreciated!

Thank you for your willingness to complete this research.

Yours sincerely

N. C. Kgati

Noziphiwo Cleopatra Kgati
PhD Candidate, North-West University
Student number: 12717762
Tel: 018 – 299 4594
Email: Nozi.Kgati@nwu.ac.za

Seugnet Blignaut

Seugnet Blignaut
Promotor
[Tel: 016 - 910 3514](tel:016-9103514)
Email: Seugnet.Blignaut@nwu.ac.za

Informed Consent to participate in Research Project:

A qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities of Open Distance students at a higher education institution.

LETTER OF PERMISSION: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT (LECTURER)

I, _____, (name and surname)

a lecturer from the North West University hereby give my permission to participate in the above mentioned research project. I am aware that my participation in this study remains voluntary and that I, at any time, may withdraw from the research. I understand that if I do not wish to participate in this research, it will not be held against me, as participation is voluntary. I also understand that all personal information will be treated as confidential by the researchers.

Signature

Date

Addendum 2.4 to 2.7: SLR recordings of documents

See the attached Excel spread sheet for addenda for the following:

Sheet 2.4 –total number of documents

Sheet 2.5 –selected number of documents

Sheet 2.6 –final number of selected documents

Sheet 2.7 –number hits and hand-picked documents

Addendum 3.1: Focus group interview schedule for students

Questions ask to students during the focus group interview

1. What are your roles as ODL students?
2. What are the roles of ODL lecturers?
3. What are the institutional roles?
4. What are your responsibilities as ODL students?
5. What are the responsibilities of ODL lecturers?
6. What are the institutional responsibilities?
7. What are your challenges as ODL students?
8. What are the challenges of ODL lecturers?
9. What are the challenges of the institution?
10. What are your benefits as ODL students?
11. What are the benefits of ODL lecturers?
12. What are the benefits of the NWU ODL institution?

Addendum 3.2: Focus group interview schedule for lecturers

Questions ask to lecturers during the focus group interview

1. What are your roles as ODL lecturers?
2. What are the roles of ODL students?
3. What are the institutional roles?
4. What are your responsibilities as ODL lecturers?
5. What are the responsibilities of ODL students?
6. What are the institutional responsibilities?
7. What are your challenges as ODL lecturers?
8. What are the challenges of ODL students?
9. What are the challenges of the institution?
10. What are your benefits as ODL lecturers?
11. What are the benefits of ODL students?
12. What are the benefits of the NWU ODL institution?

Addendum 6: Certificate for language editing

H C Sieberhagen

SATI no 1001489

hettiesieb@gmail.com

Translator and Editor

082 3359846

018 264 2309

**CERTIFICATE
OF LANGUAGE EDITING**

ISSUED ON 21 MARCH 2021

This is to certify that I have edited the language of the thesis

***A qualitative view of the roles and responsibilities
of Open Distance Learners***

***by
N C Kgati***

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
***PhD in Education
Curriculum Development Innovation and Evaluation***

at the North-West University

Promoter: Prof A S Blignaut

***The responsibility to effect the recommended changes
remains with the student.***



H C Sieberhagen

**SATI no 1001489
21 March 2021**