Chapter Five

Data analysis and interpretation

5.1 Introduction

While Chapter Four clarified the qualitative research design and methodology used during this bounded case study (§ 4.4), Chapter Five presents the analytical and interpretive account of the data analysis on the use of academic Facebook with rural teacher-students in the Eastern Cape in order to enhance their learning experience. The overarching aim of the study was to uncover the affective learning experiences of teacher-students while using a SNS like Facebook as an academic tool to be able to provide guidelines for scaffolding and coaching interventions to rural ODL students. The research question was: *How can the affective learning of open distance learning teacher-students in the rural Eastern Cape be supported through academic Facebook?*

During the qualitative inquiry, data analysis assigned codes to units of meaning that represent a "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2011, p. 3). The integrated dataset of this study comprised the transcribed textual data from (i) a focus group interview with ten teacher-students as research participants, (ii) the academic Facebook group, FaceFunda, (iii) the researcher's reflective research diary, (iv) six individual interviews with research participants, (v) two interviews with the IT expert, (vi) one interview with the facilitator of the focus group session who also observed and assisted at one of the coaching and scaffolding sessions, and (vii) transcriptions of six coaching and scaffolding sessions with the participants. Collectively these eighteen documents contributed towards an integrated dataset in order to address the research questions. In order to uncover qualitative information on the teacher-students' affective experiences while learning with technology, I used the classical framework of Bloom's taxonomy (Kharbach, 2011) (§ 3.2.2.1.1) as conceptual framework for the emotion coding methodology as described by Saldana (2011).

Chapter Three (§ 3.2.2.1.1) outlined the affective domain of Blooms' taxonomy of educational objectives as the focus of this study in order to uncover the learning emotions the participants experienced while learning with technology. Affective characteristics (which determine the emotions with which students enter into a new learning experience) and motivation are interconnected:

> *For a student to learn a learning task well, he should have an openness to the new task, some desire to learn it and learn it well, and sufficient confidence in himself to put forth the necessary energy and resources to overcome difficulties and obstacles in the learning, if and when they occur (Bloom, 1976, p. 74).*

Three patterns emerged from the analysis (Figure 5.1):

- Emotions while learning with technology
- Experiences with technology
- Need for support.

Figure 5.1 Structure of the analysis of the integrated dataset

Figure 5.1 illustrates the structure of the analysis of the integrated dataset. The numbers next to the codes, e.g. Gratitude (76-1) means that during the coding proses, the code *Gratitude* was assigned 76 times to various units of meaning within the integrated data set.

Each of the three patterns display linked codes relating to emotions students experienced during receiving coaching and scaffolding on the use of academic Facebook support while compiling their BEd Hons research proposal. In each case, the patterns relate to emotions of competence (codes that captured positive and enabling experiences), and emotions of incompetence (codes that captured negative and incapacitating experiences). The following sections (§ 5.2—5.4) describe in detail the emotions which participants experienced while learning relating to the three patterns that emerged from the analysis (Figure 5.1).

5.2 Emotions while learning

Figure 5.2 indicates emotions while learning as the first pattern of findings. During the experience of learning through ODL, students' emotions fluctuated between the two opposite ends of the continuum, extending from competence to incompetence while learning with technology. The pattern of emotions while learning produced twelve codes in total.

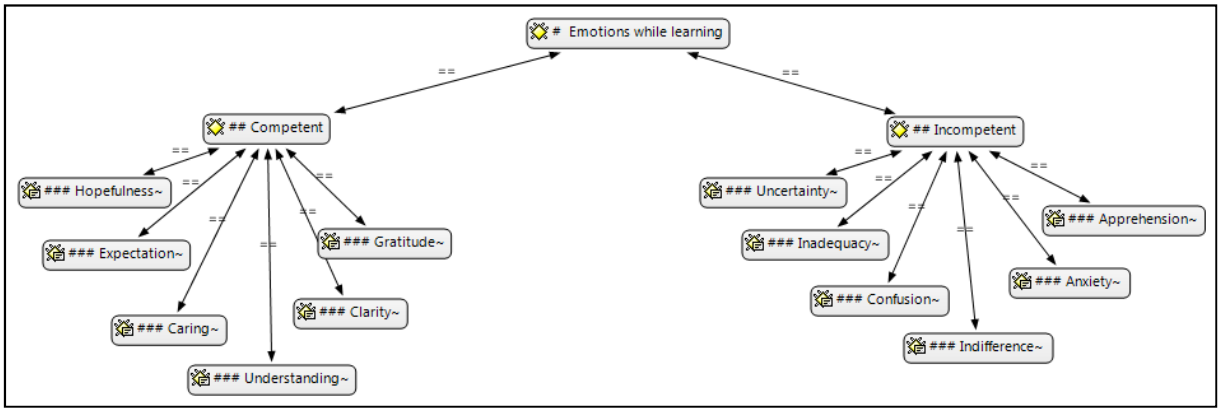


Figure 5.2: Coding structure of emotion codes while learning with technology

Figure 5.2 illustrates the two opposite sides of the continuum, where participants either felt competent or incompetent while learning with technology. Each pattern has emotions contributing to enabling participants to feel competent or emotions contributing to feelings of incompetency.

5.2.1 Emotions of feeling competent while learning with technology

Six codes related to the theme of feeling competent while learning with technology: (i) hopefulness, (ii) expectation, (iii) caring, (iv) understanding, (v) clarity, and (vi) gratitude.

Within the following references, (P4) refers to the fourth document that was assigned to the integrated dataset in Atlas.ti and (:45-47) refers to the lines within that specific document.

The UODL at the NWU, Potchefstroom Campus, offers opportunities for teacher-students to upgrade their qualifications through distance education. The teacher-students as participants in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape were *hopeful* that they would improve their lives through using the opportunity of studying while formally working at the same time. These participants felt hopeful about their opportunity of gaining more insight into the research module they enrolled for:

> *I have big hope that I will get some help through this research. Maybe I will get some techniques on how to tackle some things and certain issues around it (P4:45)*
>
> *And even, if you have an access to internet, you post the page—what am I going to do? The page? No, we are not very much familiar. But by having somebody who is going to guide through things like those, it will help. This intervention—I think by attending, I will get something (P4:45-47)*
>
> [On the FaceFunda website] *Morning* my sister*, ok I will try and do that, it is not an easy job, I'm telling you, but we will get there (P17:18).*

These participants fostered the *expectations* that they would pass the research module (RSPR 671) which they regarded as the most difficult in the BEd Honours programme (§2.3). They felt unsure of where to begin with the learning content of the RSPR 671 module. The introduction of this project relating to the academic use of Facebook made them feel more hopeful and gave them more positive expectations of success with the module. Facebook provided the opportunity for participants to interact with one another and the facilitator on an academic level (De Villiers, 2010). The use of their own technological devices enabled the participants to access information, as well as to create new information (Maguth, 2013).

The participants reported that they experienced the support group as positive and the support they received from the group created the expectations that they would be supported during their learning. During the individual and the focus group interviews, the teacher-students shared their anxiety and loneliness while studying through ODL (Cronje & Clarke, 1999)[4]. They articulated that the support they received through the academic Facebook interaction enabled them to cope with the challenges which they encountered while learning with technology (Kukulska-Hulme, 2013; Rambe, 2012):

> *I was stressed, but today, I'm in the taxi now, you know? I'm a passenger and there is a driver which is X* [laughing and happy agreeing sounds from many] *you know, my mind is open. And I'm so happy every day, you know? It was dark, and today I can see the light* [wow, says others]*, so thank you very much* (P13:13).

During the coaching and scaffolding, I used visual aids to unpack the learning content relating to the basics of research methodology. I also posted images to the FaceFunda website for the participants to revisit the information as often as they deemed. This refers to the regular revisiting of basic ideas during teaching and learning. Knowledge is built and elaborated upon until competency has been reached (Theories of Learning in Educational Psychology, s.a.). Participants could interact with

[4] According to Cronje and Clarke (1999), distance education is dark and lonely.

smaller chunks of learning content at a time, leading to their expectations that they would, in the future, cope with the learning content.

The use of blended learning approaches (§ 3.2.2.2.1) contributed towards situated learning—where teacher-students supported one another, as well as receiving support from a facilitator (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). Listening to the explanation of the learning content; discussing it with their peers and the facilitator, as well as engaging with their formal study guide, enabled the participants to interact with the learning content and created the expectation that they could succeed. The blending of coaching and scaffolding with the online facilitation on FaceFunda provided the participants with multiple interactive support options which they could choose from to interact with.

A positive side effect of mobile learning is that incidental learning takes place which has added value when combined with other facilitation approaches (Kukulska-Hulme, 2013). As the technological skills of the participants increased, they discovered that while searching for information on the Internet, they came across other information which could benefit their studies:

> *I go to the Internet and then I got some other articles. Like…*that thing[5]*…I got the …hmm ..what you call…the Mail and Guardian. Yes, that is perfect, I got it, ja* [yes], *that is perfect, I got it. I had to buy a modem, because I have a computer I can use, so I bought a modem, you know?* [Searching on the Internet for the article] *Here it is, the Mail and Guardian: 'Unpaid teachers for salaries'. People who write letters to Mr Ngonzo claiming the salaries, the Department did not pay the salaries but they just continue teaching without salaries, so I got this. There are a lot, even the poverty. Ja* [yes], *I've got everything—even the statement of the DoE, Angie Motsegha. Even the implications of the national language policy in South African classroom. That is my topic. Because* mine says[6]*'poor performance'…*here is the paper of that[7] (P10:13-21).

Through the use of technology, students became actively involved in their learning because they determined their own goals, chose learning sites, and discovered resources (Kukulska-Hulme, 2013). During coaching and scaffolding sessions, I explained the learning content and facilitated peer-tutoring during group work while the participants practised using their mobile phones for academic purposes. This hands-on support created expectations that the participants could master the new technology skills and profit from support via their mobile phones. Initially, participants experienced difficulties in registering on the FaceFunda group page. An IT expert facilitated the mastering of basic mobile phone skills. Eventually 22 teacher-students registered on FaceFunda for support. They were eager to learn about the proposed technology and they valued the experience. They had the expectation that collaboration via FaceFunda and attending coaching and scaffolding sessions would assist them to pass the module. FaceFunda provided the opportunity for participants to receive continuous support from the learning community:

> *Yes, I enjoy that session, now I' m starting my proposal. Before I attend the second session, I didn't know where to start—but now I'm writing 'the statement of the problem' little beat clear in my mind* (P17:636)

[5] unantsika
[6] eyam ithi
[7] nantsi iphepha lona

> *I was very happy with FaceFunda—I'm happy indeed! FaceFunda gave us life, we were empty* (P17:376)
>
> *I'm feeling happy. I thought that I would not get that BEd because of the research, but now, I'll get it* (P13:57)
>
> *The session was of good purpose, we worked hard but it was so interesting and made us eager to start the car with full energy* (P17:17).

The participants often referred to how *caring* for one another was important to them. People's uniqueness is strongly linked to their need to belong to a group where values, life-styles and other characteristics can be shared (Bloom, 1976). As the participants experienced that others could relate to their circumstances and understood their challenges, they felt less isolated. Communities of learning fostered cooperation while they assisted, supported and motivated one another in their professional development (Herrington, 2006). The participants who attended the coaching and scaffolding spontaneously formed a support community of learning when they realised that sharing similar ideals and comparable experiences could assist them while learning with technology.

During the coaching and scaffolding sessions, the participants discussed content issues, shared innovative ideas with another, suggested study approaches, shared feelings of anxiety and excitement, elaborated on one another's thoughts, and verbally reflected on their learning experiences. On the contrary, FaceFunda communications always related to short phrases and sentences and little in-depth discussion of the learning content. This interaction increased after the IT expert presented a technology workshop. Trusting relationships developed when the students became comfortable with their own positions within the support group (Arbaugh *et al.*, 2008). The teacher-students visited FaceFunda in order to view their peers' postings. They also "liked" the photographs taken at various sessions, as well as the notes the facilitator posted to the page. While the coaching and scaffolding sessions played an important role in the sharing of knowledge and ideas, FaceFunda acted as additional support after the technology issues of the participants were no longer an obstacle.

The participants were comfortable to engage with one another, to exchange ideas, to express their emotions, as well as to refer to one another, as well as the researcher by their first names (Garrison *et al.*, 2004). The group-cohesion resulted in them seeing themselves as real people who felt socially and emotionally connected (Arbaugh *et al.*, 2008). Among the participants a risk free, personalised space evolved where the participants developed new nicknames like "MaHobs[8], SisPosh[9] and TaAnt[10]". The researcher's nickname became Ronnie.

Socialization is promoted when participants develop trusting inter-personal relationships, and develop feelings of belonging wherein they can engage comfortably with one another(Arbaugh *et al.*, 2008;

[8] The participants nicknamed the oldest participant "MaHobs" as they looked up to her as their mother ("ma" in Afrikaans). To this abbreviation the first part of her surname was added.

[9] "SisPosh" was given to the participant who joined the support group in case she did not pass her RSPR 671 module. They nicknamed her *sister* with a shortened version of her name added to the prefix.

[10] "TaAnt" was the nickname given to the one male participant who attended most of the sessions, "Ta" means brother and then they added a few letters of his name to the prefix.

Garrison *et al.*, 2004). As part of social interaction, I congratulated the participants on their birthdays, and wished them well when they were in hospital. Other members in the group followed up on these examples and thereby shared their support and social commitment to the community. An active thread developed after a participant received her successful examination results. This was a turning point for many participants who had not participated before. They overcame their own self-consciousness and also posted messages of congratulations. Feelings of caring developed their confidence to use technology while learning:

> *I also had the feeling that this group created that sense of sharing and knowing other people. So it helped understanding other peoples' views and other people's problems. And also among those sharings—it made me to understand that people can share, and have some problems, and problems can be solved at the end of the day* (P13:54)
>
> *I liked the information sharing with each other because before I had a negative attitude with this research* (P13:175)
>
> *I feel so excited, when I meet with friends, the work is so easy* (P13:56)
>
> *I'll meet my group and they are going to help me pass* (P16:164)
>
> *I liked it because it created for me lots and lots of friends, with whom I can express myself* (P13:170)
>
> *Sharing of ideas and talking ideas. It is the most important thing I gained that day, because we shared a lot of things with my group. So I liked that sharing* (P13:68).

Participants, who frequently access the SNS, become involved in an enriched learning environment. There they interact with one another, their learning content and search for new resources. This could lead to success at higher levels (Chen & Bryer, 2012b). Initial feelings of uncertainty gradually dissipated when they developed a better *understanding* of their weaknesses and strengths of how to interact with the learning content. The more time the participants spent together, and the more they worked together, the deeper their understanding of the content developed.

Bosch (2009) conceives that, in spite of South Africa's multilingual status, English is used most frequently on Facebook. It thus seems that South Africans regard English as the obvious choice to use on Facebook irrespective of age or nationality. Although I used English during the coaching and scaffolding, I used some phrases in isiXhosa where appropriate. The participants experienced this as endearing as they could assimilate the theoretical aspects better because they understood better. They used their home language, isiXhosa, when they explained concepts to one another; mixing English terminology in-between in order to deepen their understanding while linking with the learning content. Although I invited the participants to write in isiXhosa on FaceFunda, no-one complied up to the very end when one participant asked another for her phone number in isiXhosa. No academic content discussion took place on FaceFunda in isiXhosa.

It seems that the academic use of Facebook assisted the participants with their affective learning. Using their home language during the coaching and scaffolding assisted the participants in understanding the learning content better. At the Cathcart coaching and scaffolding session (Table 2.2), after engaging with their own research proposals, the participants made the following statements about their increased understanding of the learning content:

> Hey friends, do you hear now?[11] *hmm, heya, awe* [confirming sounds] We understand now![12] *It is clear now!* (P9:149-151)
>
> Researcher: *You must focus on pragmatic, qualitative case study, qualitative open-ended questions. Don't allow the confusion to be in the head.* We don't want it inside, confusion must be outside[13]. *Ok, now we go on to 6.2 is Sample* (P9:139).

Initially the participants relied on the facilitator and the IT expert. As their confidence increased, they became more independent and became willing and skilled to assist one another (Tufte & Thomas, 2009). Some spontaneously assumed the role of leaders in the support group. They became mentors and other participants grouped around them to discuss the learning content. Working together helped the participants to experience how others engaged with the learning content. They subsequently copied these strategies and became prepared to learn new skills, change old habits, incorporate technology, and practise the new skills during their learning experience. Sharing leadership in fostering *understanding* contributed towards participants' competencies:

> *Before we could not understand how to go deep, now it has changed. We can go deep now, now we know that this and this and this is caught up in that thing* (P10:41)
>
> *We've got this manual-book, but we never know how to use it, how to start with it, but after we got sessions, I even went to this book. I am interested in opening my book because I even loose the interest with this thing…I didn't understand what is all this in the book!* (P10:10)
>
> *I'm having the barrier of time management. I can see that now. It is improving a little bit* [silence] (P13:129)
>
> *I talk about the problem of not reading—that is a big barrier. Not to go to books and read, but when I get in here—that was the start of reading my books. I don't miss my books—every day I read my books. So it was a barrier to me reading—I didn't like that activity* (P13:123)
>
> *I was not organized before, but when I saw her books, with the labels in the book—I have to go and try to be organized* [all laughing happily, agreeing sounds] (P13:128)
>
> We are learning straight from the book now![14] We are learning the scope[15]. Now we can write![16] The module FOER has returned to us[17] We are not lost on the road. **I** know what to do now. We are not tight anymore. We are not closed up any more. [Agreeing sounds] *H..a..y..y..i..i…(P9:144-146).*

The facilitator of the focus group interview, who observed during the third coaching and scaffolding session (Table 2.2), commented on how understanding set in when concepts were explained in understandable terms. He even became interested to enrol for the BEd Hons module with NWU!:

> *I'm so interested. I mean, I remember doing the research at school* [referring to his University experience]*, it was little kind of challenging, and you always hear these difficult words, but with you it was kind of easier, meanwhile you are using the same words that they use but, you use them—then you explain them, then you tie nicely with the other work. You want to show us this is the big words in the research…*
> Researcher: *I don't want to impress, I want to teach* (P6:63-64).

[11] Hey abantu, uya mamela ngog?
[12] Siya quonda ngog!
[13] asifuni e-be ngaphakathi, confusion u-be phandle*!*
[14] Siyafunda straight encwadini!
[15] Siyafunda e-scope ngoku!
[16] Siya kwasubala!
[17] U-FOER u buyile! Hayi, siya bala ngoku, asi lahlekile endleleni ngokwam diaqonda! Asi qinile ngoku. Hayi, asivalanga. *H..a..y..y..i..i…*

Clarity set in when the learning task became clear in the minds of the participants. Coaching and scaffolding that support the constructivistic learning approach of Vygotsky, relate to Bruner's *spiral curriculum* theory (Theories of Learning in Educational Psychology, s.a.). This refers to the notion that basic ideas should be revisited continually during learning opportunities, building and elaborating to new levels of understanding and mastery. The building of knowledge should be contextually relevant, organised from *simple-to-complex, general-to-detailed* (Theories of Learning in Educational Psychology, s.a.). Initial knowledge develops into advanced knowledge in order to progress to higher levels of understanding. Learning content can be represented by using visual aids, by verbal explanations or with representative symbols. I therefore used the colourful posters showing how the BEd Hons proposal content would be demarcated in various weekly coaching and scaffolding sessions. Effective sequencing allowed the students to understand the format in which their proposals should be presented. Bruner's spiral curriculum is based on the understanding that students should master basic concepts before they would be able to grasp more "complex knowledge" (Constructivist Theory, 2013). I deliberately started coaching and scaffolding at a level where I thought the participants where, and took them along the path of discovering knowledge. The observer at the third coaching and scaffolding session (Table 2.2) made the following comments:

> *Then you move on and talking about the literature, you had it on the colourful papers, and you show them, even when you were showing them how to collect the literature review. This is, you take your file, this is my file, these things—to me that was great, because sometimes you get the literature review just think about getting there* [showing high on the mountain] *books and all that. But you show them, look, how to get information. And how to keep it together, so that it is your own project. And the other thing important, I noticed, when you said you make notes immediately. For the future, you are thinking what will happen at the end of the day, they are going to ask where did you get this, but you said to them, make sure, that the sources are named—then you know. That was to me, ok, this is going to help me up there* (P6:34)
>
> *You move up—the paper is easy, you get it, everyone knows the Daily Dispatch, the Rep, the Teacher, they know, it means you move up here, then get up, you climb you go to Jansen of the book, and where to look at the book, not just the book, look how relevant is it. How old is the book. To what's happening there. And then you move up—to me there was no interruption, it was just flowing because to taxi's, papers, books, up to the internet its getting up, up, we are climbing, climbing, climbing, it was just a matter of progression* (P6:36)
>
> *Step by step, you don't start at the most difficult things, you start where people are, then you go up. I think that is why you didn't lose them, and they didn't see it is so difficult: 'It's up there* [high mountain] *how will I manage if I don't even understand now?' They understand straight away. And they move, they move with you* (P6:38)
>
> *You put it in a simple, simple, simple level, you started nicely simple, and as you climb you know, you like bring the people with, you not up there saying 'Hey come, I'm over here!'* [showing I'm on top of the mountain waving to the others down below to come up]. '*You must find ways to get here'. No, you are together* (P6:40).

Information should be translated into students' frame of reference in order for them to contextualize the knowledge. Bruner's spiral curriculum involves the regular revisiting of basic concepts through rephrasing the learning content in order to allow students to understand it better (Theories of Learning in Educational Psychology, s.a.). Thereafter, students discover knowledge for themselves—a student-centred approach (Constructivist Theory, 2013). The observer remarked:

> *More and more relevant to real-life, because from where you started with the taxi, it's what we're using, the taxi. You are breaking the ice straight away, you're talking about this they know and the poster—the bus! You not talking something about the bus outside, no there*

> *was a bus here, you need to get in here—there is the picture to make the connection to what you were saying. So you didn't lose them for those moments, no there is the picture—you brought them with* (P6:30-32).

During the coaching and scaffolding sessions, I explained the module content from the point where they were at, aiming to reach a higher level of understanding. Peer tutoring in their home-language was imperative in clarifying the work in order to foster better understanding. I also posted theoretical content information to the FaceFunda website in order to enrich the participants' learning experience when they accessed the group page anywhere and anytime. When the participants developed understanding of the learning content, clarity set in and feelings of competency prevailed:

> *We are clear; we can even go to our books and say: 'I am starting now!'* (P10:109)

> *Hey, you see, we are inside now! We are all inside because we understand what to do! We are inside!* (P9:134)

Participant 1:	*Hey X!* [talking with amazement],
Researcher:	*Does it make sense?* [all laughing because new insights have been gained]
Participant 1:	*Hey, hey, hey! Yo, yo, yo! You have taken me out of the cocoon,* my sister*!*[18]. [All laughing happily because they understand what to do]
Participant 2:	*Yo yo yo!* (P9:47-50).

The code *gratitude* refers to feeling thankful; ready to show appreciation, and to return kindness. The participants who actively participated during coaching and scaffolding, and joined FaceFunda as well, shared their feelings of *gratitude*. After every coaching and scaffolding session, and especially during the focus group interview, the participants expressed their gratitude without inhibition. A participant mentioned that everyone was helpful and patient with her, and the other participants—even the IT expert! They indicated their appreciation:

> *What I like of this support group, is the patience of the people, they can share the information and with each other. Like Y with us, with FaceFunda. I like it. Ja* [Yes] (P13:73).

Herrington and Oliver (2000) introduced a situated learning framework which expounds the concept of students supporting one another and is also supported by facilitators. When the FaceFunda and coaching and scaffolding interaction complemented one another, dual enrichment took place and a virtual learning community came about (Jabr, 2011). Online technologies can foster situated learning if they are introduced innovatively, are user-friendly, and exist in an inviting environment. This will enable students to learn better. Facilitators' skills, experience and understanding of the learning content can benefit students who have the potential to learn, are receptive to learn and are appreciative for opportunities that are presented to them. Dual relationships are formed to benefit all. Facilitators who share experiences, offer suggestions, provide advice, offer a helping hand, and show students routes to interact with knowledge, assist students in their learning experience. This often takes place in informal settings (Hunter *et al.*, 1998) where participants and facilitators interact freely. The participants in this study verbalised their appreciation without reserve:

> *I felt that I am not alone; with this problem of this research. At least, I've met brothers and sisters whom I can ask assistance from. So I feel it was a great pleasure for me to be in this group* (P13:52)

[18] Sisi!

> *I'm also happy about joining this group. Before I was just…I was even thinking of dropping out, but when she came here and explain to us—I did see the way forward. I thank her very much* (P13:61)
>
> *I feel happy about the support group. Before I came, it was just like a dark cloud for me, and I wanted to drop out of this, telling myself that I must drop out—I must not study again. But now, now I'm excited; I'm going to get there. Thank you!* (P13:65)
>
> *So to meet these people it was so good to me because it boost my low self-esteem, it means a lot. Thank you* (P13:69)
>
> *I am so excited today! I am willing to help with my little knowledge to everyone who needs help* (P17:98).

The intertwining of coaching and scaffolding and Facebook interaction resulted in positive emotions while learning with technology. Each of the two components of the intertwined learning environments contributed towards the enhanced learning experience of the participants.

> *What I like with FaceFunda, we learnt so many things about technology. Secondly I think FaceFunda opens our minds* [other make agreeing sounds] *it was dark, I didn't know how to do, I didn't know how to prepare, I was just stuck. But today, I'm on a great track! I know what to do, I know, and it's a move! I was stressed, I was so stressed, so today I'm in the taxi now, you know, I'm a passenger and there is a driver which is X* [laughter] *you know, my mind is open. So thank you very much (P13:117).*

5.2.2 Emotions of feeling incompetent while learning with technology

Figure 5.2 illustrated the range of emotions that exist between feeling competent and incompetent while learning with technology. Six codes indicated feelings of incompetence: (i) uncertainty, (ii) inadequacy, (iii) confusion, (iv) indifference, (v) anxiety, and (vi) apprehension. These six codes form the next section of discussion.

During the project, some participants suffered emotions that caused them to feel incompetent while learning. These feelings of incompetency could have changed into feelings of competency because the participants had the option of attending the coaching and scaffolding sessions and joining the online support group on FaceFunda. However, every participant had a choice as to how much effort they wanted to put into their own learning task.

Past achievement is a barometer with which students enter new learning experiences. Such experiences forward memories of previous underachievement or successes. These experiences influence affective emotions. Adult students, like in this study, often have learning experiences as "entry characteristics" (Bloom, 1976) which they bring into the learning environment. They established affective entry characteristics based on past experiences from a variety of learning environments and include failing modules, dropping out of other courses, the inability to use their cellular phones optimally, as well as not understanding the learning content in tutorial manuals. Perceptions of feeling unable to perform certain tasks, create negative emotions which exhaust intellectual energy and capacity (Vail, 2013). Understimulated emotions cause boredom, which prevents sustained learning (Tooman, 2001). A

drained emotional state prevents students from remembering what was learnt, as well as from making new connections onto previous knowledge.

Some participants felt *uncertain* about their understanding of the learning content, as well as their inability to employ self-study competencies to foster understanding of the learning content. The participants were learning in a second language (English), and they found integrating content specific terminology challenging. The coaching and scaffolding sessions and participation on FaceFunda provided opportunities for participants to develop skills to express themselves in terms of academic concepts in their home language or language of choice (Kruger, 2012). Non-participation prevented the participants to overcome this barrier. They felt unsure of themselves and how to apply the knowledge:

> *Hmm…currently I have a problem with the research* (P7:8)
>
> *Doing this proposal, should we concentrate on these questions?* (P2:25)
>
> *How many pages for the proposal?* (P2:29)
>
> *Is it compulsory to type the proposal?* (P2:53)
>
> *Must we explain quantitative?* (P9:119)
>
> *Whatever information I get, I must write it down?* (P9:196).

Emotions of *inadequacy* left the participants feeling incompetent, which led to a sense of being unable to cope with the learning content required to complete the BEd Honours degree. Negative emotions drained the participants' intellectual energy and capacity. Despair, worry, sadness, shame and frustration could cause the participants to lose their ability to remember, reason or make links between different pieces of information (Vail, 2013). This negative spiral demotivated the participants and soon they felt inadequate to achieve success:

> *I don't know anything! Especially the proposal—nothing!* (P15:5)
>
> *I don't want to talk. I'm stuck, and so now I can't talk* (P13:139)
>
> *There are a lot of things I didn't know. It is the second time; I started in Xxx University, but because of circumstances, I didn't go through. So this is the second time that I'm trying. So to meet these people it was so good to me because it boost my low self-esteem, it means a lot* (P13:69)
>
> *I thought I was having a very heavy load on me, but now that I have joined this group, at least, I could feel that something was taken off me. And I'm just like* my dear friend[19] *Nomsa, this is my second time doing the Honours, I was doing it with Xxx University and when I came to this part of this research, I said: 'Ag man* [oh boy] *this is too much for me' and I dropped out* (P13:71).

When a person is confused, it causes *confusion* in the mind and it becomes difficult to understand what to do and how to do it. This disorder caused embarrassment and discomfort which hindered the participants to function optimally. Confusion resulted from feeling overwhelmed with the learning content at the beginning of the module BEd Hons, inability to read and engage with the learning content, and to attend the contact sessions at the contact centres. Coaching and scaffolding enable facilitators to assist students to heighten their understanding of the learning content (Nagel & Verster, 2012; Puntambekar, 2013). The combination of support, explanations and technology have the potential to

[19] *u-sis*

enhance learning environments (Rambe, 2012). Participants who attended the coaching and scaffolding sessions, and participated on FaceFunda gained from the support. However, many teacher-students did not participate. The following comments related to participants who signed consent forms, but only attended one coaching and scaffolding session. They also did not fully gain from the experience. I interviewed them individually a week after the focus group interview (§4.6.1):

> *Ja*, *because the modules, I didn't read them thoroughly* (P15:19)
>
> *So I'm stuck, but I had a problem—I didn't have enough time to look at my books* (P13:143)
>
> *Last night I was trying to combine my ideas* [embarrassed, loud laugh]*…but I don't know anything! I'm blank!* [laughter]. *Really ma'am, I'm BLANK! I've got my neighbour, she's doing Management and I'm doing Curriculum, but we are both blank!* [She laughs nervously and loudly] *We don't know what to do! We don't know really! We don't know!* (P15:15).

However, the participants who mastered the technology and participated in the coaching and scaffolding enhanced their learning experience:

> Participant 1: *Do you see now?*[20] *We were a stationary vehicle.*[21]*. It is a car that cannot go, and no petrol, now you are throwing petrol into the taxi and you are the driver*[22] [agreeing sounds, laughter]
>
> Participant 2: *It is a good example* [laughing] *we are just a car without wheels, no petrol, no driver—the people are just there* [all laughing]
>
> Participant1: *We were just an empty vessel—exactly, put it that way!*
>
> Participant 2: *Now, now we've got information* (P10:124-139).

Adult education is mainly concerned with helping people to *live more successfully*, and not merely to prepare them for life (Robinson, 2013). Adult learners need assistance to experience fulfillment in their lives by addressing personal and community issues (NWU, 2013). Participating in online learning communities can enhance students' learning experiences (Garrison *et al*., 2004). A research participant who was *indifferent* at the onset of the coaching and scaffolding intervention remained uninvolved. Although he had the opportunity to travel to Queenstown with me at no cost, he seemed disinterested and apathetic at the coaching and scaffolding session which he attended. He signed the consent form, but never again participated in the coaching and scaffolding opportunities. He also did not arrive for an appointment with someone who was willing to assist him with his cellular phone. His indifference resulted in missing out on facilitator and peer support opportunities. The IT expert assisted him in joining the FaceFunda group where-after he regularly visited the website and "liked" contributions. Although he never wrote any comments of his own, access to FaceFunda moved his indifference to participation.

> Researcher: *Do you want to be part of our project—of my research?*
> Participant*:* *Yes, yes, no, I don't have a problem*
> Researcher*:* *Ok, 'cause I see you have signed the consent form*
> Participant*:* *Yes, yes, I have signed it, yes*
> Researcher*:* *Thank you for that. Now, to get Facebook on your cellular phone, is that a problem?*

[20] Uyabona ke ngoku

[21] Sibe i-moto emileyo

[22] Engena mavili, ai hambi, immile le moto.

Participant: *No, I don't have a problem, but I had an arrangement with this girl from Miss Xxx, but I was unable to go to her on the arranged time. But I don't have a problem*
Researcher: *All right, now can't the two of us go to the Geek* [the IT expert] *this afternoon and then he helps with your cellular phone?*
Participant: *Oh, no, I don't have…[points to his phone]*
Researcher: *Internet?*
Participant: *Yes. No, no, we can…[gestures with his hand that we can drive]*
Researcher: *Can I come and fetch you here?*
Participant: *At what time?*
Researcher: *Can I fetch you just after 2 o'clock?*
Participant: *Ok, no problem, I'll wait for you*
Researcher: *Then we go down with your cellular phone and he helps us to invite you so you can get onto that FaceFunda*
Participant: *Ok. After 2?*
Researcher: *After 2*
Participant: *You come maybe quarter past two?*
Researcher: *Yes*
Participant: *I'll be free (P7:48-87)*
Researcher: *And you don't mind that it is going to cost you a little bit of money to go onto Facebook?*
Participant: *I don't have a problem, because my cell phone is a contract cell phone (P7:112-113*)
Participant: *Thanks Ma'am, thanks Ma'am!* (P7:121).

Anxiety causes many students to not achieve their best as it hinders them to remember (Vail, 2013). In this study, fear led to nervousness and consequently resulted in anxiety that restrained the participants from functioning competently. The participants' uneasiness made them feel apprehensive about their work. Actions and behaviours show the attitudes to which they contribute, because an attitude in itself is not observable, but actions are (Miller, 2012). The participants who did not attend more than one session, or participate on FaceFunda, experienced anxiety when they realised that they were unsure of how to succeed with their proposals. Emotional awareness creates feelings and attitudes (Picard *et al.*, 2004). When people become aware of negative emotions, they take personal responsibility for their emotions and act according to them (Arbaugh *et al.*, 2008).

Self-esteem filters and controls a person's emotions (Wlodkowski, 1999). Learning improves when students with high self-esteem experience low levels of anxiety (Esterhuizen *et al.*, 2012). Some participants acknowledged that the opportunity for support had passed them by. This left them feeling anxious:

> *But it's just that I'm worried that I didn't attend the previous classes* (P14:84)
>
> *I'm so worried about those two weeks when I did not get hold of the group…* (P10:163)
>
> *The reason of course*[23] *is that I want to do this. I am studying and I want to do this proposal, I just want to get the information to go forward with this proposal. So I was stuck!* (P10:10)
>
> *I think that it is a problem, even to other students—the problem of when you read many books—the literature study, ja*? *Yes, yes, it is a challenge because the libraries around here do not have enough material* (P4:45)

Apprehension is experienced in anticipation of danger lurking in the future (Dictionary.com, 2013), usually accompanied by the desire to fight or flee because understanding of concern-

[23] kaloku

ing aspects are absent. Apprehension could lead to fear of misfortune or future trouble (Dictionary.com, 2013). These participants felt afraid about not understanding their learning content and not knowing how to write the proposal. Participants experience frustration, despair or worry when they face fear, and this triggers the inability to access their inner strength, and fear can cause them to perform poorly in given tasks (Vail, 2013). When a person is scared, new information is not learnt well. The participants experienced apprehensive emotions at the onset of the coaching and scaffolding sessions, but those who persevered and pushed through the barriers conquered their fears. But there were some participants who could not do this, and were afraid that they would be unsuccessful in the module:

> *The work is so hard for me and I'm scared, so tense* (P13:56)

> Participant: *No it's going to the strategies of research…*
> Researcher: *Is that the main thing that you are scared of?*
> Participant: *Ja, ja, that section of literature review cause it's the major content of the research* (P7:88-90).

Positive learning emotions can be created through the formation of communities of learning (§ 3.2.3.2), whereby participants are supported through the use of technology which places them in continuous contact with one another (Herrington, 2006). However, when students do not make an effort to attend the coaching and scaffolding sessions, they remove themselves from support. Distance education institutions face various challenges, because they are required to attend to the basic academic needs of students geographically dispersed—removed from facilitators and peers who are the conduits for information and support (Makoe, 2010). Some participants persevered and joined the FaceFunda group and attended the coaching and scaffolding sessions, conquered their fears; thereby changing their inadequacies into adequacies:

> *This research thing—it's a monster! Everybody is afraid of this module! At least, by coming here last time, I could at least see something—that the grey was little bit getting lighter* (P4:8-10)

> *To attack this thing, this research! Those steps in the group made me clear how to tackle the different steps in doing the research* (P13:77).

A major obstacle in distance education is that students experience isolation because they feel that "distance education is dark and lonely" (Cronje & Clarke, 1999). Sometimes isolation is caused by physical distance from peers, but in many cases it relates to choices students make:

> Researcher: *Have you got a colleague at school that is also doing the Honours?*
> Participant: *No, I'm the only one* (P4:48)

> *This group is my support group, but I didn't fit in because I didn't attend here* (P16:95)

> [From the researcher's reflective diary]: *She laughs because she describes her situation as being 'totally blank'! I wonder if she will actually contact some of the other participants to help her* (P18:205).

This research focused on the emotions which affected participants while learning with technology. The analysis of the integrated dataset indicated that the coaching and scaffolding sessions played a large role in the participants' adoption of FaceFunda as learning support The IT expert observed the

positive side of the blended learning situation which assisted the affective learning emotions of the participants, which all worked together to soften the frustration-levels:

> *What I saw yesterday, them breaking up into groups with one that knows a little bit more and being willing to help each other. Just spending time with each other. Yes, if it's not that, then FaceFunda would not be effective. They actually need that group inter-action. Not just on-line, but in the off-line environment too* (P12:55-65).

5.3 Experiences with technology

A vast number of words are available to describe human emotions. I chose the most relevant wording for codes (Table 4.3) to describe the units of meaning I identified in my integrated Atlas.ti™ data set. I categorized the related codes as *technophilia* (enabling or positive emotions while engaging with technology) and *technophobia (*disenabling or fearful emotions while engaging with technology) to the pattern of *experiences with technology*.

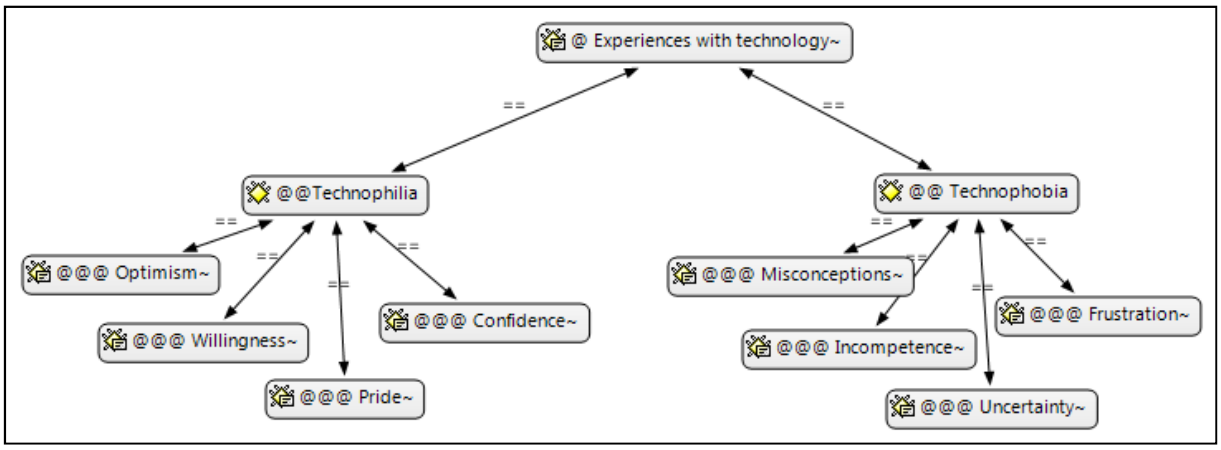


Figure 5.3: Coding structure of participants' emotional experiences with technology

Figure 5.1 indicates *experiences with technology* as the second pattern of findings and Figure 5.3 lists the eight codes relating to this theme. During their experiences with learning through ODL, students' emotions manifested between the two opposite continuums; varying between feelings of competence (technophilia) and incompetence (technophobia) while engaging with technology.

The challenges in the use of technology in rural areas are very real. The participants participating in this research, presented limited technological skills. An IT expert assisted them on how to access the Internet through their cellular phones and register on Facebook. His observations on the participants' understanding of cellular technology provided insight into their technological barriers:

> *The group of people we're dealing with here, hmmm…when the basics like this is not basic, hmm…then they fall around. And I think a lot of them are restraining themselves because they're not sure…So they rather not do something which is not right. Hmmm…we can see one of them, for example, on a comment, commented 5 times over the same thing. But at least they are*...[searching for correct words to describe the participants] *participating, but the skill is still lacking, definitely!* (P12:34-42)

> *Facebook is a complete strange application for them to work with, and then to navigate and find their way within the Facebook pages on their cell phones, hmmm…being different from cell phone to cell phone, hmmm…But we managed to get there; most of them are now on Facebook. But now within Facebook…how do you access FaceFunda…? Where do you find it to go in to hmmm…That was the challenges* (P12:4-12)
>
> *There is only a few of them that are communicating. When we started addressing the terminology like 'comment' and the 'post'—you could actually see them realising: 'ok that's what we've missed!' It's comment, rather than reply…And also for them to start a thread or a message…is to put a post at the top on Facebook* (P12:14-22)
>
> *Experimentation from their side as well, they need to participate. Not only in the comments but in the polls as well…*(P12:26-28).

5.3.1 Technophilia

Four codes related to the theme of technophilia: (i) optimism, (ii) willingness, (iii) pride, and (iv) confidence.

The meaning of the word *technophilia* is based on the noun technophile, which means being a lover of new technology (Encarta, 2013). The effect of *technophilia* is that "teacher-students experience…a strong enthusiasm for advanced technology" (Esterhuizen *et al*., 2012).

The IT expert was fascinated with the participants' willingness to learn. Their "awareness to receive, willingness to hear and selected attention" (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) towards the new learning experience was commendable:

> *They are over eager! They're really excited and eager to get their connectivity problems sorted so that they can be part of the technology (P5:55)*
>
> *But the willingness for me stands out! (P5:62-63)*
>
> *Here with FaceFunda, it's like now they've got the opportunity and the ability to benefit out of the technology that they're sitting in their hands with. And that has motivated them to want to work it. That's the excitement that I'm seeing, because that's what they want to do! (P5:69-70)*
>
> *They are very eager to continue and make this actually work for them…This is what it was about; it's a resource that will help them. If only they get to the point where they are comfortable using that resource…After yesterday, you could definitely see progress been made with the people that we had there, they realized where and how they need to do it. That is so exiting!* (P12:48-54).

The participants who attended the coaching and scaffolding sessions and joined the FaceFunda goup page were *optimistic* about the learning intervention. They began to understand the affordances of technology and how it could assist them during their learning, as well as in real-life situations (Chen & Bryer, 2012b) Distance learning can be an adventure, because of its self-reflective and autonomous characteristics where students determine their own pace, where they study privately and combine their learning with other activities (Kukulska-Hulme, 2013). When students accept the challenges of learning in a new way, it could become an exciting journey:

> *It helped us a lot as* my sister[24] *Nomsa has said, you know? I never thought in my life I have to buy e-laptop, I always tell them at school 'I am tired of this bag all the time* [referring to the laptop in a bag]*, you will not going to cope with it'. But now that I've learnt a lot with e-technology, I said to the teacher there, u-Mister M., 'It's high time that I have to buy e-laptop for myself be-*

[24] sis

> *cause the things that I'm doing, especially this research, it demands a lot with technology'. He said: 'Not you Mpa!' I said: 'It's me now!'* [all laughing happily]. *It is the time. There comes a time!* [others making agreeing sounds] (P13:147-148).

I custom made the FaceFunda group page to support the participants during their learning experience, as well as to capture the extent of their emotions while learning with technology. Due to the novelty of the intervention, I was the only one regularly posting information to the group page. The participants were not yet ready to let go of instructivist traditions (§1.2) where the students were passive recipients of knowledge. They still needed someone else to guide them through all the phases of their work, instead of reading their tutorials and interpreting it for themselves:

> Participant 1*:* *What stands with this Proposal, we had a problem with a proposal. I for one, didn't even know what is a proposal. First of all and how to do the proposal? By the time we were doing the research of*[25] *FOER, we were just studying right through the book… hmmm [agreeing sounds]*
> Researcher: *It was just?*
> Participant 2*:* *Now it comes to proposal, I never knew I have to do something that will be done in future, do you understand*[26]*? So to me, by coming to your classes it opened my...my…*
> Researcher*:* *understanding?*
> Participant 2: *my understanding, you see*[27] (P10:98-99)
>
> *I don't think RSPR 671 is the research, I thought that FOER is the research. Because I told Xxx I am going to Grad in July because I passed FOER, and she said: 'No, there is a thing like a research that is going to do' and other work* [all laughing kindly about her misunderstanding]. *So here I learn of it, thanks* (P13:75).

The participants' optimism became evident: "I'm trying…that's what I like…FaceFunda is fruitful. FaceFunda is fruitful and helpful" (mentioned twice). This indicates that they gained from the experience and they shared their excitement:

> *I'm trying to fit into the new situation and I understand that everything is advancing and therefore by advancing with things, I should get along with today's learner. Even technological—I want to understand technology more and more and more because everything now is computer based* (P4:83)
>
> *What I like with FaceFunda, we learnt so many things about technology, about computers and how to Google, because some of us did not know to go to Google, Google search, Google Scholar, that's what we know now from X. So that's what I like* (P13:117)
>
> *It's not just talking news, just passing news for someone to know—it gave me an understanding that Facebook is not for certain kind of people, it is meant for everyone—whether it is peer, or grown up or what age you are, you can fit into Facebook if you used it* (P13:118)
>
> *FaceFunda is fruitful for us because FaceFunda is near to us to help us a lot* (P13:119)
>
> *If you come across a question that you can't understand properly, you can send a message and then each and every member of the group can assist you, you are not focussing on one person only, but you are focussing on a group at large. Then you can have the assistant this side and that side. So that's why I see that it is so fruitful and helpful too, so it is sort of networking* (P16:99).

Affective learning experiences become evident on SNSs where students and facilitators interact with one another and learning content (De Villiers, 2010). Some participants discovered that Facebook is valuable for educational purposes in order to experience learning in exciting new ways (Kennan,

[25] ka
[26] u ya quonda?
[27] uyabona?

2009). It was vital that participants could use their technological devices as "tools to negotiate and inhabit online networks" (Kennan, 2009):

> *It opened my understanding, you see*[28]*? From the first day when we were with you, you talked about with us and you taught us e-*technological things[29]*, né? We were not on Facebook, for instance, we don't know how to open even u-Facebook. But now we are all eager and* [agreeing sounds] *I had a negative attitude of Facebook because we thought that the information is the information that these people are writing—these negative things…not knowing that there is a secret place here were we can get in as a group on which we are studying and pour out our knowledge so that we can help each other* [agreeing sounds] (P10:102-108).

During the 21st century, society and information technology are mutually dependent (Petrović *et al.*, 2012). Although technology affects the lives of millions of students of all ages (Chen & Bryer, 2012b; Petrović *et al.*, 2012; Vota, 2010), it also presents new challenges and opportunities to the learning environment (Batchelor, 2011; Botha *et al.*, 2009). The opportunities are diverse and add to life-skills such as higher order thinking skills (Muhuro, 2008). Furthermore, with technology, any situation can be used as a "teachable moment and opportunity to build community and encourage the sharing of resources" (Maguth, 2013).

The participants' *willingness* became evident through their eagerness, cheerfulness and voluntarily participation in the support-group. They were willing to learn and conquer technological barriers. They realised coaching and scaffolding would support them to accomplish the learning task. It was inspiring to see how they assisted one another. Two ladies who attended most of the coaching and scaffolding sessions, became familiar with and eloquent about the learning content and gladly explained the intricacies to other participants. Theories of Learning in Educational Psychology (s.a.) reminds us that it is vital to implement teaching and learning strategies concerned with experiences and contexts to enable learning. Students should be ready to accept new challenges in South Africa, we have to "create a vibrant developmentally-orientated movement [of] intellectuals striving for academic excellence" (Mukundi, 2009, p. 60). The positive feelings of participants' willingness were expressed as "…we want to…we will get into it…I will try…we are all eager…made me curious…want to know what's new…very interested…" Towards the end of the intervention, some of the participants were confident: "…I'm young for technology…clever with technology…it helped us…" Also:

> *We want to, but I'm sure we are not clear about the technology thing, but if X can help us, we will get into it. And she must tell me how must I respond because I can retrieve the message and read it but I am unable to write and send it back* (P2:34)
>
> *I am still having a problem with the Facebook, but I'm trying. I promise I will try, I will try!* (P13:63)
>
> *It made me very curious because I was curious to know what is* whoever[30] *saying. What are the news today in ports of FaceFunda? So I'm not a technician person, and e-phone I just take it when it is ringing, but now that I'm in the FaceFunda, my phone is always in my hand or in my pocket, I just want to know: What's new now? You know? It made me very curious and clever with technology* [agreeing sounds from others]. *Because I really, I did have Facebook before but...Just because people say Facebook, Facebook, so I thought, ok, put my phone to it. I ignored it after that but now that I started again with FaceFunda, I was very interested to continue with my Facebook and FaceFunda and everything!* (P13:116)

[28] uyabona
[29] izinto
[30] ngubani

> *But you know it makes me to be eager to know more about i-fiddeling, I do have e-computer in the house ne? but you know, when I was buying that computer, I said: 'I am buying it for my kids, so that they can do their assignment and what'. I never went there* me myself[31], *but now that I was with this group, they were so shocked seeing me in front on the computer* [all laughing] *I'm serious! Asking them, Xxxx, come and open this, 'what are you going to do'?* [all laughing]. *I said: 'I just want to search something here'. 'Let me help you*, my mother'[32]. *I said: 'No, don't help me, just teach me how to open it, and then I will call you when I'm stucked'. You know, I really thought of these are just for the youth man,* [agreeing sounds], *it's not for us, I'm old for this, I'm old for this! But now I'm telling myself: 'I'm young for technology now.'* [Yes, yes and agreeing sounds] (P13:152).

The oldest female participant was the most technologically advanced as she had attended a one-year course in computers. She took the lead and was soon the one who explained and demonstrated how to operate the cellular phone and laptop. She expressed her feelings of confidence and pride in her skills. She also voiced her disapproval of the low skill levels of her peers and reprimanded them at the focus group interview. She pointed out their inadequacies and encouraged them to acquire new skills to enable them to assist their peers in due time. She believed that technology made contact between people easier:

> *What I don't like, is the problem of this phone. We don't know exactly how to use this Face-Funda,* do you see[33] *? So that is what I don't like, because with this we don't contact each other but this is the best thing to contact each other. And to know this* [showing to the phone]. *That's what I still don't like. Let's try girls, to do something,* or else[34] *to meet. We must have a session to master this. So that after she* [referring to the researcher] *is gone, we can meet or contact each other by using FaceFunda. Not by sms but by using FaceFunda* [agreeing sounds]. *That is the problem. If we know how to use that FaceFunda, we know how to share. Because you ask a question you don't know, and I know that question, I will…I will answer that question for you. I will try to help you,* do you see?[35] (P13:88)
>
> You must do it[36] *every now and then to check your e-mail, it's your duty! It is your duty to check FaceFunda—what's going on? You must be curious for FaceFunda. I think so* [agreeing sounds] (P13:92).

The participants experienced the disadvantage of not being technologically skilled. However, many were willing to learn and conquer personal barriers. As they increased their skill and understanding, feelings of honour, self-respect, and a sense of personal worth set in. This led to feelings of being *proud* of themselves: "For a student to learn a learning task well, he should have openness to the new task, some desire to learn it and learn it well, and sufficient confidence in himself to put forth the necessary energy and resources to overcome difficulties and obstacles in the learning, if and when they occur" (Bloom, 1976, p. 74). The following utterances occurred relating to feelings of pride, enthusiasm, and joy:

> *Yes, I am on FaceFunda, so I check even your comments and whatever, even if you are accepting some new ones and congratulating some birthdays, and everything. So I see them!* (P16:91)
>
> Participant 1: *I can do typing, and I can also get what actual…I can do that to fetch in Google*
> Researcher: *So that is all you learnt yourself?*

[31] mna
[32] ma'mam
[33] uybona?
[34] Okanye
[35] Uyabona?
[36] Wena kufuneka

Participant 1: *Yes, yes, I learnt it! You know, I did a little bit of computers when I was studying at Xxx University, yes, I did there—specializing in Maths and Science, yes, my BEd* (P4:70-72)

[During the focus group interview, a participant had the following opinion]:
Participant 1*: Being on FaceFunda—it was very much exciting for me to interact with a white lady* [all laughing loudly]
Participant 2: *Hey Abe, what are you saying![37] Aaa… Oh my dear God![38]*
Participant 1*: It's true, it's true![39] because on our phones—she is the only white person on my phone and that is exciting! FaceFunda has changed my attitude* (P13:118)

The video that you've sent—I could see it! (P10:276)

Researcher: *Is FaceFunda a nice place, do you enjoy going to look at it, or is it a waste of time?*
Participant: *I enjoy it, I enjoy it! Enjoyable! You know, you laugh* [all laughing]. *You are laughing![40] Sometimes I just open and see and look at the pictures!* (P10:180-181).

The participants came to the intervention with little technological skills and facilitators should ensure that the diversity of skills is addressed. In so doing, participants develop a sense of *confidence* (De Villiers, 2010). Confident participants want to extend their learning experiences to other areas of coursework. Although FaceFunda was designed to coach students and scaffold their learning relating to a research proposal assignment, it provided opportunities for own reflection, review of others' participation, served as a repository of information, and provided a space for discussions (Nagel & Verster, 2012), but I only experienced the beginnings of these interactions during my research. Probably the two most important limiting factors were the short time-span in which the intervention was scheduled for, as well as absence of base line technology skills of the participants. During the initial phases, I had doubts whether the participants would master the technology, but I was wrong. They were willing to learn and they persevered. As the intervention continued, their skills and confidence developed and more participants joined FaceFunda. However, real meaningful academic discussion did not take place on FaceFunda.

I relied heavily on the IT expert to accommodate the eager participants to join the FaceFunda group. After a very slow start of only one participant after the first coaching and scaffolding session (Figure 2.6), the group comprised 24 (including myself and the IT expert) at the end of the intervention. All but one of the participants' cellular phones were able to connect to the Internet and most had sufficient airtime. When someone did not have enough airtime, they would send a message to a friend and receive airtime. This seemed a common practice to upload airtime. The assistance of the IT expert (Table 2.2) enabled me to focus on scaffolding and coaching of the learning content during sessions. The *confidence* of the participants developed as they engaged with the learning content. These emotions confirmed that affective learning was taking place. During the focus group interview, the participants said the following, showing their confidence:

I was very happy with FaceFunda—I'm happy indeed! FaceFunda gave us life, we were empty (P17:376)

[37] uthini?!
[38] Nkosi yam!
[39] Injalo, injalo!
[40] Uyahleka!

> *It assisted us a lot because we know how to open the computer, go to Google Search and get information there. We know how to—some of us—know how to Google using the cell phone, so at least, we are grateful for that* (P13:146)
>
> *You know, I really thought of these* [showing to the cellular phone] *that are just for the youth* [agreeing sounds]. *It's not for us, I'm old for this, I'm old for this, but now I'm telling myself: 'I'm young for technology now!'* [agreeing sounds] (P13:152).

5.3.2 Technophobia

Four codes emerged while experiencing technophobia: (i) misconceptions, (ii) incompetence, (iii) uncertainty, and (iv) frustration (Figure 5.3).

Technophobia describes the participants' "suffering from an irrational fear or dislike for advanced technology" (Esterhuizen *et al.*, 2012). It was important to uncover technophobia that the participants suffered which would cause barriers to their learning (Batchelor, 2011). The socio-cultural and contextual background of students influences their learning experiences—especially in the case of rural students where technology comes into the equation (Botha *et al.*, 2009). Disadvantaged students who have had limited exposure to technology, do not have the self-confidence to use it spontaneously, or ask questions about it, nor do they have the vocabulary to express themselves in academic terminology. They also do not fully understand the impact technology has on learning as their experience often only relates to a few websites in a social context (Rambe, 2012).

After the second coaching and scaffolding session I realised that I needed expert help with the technological issues the participants faced. The only Internet-enabled device that the majority of participants owned was a cellular phone. Compared to computers, it is more difficult to search and read information than on a larger screen. However, the "small device, added in the midst of a learning activity, can become a catalyst for change" (Kukulska-Hulme, 2013). Facebook was also new to them. FaceFunda was also their first introduction to academic use of Facebook. The participants lacked the confidence to write on pages to participate in discussions. It was hard for them to access the page and help was seldom around to assist them.

Many of the participants had a mistaken view of Facebook, which caused *misconceptions* about the academic use of it. Due to their age, many were not keen to join Facebook as they were of the opinion it was meant only for the youth and for gossiping. De Villiers (2010) found that her participants viewed Facebook as a social tool for the youth and that the older generation were not so comfortable using technology as a social interaction tool. She indicated that older participants, who had never used Facebook before, found it difficult and unnatural to participate on the social website. These flawed ideas caused them to be sceptical about Facebook, but those who persevered realised that the academic use of Facebook could be valuable: "…I always thought…I thought…we thought…I took it wrongly…" They changed their opinions: "…now it changed my attitude…can improve myself…"

The children of some of the participants made fun of them as their parents were learning something which they already knew. Such a reversal of role is not easily acceptable in the isiXhosa culture:

> *I always thought Facebook was something for kids, for teenagers, so we are trying to speak some news and you are skindering [gossiping] yes…Now it changed the attitude that I can use Facebook for something that can be most advantageous to ourselves. That can improve myself on another field* (P13:118)
>
> *I thought this Facebook thing, it was only the children's toys to play with, but now we are working on it ourselves*[41] *[roaring laughter]. My children say: 'why is Daddy so quiet and staring at the cell phone in your hand?*[42] *[roaring laughter] (P9:212).*

Again referring to Cronje and Clarke (1999)'s statement that distance education is "dark and lonely," we can infer that students face many challenges during their ODL experience. They have to read the tutorial content (which, for an English second language speaker could be taxing), and they must resolve administrative issues across the distance. These uncertainties caused the participants to not use their cellular phones optimally: "…new to electronic…what am I going to do?...not very much familiar…I don't know…I know nothing of that…" Also:

> *And also, most of us we are new to electronic, that is to Internet* (P4:45)
>
> *And even, if you have an access to Internet, you post the page—then what am I going to do? The page is strange, we are not very much familiar…*(P4:47)
>
> *No, I don't know, maybe it's my son who's doing this, the only thing I do here is to phone or write the SMS. That's it* (P6:56)
>
> *I'm sure we are not clear about the technology thing* (P2:34)
>
> *I asked my son, it was done by my son. I know nothing of that* (P9:100).

Technical difficulties prevent students from gaining benefit from the use of technology (Lárusson *et al.*, 2008). The participants' *incompetence* came between help and information available at their fingertips. It had to be their decision to conquer the barriers and move into a world of information and support which could change their situation. Most of the time, it was tedious to keep FaceFunda active because of no communication, "like" clicks, or anybody reading the posts. However, I posted daily in order to encourage the participants to respond. The intensity of engagement should increase when technology challenges a student, but it should not become overwhelming. Students affectively construct engagement to explore the knowledge and then discuss it with their peers: "The way they feel about the knowledge profoundly influences what they will do with it and especially how they reflect on it, which in turn influence[s] how it grows and connects" (Picard *et al.*, 2004). However, the participants suffered incompetence and feelings of uncertainty:

> *Oh! It goes straight there! I didn't know this skill…* (P10:83)
>
> Do you see?[43] *I didn't put my picture, I don't know how to put it on* (P10:182)
>
> *What I do not like, I don't know if it is a technological problem or it's a group problem, my phone does not notice me when there is a message from FaceFunda. I have to go to Facebook, and then find out there was a message from X that was sent ten hours ago* (P13:90).

The participants received emotional affirmation from their children in order to become competent with their devices:

[41] Bendicinga lento ka-Facebook, yinto yabamtwana yodlala kodwa ngoku siyisebenza ngokwethu!
[42] Abantwana bam bathi: kutheni utata ethule kwaye ejonge umakhalekhukwini esandleni?
[43] Uyabona?

> *Yes I have computer—my daughters have laptops, so I think they can help me with that* (P14:62)
>
> *It was the first time I was studying this Facebook. The only person who knows this is my daughter and even now, my daughter is asking me some questions: 'Why mamma, are you not replying?' So I am still having a problem with the Facebook, but I'm trying* (P13:63).

Again, it was the eldest participant who reprimanded the younger ones as she was frustrated with their insufficient skills:

> *How are we going to know the computer?, because some of them are not computer-literate. That's my question. As we are here now, so how are we going to tackle this problem of a…computer? of…technology? How are we going to overcome that problem? Because a...o-Push is having a problem,* this one, and this one has a problem[44]. *I have a feeling that those who can help, must help. We must do something because X will not always come from Cathcart for this,* do you see?[45] *I am computer literate, I learnt computer at X-College for a year, so I think if there is one that need that support, I will take that chance to assist you* (P13:154).

Frustration manifests as a deep dissatisfaction arising from unresolved problems or unfulfilled needs of students and facilitators alike. Facilitators experience difficulties to foster cognitive presence to develop which again brings about frustration and anxiety. *Instruction* cannot prescribe when participants reach the point at which they "produce answers" (Arbaugh *et al.*, 2008). Therefore*, coaching and scaffolding* through patient probing are required (Arbaugh *et al.*, 2008), especially when course material is delivered via blended learning and students are not e-ready—which was the case in this current study.

Early during the research I realised that the technological barriers were bigger than my assistant could handle (Table 2.2). I needed a technology expert to assist the participants to join FaceFunda. The participants were (i) positive and willing to break through the technological barriers; (ii) willing to come to the coaching and scaffolding sessions; (iii) accepting assistance from the IT expert; (iv) struggling with the little screen to scroll left, right, up and down in order to read information and view the information and photos, and (v) accessing the FaceFunda page. They became frustrated when no help was around to guide them. In many cases, it became easier to give up than to keep trying. The IT expert commented the following during the first interview:

> *In the rural areas, they haven't got that knowledgeable person [IT expert] to turn to. But they can turn to a child to help them, to bridge the connectivity issue and get to the portal. If they haven't got someone to assist them, then there's definitely a barrier there. But being teachers it puts them right smack in the middle of a whole lot of kids. There's gonna be one that knows how to use cell phones—guaranteed! They're not tapping into a resource pool that could help them with their device (P5:65-83).*

The main causes for the participants' frustration related to (i) weak or no cellular phone reception in rural areas, (ii) inexperience with technological devices and (iii) not enough help around when needed:

> *I don't know what is maybe the problem, because I didn't receive anything inviting me to it. I don't know, maybe I have the shortfall with the technology* (P4:21)
>
> *There is no signal sometimes, in the rural areas you can't get us through cell phones* (P14:46)

[44] na lo, na lo unenqaki
[45] o ya bona

> *So my problem is that we don't do Facebook, it's for the child—I don't like it. My problem is here* [showing to the phone]. *I do not know how to go to the Internet* (P13:157).

The IT expert summarised a limitation of the study: "…project should actually have gone over a much longer time…anti-climax in closing…" Yet, the most exciting thought for me was the life changing experience the use of technology created in the lives of the participants. The characterisation that took place within some of the participants who internalised values by allowing technology to control their behaviour, shows that learning took place in the affective domain (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The IT expert's opinion included the following:

> *This project should actually have gone over a much longer time. By the end of the whole project we will see enthusiastic, willing, skilled people…It's a bit of an anti-climax after putting all this effort into it, that it's gonna close down!*
>
> *You know, they're just getting excited about it, but yet there are other resources almost similar to this in which they need to go and tap into. This actually guided them into that. It's very much a stepping stone. On a small scale, local basis, where it is not strange faces,—they had the opportunity to meet each other. Online, you don't have this when you're tapping into online support groups; it's just a name, never a person. Where with this, even the rural people, they still came because they wanted the face-to-face sessions, and they needed the explanations on how to use FaceFunda. And now they would be prepared to move forward and go into an on-line only support group for their studies now. So they have been enculturated* [should have been acculturated, meaning to change somebody's cultural behaviour and thinking through contact with another culture] *in the technology source that is available in their hands* (P12:66-85).

5.4 Need for support

Distance education students experience the need to belong to a group that can support them as well as teach them. Collaborative learning during social interaction is valued in the African culture as students dependent heavily on their teachers and their peers in the learning environment (Makoe, 2010). The formation of learning support groups can relieve anxiety and isolation which may be experienced during learning. Technological devices offer connections with people from all over the country. As more students gain access and use mobile devices outside the classroom, it becomes more apparent that these digital tools can be employed to learn immediately anywhere, whenever they are needed, and can also provide support by linking students with their teachers and with one another. Teachers must be open to the interests and experiences of all the students, to ensure that learning and partnering with one another can be meaningful. ODL students feel that institutional support should be reconsidered in order to keep up with current student needs. When these needs are met and students are satisfied that their "needs and expectations are met through curriculum design, course delivery, resources, student support, relationships with academic staff, etc." then a positive attitude can prevail within the learning experience (Mdakane, 2011, p. 130).

Figure 5.1 indicates the need for support as the third pattern of findings. The participants rollercoasted between the two opposite continuums relating to feelings of competence (feeling sure) versus incompetence (feeling unsure) in their need for support. The pattern *need for support* produced eleven codes in total.

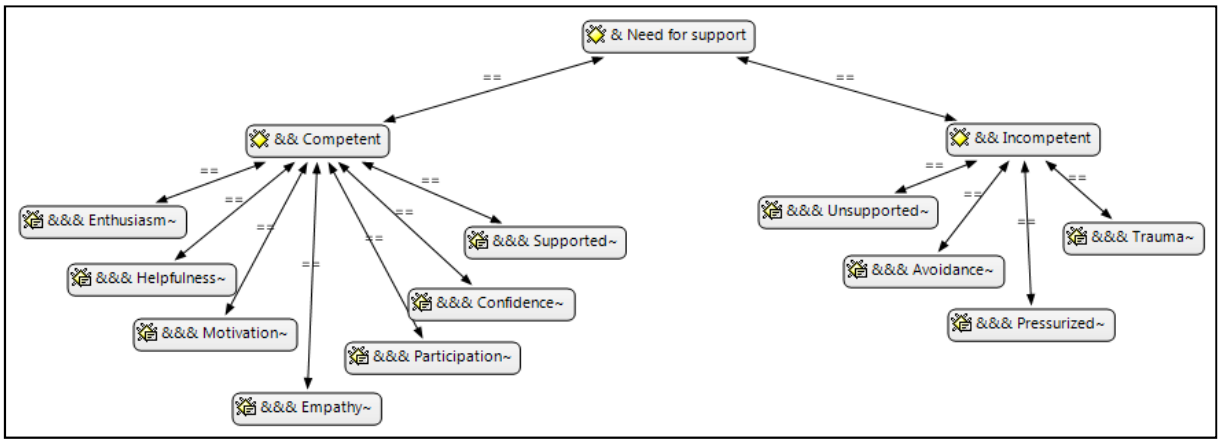


Figure 5.4: Coding structure for the theme of need for support

From my reflective research diary, I list the following to indicate how important support was for the participants:

> *The creation of a support group makes so much sense for Distance Learning students (P18:09)*
>
> *The students have time to think about the support group and how they want to take part on FaceFunda, which is the vehicle-concept of taking them from one place to another to know more (point A to point B)(P18:12)*
>
> *The concept of a support group is very positive and desperately needed by the students to relieve their anxious and lonely feelings (P18:18).*

5.4.1 Competent

Seven codes related to the theme of feeling competent with support: (i) enthusiasm, (ii) helpfulness, (iii) motivation, (iv) empathy, (v) perceptiveness, (vi) participation, (vii) confidence, (viii) supported (Figure 5.4).

Positive emotions and attitudes trigger energy for students to involve themselves in new learning experiences. It is important that students are not merely "energised by affect; it is affective and forms a relationship with the learner" (Picard *et al.*, 2004). From the onset of the coaching and scaffolding sessions I encouraged the students to grasp the opportunity to learn in a way very new to them. I established interest in the content relating to this learning opportunity (proposal-writing), as well as learning with technology. I established a sense of belonging in the coaching and scaffolding opportunities, as well as on FaceFunda.

Enthusiasm is an emotion that generates interest, passion, excitement and an eagerness to learn. Facebook provides opportunities for students to interact academically, meet and communicate with classmates and lecturers (De Villiers, 2010). The use of mobile technologies as learning tools provides access to information, communication with one another, and the opportunity to create new information to students (Maguth, 2013). The Internet enables easy and effective communication in especially a constructivist teaching and learning environment (Cronje & Clarke, 1999). Cooperative

learning, situated learning and supportive measures can be facilitated over distance through the internet.

The emotions of enthusiasm where captured during the coaching and scaffolding sessions, as well as the many "likes" on the FaceFunda page. Participants with positive attitudes towards the learning experience persevered in spite of personal difficulties and barriers. It was encouraging to listen to their plans to assist one another during the learning task:

> Participant 1*: Hay, we are working now* [all laughing happily] *yes, we are working now!* (P9:42)
>
> Participant 2: *No, I'm inside now—I'm going with this taxi now!* (P9:135)
>
> Participant 3*: Come people, let us make a date that we finish our project*
> Participant 4: *In July, work hard in the holiday, 1st week of July?*
> Researcher*: Oh, are you going to get together just like today?*
> Participant 5: *Yes! if anyone finds something about resistance for change you must keep it, I will also keep other topics for the others. Ok, ok, ok. We send it to each other*
> Researcher*:* [Reflective thoughts while the participants talk with one another about their studies] *They share cellular phone numbers, so they'll stay in contact to support each other, even after my research is finished. They didn't know each other before these gatherings and now they call each other 'study mate'* (P9:205-211).

Feelings relating to participants' enthusiasm, and happiness which related to a sense of competence related to:

> *I like to do with people, I like this group*. (P13:168)
>
> *I liked it because it created for me lots and lots of friends, with whom I can express myself* (P13:170)
>
> *What I liked is the information sharing with each other because before I had a negative attitude with this research* (P13:175).

The lady who introduced me to the group (Table 2.2), herself was unsure whether she would pass the module, and decided to join the support group in order to learn more about research. She was excited when she learnt that she passed and this motivated other participants:

> *Before I was afraid for the research because some people say the research is difficult* [agreeing sounds] *Difficult to pass it, but I'm here, I pass it the first time!* [all laughing happily with her] (P13:177).

Helpfulness relates to kindness, goodwill, care, concern, co-operation and attentiveness paramount in constructivist learning environments. The coaching and scaffolding sessions developed into a meaningful intervention which assisted the participants to develop an understanding of the learning content, and a desire to work collaboratively. The participants did not know one another at the onset of the intervention. They were strangers to one another and to me. During the coaching and scaffolding sessions they got to know each other and group cohesion developed. They assisted one another to in their search for the acquisition of skills and knowledge:

> Researcher: *It is actually time to start helping each other. Are you prepared to do that?*
> Participants: *Yes! Yes!* (P3:11)
>
> Researcher*: Do you share* [your knowledge] *with others?*
> Participants*: Yes, we share it with other people (P10:156)*
>
> Participant: *Xxx had bereavement this week, his father is buried tomorrow. I will help him next week; I will be with him full time next week*
> Researcher: *Ok, and take him to Nomsa*
> Participant: *We will call each other and help Xxx* (P10:271-274).

A posting from the FaceFunda group page indicated that the oldest participant offered assistance to a peer:

> Participant 1*: Ant, can i help u in literature review? I give that offer, if u can invite someone and meet in library the time I'm on leave.*
> Participant 2: *Ok, i appreciate that offer, when can we meet?* (P17:278-280).

The quality of education in any country determines the ability of its citizens to meet social and economic needs. Teachers should develop their professional knowledge and skills, be equipped to use educational resources and be motivated to do their job and feel satisfied with their work. This will ensure that educational systems grow continuously (Ololube, 2006). Thus teacher motivation is essential to the improvement of education quality in our country. *Motivation* stimulates emotions of enthusiasm and becomes a positive stimulus for encouragement, creativeness and inventiveness. Creativity leads to the development of new ideas and insights which could lead to new revelations. It is therefore, important to understand what motivates students to use social media, because shared interests is the commonality that encourages the interconnectivity (Ostashewski *et al.*, 2013). When these shared interests are discovered, student engagement with tasks will increase (Wright *et al.*, 2013). Social networking should be seen as a feature and not as a destination (Ostashewski *et al.*, 2013). Participants indicated that shared group support increased their motivation:

> *For me I think by hearing that some people are doing this and that, even that Xxxx knows how to use these things, I think I am getting motivation—so it's now that I have that full force that I am going to do a lot of work now. So I think I am getting motivated, that is the most important thing* (P13:171)
>
> *I'm also motivated—big motivation I receive here…I see the strategy and I'm going to use it* (P13:173)
>
> I am motivated because there are friends, if you ask, they say they will help me (P13:174).

Empathy is a sensitive emotion which indicates emotions of understanding, sympathy and compassion which lead to a responsiveness and openness to the problems and needs of others. Empathy compels people to be available for one another and generates feelings of usefulness. The support group created a space where the participants could relate to one another as they developed deeper emotions of understanding towards each other:

> *What I like about the group—the group they made me to feel at ease* (P13:77)
>
> *What I like of this group, ne? If you haven't started you will find a phone call saying: "Ntobi, how far are you with* whatever[46] [all laughing]. *Even if you are relaxing, somebody is picking you up: Come on, come on, how far are you now? You know—it encourages us a lot!* (P13:82)
>
> *And then suddenly, you see everything clearly; it's accommodative—it's so fine* (P16:85).

Participation on its own is not an emotion as such, but it promotes positive feelings which in turn, encouraged the participants to benefit more from the intervention. The more they participated, the more knowledgeable they became: "Learning is enhanced through high self-esteem and low anxiety, having a positive attitude towards learning, it is shared through emotions, values and beliefs in a group where learning takes place from one another through active engagement" (Esterhuizen *et al.*, 2012).

[46] *ntoni-ntoni*

Teacher-students who participated in the FaceFunda group benefited the most from the intervention. Initially I had to coach and motivate the participants to participate on FaceFunda as well. For most it was easier to participate in the coaching and scaffolding sessions than on the Internet as they could express themselves more easily in verbal language than in written language. On FaceFunda they experienced major technological as well as language barriers. Only a few accomplished communication on FaceFunda. They became positive, encouraged and satisfied with their competence and encouraged others to also become part of the learning community:

> *So what I want, I want to gather myself to attend everything* (P16:95)
>
> *I need to come closer to the group* (P16:105)
>
> *It's the freedom of speech! Everyone was fr..e..e.. to talk! And you were free to ask questions! Ja* [yes] [thinking deeply] *the freedom* [laughing happily] (P14:16-18)
>
> *You know what I like doing on FaceFunda, is the confidentiality. It's not open for the whole world* [agreeing sounds from others]. *At least you know to whom I am talking to* (P13:137).

During the third coaching and scaffolding session, the observer (Table 2.2) shared the following:

> *These* [referring to the participants] *were so interested, focussed: the papers, the pens out, the books to take notes, that was like, ok, that's great. This is interesting; they were sitting and straight away be focussed. You didn't need to say: 'Come we need to start now, we need to do', no you just say we are going to start. And the others who joined a little bit later, they just zoom in nicely and put up hand if they need something that was nice and then focussed* (P6:11)
>
> *The group-work it was nice. It was another thing that was hmm I think they are kind of aware, it said to me they are there because the minute you talk about group-work in most cases, people are not so sure, they will like hold back and to check who is standing where and I want to be with… no, they were just separated nicely the first row just make a group and the second one make a group and this side, and the back one just make a group, it was very, very organized. Not like you see someone is standing on the other group and suddenly she or he sees the friend on the other side and run. No, they were there. And then I was taking photos of the group that was near the piano, yes, I was just listening, they were all not like chatting, they were focussing. I heard the other lady when she said: this study is the University wants this study, it is very important, and she said to them, we need to put a focus, we need to make sure of this thing it is not only for us, it is also for the benefit of next students. Yes, and I was like, oh ok, because sometimes the group work you separate the groups and then you still need to go to them. Yes. Do this, do.., no they were into the handouts. The other group that was on the left, they were sitting there, they were all discussing and saying picking, let's start with this questions, this question is going to link us to this one. Which was very nice, it was...they know what to do* (P6:20).

Confidence leads to certainty, self-assurance and self-confidence. Confidence stimulates resourcefulness and creative ideas through imagination. Students who feel confident, will extend their learning experiences and participate in other coursework as well (De Villiers, 2010). It is important to keep the students motivated and interested in the learning content in order to support their development. Interest focuses attention, which again triggers affective reactions relating to perceived success, which in turn assigns positive aspects of self-esteem and makes them feel confident. Students who engage confidently in their learning are empowered and successful (Grabe & Stoller, 1997).

Participants came into the learning experience with very little confidence because of previous failure of the module and because they were unsure of what were expected of them. As they developed a deeper understanding of the content, and of one another, a comfortable space developed where they felt safe to admit their shortcomings. They also developed confidence in what they were doing. They

changed their beliefs regarding their abilities and confidence developed: “now we can write”; “not lost anymore”; “know what to do”; “going ahead”; “willing to help”; “busy with my task”; “much fruitful”; “mind is open”; “happy every day”; “it was dark…today I can see the light”. Also:

> *We are learning the scope! Now we can write, we are not lost anymore; we know what to do now* (P9:144)
>
> *We are going ahead now* (P9:141)
>
> *I am so excited today! I am willing to help with my little knowledge to everyone who needs help! (P17:98)*
>
> *Even in my class during break time, I’m busy with my task* (P13:126)
>
> *I think also that this intervention of FaceFunda can be utilized in something else. Inviting more people to join FaceFunda so that communication could flow and also people can put their own views and put their problems and so on. I think this intervention basically of Face-Funda can also be very much fruitful!* (P13:112)
>
> *I was stressed, but today, I’m in the taxi now, you know? I’m a passenger and there is a driver which is X* [laughing and happy agreeing sounds from many] *you know, my mind is open. And I’m so happy every day, you know? It was dark, and today I can see the light* [wow, says others]*, so thank you very much* (P13:13).

Supported environments are created where students feel assisted, aided, encouraged and helped by others. Support is provided by caring for the other people. Emotionally safe environments should be constructed , where students feel secure and comfortable to interact, are able to explore and experiment with knowledge and construct their own realities: They must “feel safe to succeed as well as to fail” (Shuck *et al*., 2007). Emotionally aware environments are crucial to create a positive learning environment. “Social learning is rooted in the person and the culture; it bears fruit through the construction process; it has shoots that branch into new areas, shaping and transforming the community around the learner” (Picard *et al*., 2004, p. 264). The participants needed to feel supported on their academic journey, and those participants who felt supported, changed their attitudes towards the learning experience. Attitude improves learning, therefore students should understand why the new knowledge should be acquired within their own context (Miller, 2012). When emotional factors are positive, personal transformation takes place more readily (Shuck *et al*., 2007).

The creation of the two spaces (coaching and scaffolding sessions and the online FaceFunda group page) where supportive measures which assisted participants to participate in whichever way which suited them the best. No one was excluded from receiving help if they needed it. Although they felt that they were important to have a facilitator creating opportunities of support for them, they did not take the lead—they remained the receiver of the support. The few participants, who developed confidence in their own abilities, were willing to support their peers which fostered a .sense of self-worth. Phrases such as the following, indicate their positive feelings about the support group: “support group helped me”; “improves my attitude”; “I liked the information sharing”; “sharing of ideas…is the most important thing”.

> *The support group helped me a lot because* me[47] *I am that person of the eleventh hour* [all laughing]. *I am honest! Now that I’m in the group, I know I have to do something. Let there then be no week without doing anything on my work. So it improves my attitude,* because[48]

[47] mna
[48] kuba

> *let me stop to wait until it's the last moment to do it. Let me occupy myself as the time goes on* [silence and a sigh] (P13:125)
>
> *I liked the information sharing with each other because before I had a negative attitude with this research* (P13:175)
>
> *Sharing of ideas and talking ideas. It is the most important thing I gained that day, because we shared a lot of things with my group. So I liked that sharing* (P13:68).

4.4.2 Incompetent

Four codes emerged while feeling incompetent which included: (i) unsupported, (ii) avoidance, (iii) pressurized, and (iv) trauma (Figure 5.4).

Work environments do not support students sufficiently, and therefore students "turn to facilitators to assist and support them. It is critical that the HEI creates an environment for providing assistance, understanding and guidance to ODL students" (Mdakane, 2011, p. 133). "Students were not satisfied with the support they received from the ODL unit. Sufficient and adequate support from the ODL unit would enhance their learning experience and assist their academic progress" Mdakane (2011, p. 136).

Unsupported means that support is not provided for and by others when needed and it leads to feeling that the burden is too heavy to bear alone. Despair sets in. This could lead to giving up trying to accomplish certain set goals. The participants from rural areas of the Eastern Cape who are studying through ODL, generally felt *unsupported*. The participants who came to only one session or did not conquer the technological barriers, still felt unsupported at the end of the intervention. They experienced that there was no back-up assistance and in some cases, that the burden was too heavy to bear alone, and that it would be easy to drop out of the module and not complete their BEd Honours degree. This left the participants feeling powerless and helpless about their situation as they got caught in a negative spiral of doubt, guilt and shame: "guilty"; "I'm stuck"; "don't understand Facebook"; "staying alone"; "I have lost it"; "no-one to help me"; "I had a problem." Also:

> *No, I don't want to talk, because I found my guilty on my side. I'm stuck but so now I can't talk. Because I missed my Facebook, so I'm so stuck and I don't know, I don't understand Facebook, so by the time I missed this, I'm going to log out. So I don't know what is happening. Then I, what I know is that I want to change the picture of mine* [referring to her profile-picture on FaceFunda] *which is the house, I don't know. I want to put my face, now, all is gone. So I'm stuck, I don't want to talk now, I have lost it! I've been trying several times, but because I'm staying alone—even my daughter is at school, so no-one is at home to help me. So I'm stuck, but I had a problem, I didn't have enough time to look at my books. It's now during the holidays that I'm going to look at my books* [silence] (P13:39-43).

Social presence, "the ability of participants to identify with the community (for instance, the students enrolled in a course of study), communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop inter-personal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities" (Arbaugh *et al.*, 2008). Herrington (2006) describes a notion of a community of learning which can be created through the use of technology where students are continuously in contact with one another (§ 3 4.2 l). If these online technologies are introduced innovatively, are

user-friendly and exist in an inviting environment, students can collaboratively help one another's professional development. Situated learning is another framework wherein students support one another and are supported by mentors (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). When students do not make positive decisions and effort to attend support interventions, they exclude themselves from a group where they could belong. Distance education institutions are faced with various challenges, as they have to "provide support and education for students who are geographically isolated from their teachers as sources of information and separated from their peers as sources of support" (Makoe, 2010). Thus, the greatest problem with distance education is the feeling of isolation that students experience (Mdakane, 2011). "Distance education is dark and lonely" (Cronje & Clarke, 1999). Sometimes, it is caused by external factors, but mostly it is brought about through an individual's choices:

> Researcher: *Have you got a colleague at school that is also doing the Honours?*
> Participant: *No, I'm the only one* (P4:48-49)
>
> Participant: *This group is my support group, but I didn't fit in because I didn't attend here* (P16:95)
>
> Researcher: [reflecting while interviewing a participant] *She laughs because she describes her situation as being 'totally blank'! I wonder if she will actually contact some of the other participants to help her* (P18:205).

Avoidance is mentally or physically avoiding something that causes distress. It is a conscious or unconscious defence mechanism consisting of refusal to encounter or face situations or activities. A conflict occurs when a choice must be made between two undesirable alternatives (Dictionary.com, 2013).

The noun avoidance means the act of avoiding or keeping away from; avoidance of occupational activities that involve significant interpersonal contact because of fear of criticism, disapproval or rejection (Dictionary.com, 2013). Some participants pleaded many excuses for their non-participation which in reality related to evading or eluding the important choice of participation. It is important to prioritise opportunities to extend your learning.

Participants avoided the coaching and scaffolding sessions and interacting on FaceFunda for a variety of reasons. However, it is clear that in most cases, the choice should have favoured the learning intervention. Non-attendance meant that they missed out on the stimulation which participation provided, and no sustained learning took place (Tooman, 2001):

> *Unfortunately I will be at home in Xxx. So I won't be able to attend this weekend* (P7:54-56)
>
> *For this session, the commitment of what I'm coming from: it's this conference—I had a duty there, there was a certain duty I was performing there, but I will try by all means to reach here.* (P4:41)
>
> *No, my friend, her husband is in Xxx and he had a problem last night, so she had to go to work and rescue him early in the morning. Otherwise she will come again* (P9:216)
>
> *I was at funeral last time* (P15:29)
>
> *They were doing something at school. We were at function at school that Friday. So I didn't have the time to come* (P15:33)
>
> [Posting on FaceFunda] *I'm sory Ronnel for not coming 4 sat mtng i attended my neighbour's funeral* (P17:449).

Some participants felt stretched due to emotional strain. Life difficulties and burdens caused feelings of heaviness and anxiety. These emotions triggered negative emotions which left them feeling inadequate (Wlodkowski, 1999). "Learning is enhanced through high self-esteem and low anxiety, having a positive attitude towards learning, it is shared through emotions, values and beliefs in a group where learning takes place from one another through active engagement" (Esterhuizen *et al*., 2012). It is clear that teacher-students often did not benefit from the support offered through interventions due to time pressure and stress-inducing situations:

> Participant 1*: Hmm.m.m. for not attending? Yo, it's because I was so busy at school…*
> *Ja, I'm so busy I don't have a chance. If I come out of school I have to attend my children with some problems, like the sport, extra mural activities, and the businesses…my husband is a business man so I have to help him to support him. Sometimes he goes out of town, then I have to accompany him…*
> *No, it wasn't that I didn't want to come; it was just because I have no chance to attend the session. I'm so keen! I'm so keen to attend. It's just that I don't have the time.(P14:32-36)*
> [Deep sigh] *[laugh], but now I have no suggestions, but it's just that I'm worried that I didn't attend the previous classes. Now I have to start. I think it was my plan that I was going to start yesterday, but yesterday I had a memorial service. So today I'm on my way to East London, and then as from tomorrow, I will start with my work. And then concentrate. As from tomorrow, up to the opening* [of schools] *…. Yes… yes (P14:86)*
>
> Participant 2: *Heyha* [disagreeing sound] *it is very difficult (*15:109)
>
> Participant 3*: The last meeting, I was on the….since we were closing the schools, the situation was so hectic because we issue the reports and attending the parents, whatever. So I came late here, the session was at 1 o'clock, then I clock out at school on 1 o'clock. So in other Fridays that I got the sessions is because I just get out at 10 o'clock and run this side. You know? And I negotiate with my HOD that I'm running to the session, then I go here* (P16:79-81).

When people experience intense shocks and suffer pain (emotional or physical), they encounter traumatic feelings. Negative emotions drain students' intellectual energy and capacity. When people are "faced with frustration, despair, worry, sadness or shame, they lose access to their own memory, reasoning, and the capacity to make connections" (Vail, 2013). When emotions are not stimulated, boredom sets in and no sustained learning takes place (Tooman, 2001). "Emotion serves as a cognitive guide and helps adults make decisions every day" (Shuck *et al*., 2007) and is part of all learning processes. Emotions either obstruct or assist learning as emotion is "an affective state of consciousness in which joy, sorrow, fear, hate, or the like, is experienced, as distinguished from cognitive and volitional states of consciousness" (Dictionary.com, 2013). A number of participants described family ordeals, losses and health problems which were clearly traumatic and obstructed learning. One particular participant encountered traumatic events during the time of the coaching and scaffolding sessions and she could not attend all the sessions. Also, her cellular phone broke and she could not participate on FaceFunda. Further examples are:

> *I had a big problem, I'm a sugar diabetics person…I had a fracture, when I was going to school; I was on the way to school. I fell down and then that has caused me a problem. Then one other time, I didn't come to the session I was admitted in hospital, I sent you a message* (16:57-59)
>
> *And then there was also a problem of mine of this sugar diabetes which was high. Very much high, and then I couldn't get in the sessions* (P16:61-63)

> *And then, during my examination time, I had a problem. M..m.m..m my young sister, my last born sister, had been killed by her husband, was strangled…Yes! Was strangled by the rope, after that her husband had killed himself, hanged himself.…So that thing is haunting me too much. And then it had happened during the bad time of my examination. During that time of my examination, this thing had happened to me. Yes, and then for now, I'm facing to raise two small children of 9 year and 5 year. It was very, very, very hard—I couldn't take it* (P16:65-73)
>
> *Because* really[49], *this thing of my sister—I can't take it. It is very much painful. I don't want to even talk about it. To lose a person, I know, I know. I lost my husband in 2002 in a car-accident. And then I was all alone. Then this sister of mine was my sister and my baby. Because she was my second hand in everything. That's why I feel like I'm not fine. I have high blood, I have sugar diabetics. I am on treatment* (P16:146-156).

5.5 Chapter summary

According to Bloom's taxonomy, the emotions which were experienced while needing support, developed from (i) receiving (those participants who were open to the support that was offered, received the support they needed), (ii) responding (the participants who responded positively and attended and participated in the two interventions, benefited the most), (iii) valuing (the participants who valued the support structures as important enough to give much attention to, became more positive about the support), (iv) organizing and conceptualising (some participants reached these higher levels of accepting the support and making it their own by re-organising their lives to accommodate the new knowledge) and (v) characterising by value or value concept (only a few participants reached this level—those participants that realised that the support was so valuable and it could also be implemented into other spheres of their daily lives). The support interventions where offered to all the participants who were initially invited (74 teacher-students), but only 34 responded to the invitation of which only 22 broke through the initial technological barriers and even fewer really participated and reached the highest level of Bloom's taxonomy of the affective domain.

It is difficult to measure learning in quantifiable terms (Tooman, 2001). Learning should work its way "from a simple awareness of a value to a highly integrated internalization of value systems…progressing from neutrality through mild emotion to strong emotion…from lack of consciousness to a valued conscious awareness to an unconscious incorporation into one's life and actions" (Tooman, 2001). When attitudes change as a result of knowledge, it could also change the outcomes of learning. Therefore, change in attitude is regarded as a performance indicator when it synchronizes knowledge and affect (Miller, 2012). Dirkx (2008) describes the learning as "a process that takes place within the dynamic and paradoxical relationship of self and other." True transformation demands full integration of the person's mind, body, spirit, emotions, relationships, and socio-cultural context (Tooman, 2001).

Chapter six presents the final conclusions of the study relating to the academic use of Facebook to enhance the learning environment for rural teacher-students in the Eastern Cape.

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