



University of
**Southern
Queensland**

**THE AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF KUWAIT
AWARD: A WORK-BASED CASE STUDY OF
STUDENT SELF-MANAGEMENT OF
LIFEWIDE AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

A Thesis submitted by

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B.Ec, M.Ed, FCPA

For the award of

Doctor of Professional Studies

2024

ABSTRACT

This research project considers the expanding role of tertiary education in preparing students, not just academically but holistically, for their independent and engaged futures within increasingly unpredictable economic, workplace and social environments. The research problem associated with this study concerns the wider developmental expectations required of tertiary educators and institutions.

Accordingly, this research project considers whether, in addition to the academic transcript, a separate document is of benefit to graduating students as evidence of such wider development. Hence, the purposes of this thesis are to explore any non-academic/vocational functions of tertiary education and then consider existing models, including the Australian College of Kuwait's (ACK) optional ACK Award program, that encourage and recognise the lifewide and lifelong development of students. This award program was established in 2013 and had been in operation for seven years at the time of the work-based research study involving a case study of the ACK Award through semi-structured interviews with 20 former participants. Key findings related to the need for more emphasis on goal setting and review in the cognitive dimension, and for transition from the relatively protected environment as a student to self-managed independence upon graduation. Further, the Goals Action Plan (GAP) template associated with the ACK Award should include a specific career-focused goal rather than the current general employability goal to encourage greater focus on early career planning. Participants spoke openly about the encouragement and guidance they received from their mentors in many developmental areas and accordingly, continuing support should be offered during the early years post-graduation. Although the case study provided evidence the ACK Award program benefited participants in self-managing their wider development, it was limited to one privately owned higher education institution within a Middle East Arabic Islamic setting. Accordingly, further study is needed in relation to nurturing self-management of lifewide learning in other settings. Since it is their individual futures that are at stake, a conclusion of this case study is that any report on non-curricular development is best prepared incrementally by the students themselves, with appropriate mentor guidance, as it reflects their own emerging and unique life journey which they must have the skills and confidence to self-manage beyond graduation.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I, Christopher Robert Picone, declare that the thesis entitled “*The Australian College of Kuwait Award: A Work-based Case Study of Student Self-management of Lifewide and Lifelong Learning*” is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Until his death, Professor Glen Postle was my principal doctoral supervisor. Glen is remembered as a passionate educator and community innovator who was a key figure in the establishment of many service programs including the Toowoomba Flexi-School and the Toowoomba Education Centre. His eyes would light up when he spoke about the success stories he witnessed of young people who fell through the cracks of the formal education system but thrived in an alternative learning environment. Glen wanted to show today's youth that success in life is not defined by a graduating GPA but rather self-discovery and a deep sense of purpose.

It was a similar motivation that led me to undertake this research project; to present the experiences of graduates from the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) who took part in an elective program of lifewide development, the ACK Award. Although I am not able to disclose their names, I gratefully acknowledge the time given by the 20 participants who took part in semi-structured interviews. Also in relation to ACK, I wish to acknowledge the former Dean, Dr Gad Elbeheri for his positive encouragement and support as well as Professor Mohamad Terro, Dr Sa'ad Al-Omari, Professor Isam Zabalawi, and especially Dr Usameh Jamali, who has been a continuing source of mentorship and a wonderful friend to Christine and myself.

During my research, I was most fortunate to meet personally with Professor Norman Jackson, from the UK, who founded the Lifewide Education Community, and Dr. Helen Chen from Stanford University, USA, who is a board member for the Association for Authentic, Experiential and Evidence-Based Learning (AAEEBL).

Of course, I am indebted to the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) for approving my enrolment in the Doctor of Professional Studies Program. In particular, I acknowledge Dr Luke van der Laan, Program Director, for supporting my initial application and Associate Dean Charlotte Brownlow, from the Graduate Research School, who always found solutions when needed. Following the passing of Professor Glen Postle, Dr Lee Fergusson steered me to the finish line and I am forever indebted for his patience and wisdom. Lee understood the anxieties experienced by Professional Studies researchers who know their way around the workplace but not the jargon and nuances associated with scholarship. At various times, Dr Shayne Baker, Dr Fernando Padro and Dr Nona Press also contributed with supervision and, on the technical side,

Mrs. Leonie Sherwin from the library guided me through Endnote referencing and the formatting of my thesis. Dr. Douglas Eacersall, Learning Advisor in the Higher Degree Research Program, kindly provided me with tutorial support in maximising the use of NVivo software as a research analysis tool, and Mrs. Margaret Bremner, also from the Library, assisted me greatly with the Data Management Plan requirements and process. In the final stages of my draft, I managed to corrupt my Endnote file and I was not able to make any further changes to references in my Word document. I was at the point of despair when I approached the UniSQ library helpdesk. They put me in contact with Tracy Bruce who was truly amazing with her skills and patience. It was not an easy fix but Tracy solved my crisis and I am greatly in her debt.

From a funding perspective, I wish to gratefully acknowledge that this research has been supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Although this research project is limited in its scope, the topic is critical for the future wellbeing of my grandchildren and their peers. They may spend more and more time in virtual settings but their lives are real. I therefore hope this thesis assists educators in their quest to help the next generation search for what the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century referred to as their ‘treasure within’.

What drives us to pursue deeper meaning and purpose in our lives and how do we find it? I don’t have a definitive response but, for me personally, from a teleological perspective, I believe death is not the end of my existence but rather a transition point, in just the same way that a caterpillar emerges from its cocoon as a butterfly. Therefore, above all else, I am thankful for the opportunity to have lived this life and I very much look forward to what unfolds when my soul is released from its temporary earthly cocoon.

DEDICATION

I felt cheated when my dad passed unexpectedly. I was robbed of the opportunity to say a proper ‘goodbye’. It was the sacrifices freely and lovingly made by him and mum that gave me the start in life that I did not fully appreciate until I became a parent myself.

Having children entails a huge responsibility for a protracted period but the joy from being part of life’s creative process far outweighs any personal sacrifices. My two daughters, Kristy and Lisa, have given me so much happiness and now I have the added blessing of witnessing their parental journey with their children, Harvey, Bella and Scarlett.

The one constant in my life for the past 45 years has been my fellow Cancerian, Christine. Words are inadequate to describe my deepest and enduring feelings for her. We have shared so much together and I cherish all our wonderful memories.

During the later stages of my doctoral studies, my eldest and much-loved brother, Mike, visited us from interstate for my birthday. We went to a dinner dance where the band played music from the 1970s and it was like stepping back in time. Cruelly, just one week later, Mike suffered a major stroke and died shortly thereafter.

Life is far too short. This research project is all about making the most of it or finding our ‘treasure within’. Accordingly, I dedicate this thesis to all those who have helped me along my life journey to find my inner treasure. In addition to the above wonderful people, I cherish the friendship of our precious friends, Ian and Christine Munday, who always make me laugh, as well as Jim and Christine Fraser, who have remained close since we met at the beginning of our shared expat experience in Kuwait. Also, Leigh and Denise Clark freely offered their time to assist with my applied research. All of these people are the rarest of gems.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACK Award	Optional self-development program available at the Australian College of Kuwait (now Australian University, Kuwait) that encourages and recognises student participation in lifewide goal setting and progress review using a Goals Action Plan (GAP) template
Formal Learning	Structured learning resulting in a formal qualification or award
Informal Learning	Unstructured learning or learning en passant
Goals Action Plan (GAP)	Template used by participants in the ACK Award program to set and review goals in the areas of academic GPA, employability enhancement, community/ environmental care, and personal development
Holistic Learning	Alternative term used in this thesis for lifewide learning (Jackson, 2011, p. 59)
Life Deep Learning(DDL)	DDL refers to the depth of lifewide learning
Lifelong Learning (LLL)	LLL is ongoing learning throughout a person's lifetime
Lifewide Development	Personal growth associated with lifewide learning (Jackson, 2012)
Lifewide Learning (LWL)	LWL is the breadth of lifelong learning at any point in time
Non-formal Learning	Structured learning that does not result in a formal qualification or award
Pillars of Learning	The four pillars of learning nominated by the UNESCO International Commission on Education for the 21 st Century, including Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together and Learning to Be

Self-authorship

The unfolding process of finding meaning and direction in life including relationships with others, described as “the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity and social relations” (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 269)

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AACU	American Association for Colleges and Universities
AACRAO	Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
ACK	Australian College of Kuwait (now Australian University, Kuwait)
ABCD	Australian Blueprint for Career Development
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
CDIO	Conceive, Design, Implement, Operate
CSR	Comprehensive Student Record
CQU	Central Queensland University
DS	Diploma Supplement
GAP	Goals Action Plan
HEAR	Higher Education Achievement Report
HEI	Higher Education Institution
LDL	Life Deep Learning
LLL	Life Long Learning
LWL	Life Wide Learning
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NASPA	National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
PED	Portable Electronic Device
PUC	Private Universities Council (Kuwait)
TAFE	Technical And Further Education
TPACK	Technological Pedagogical And Content Knowledge
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WBL	Work-Based Learning

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Jerome Bruner (1996, p. 59) wrote that formal education has consequences in the later lives of individuals who availed themselves of it in any culture. Talent and opportunity either enhance or limit the extent of those consequences as individuals progress through their lives. Bruner considered the culture in which individuals live characterises the power, distinctions and rewards directly or tacitly framing the extent of the utilitarian benefit education can provide. Later, Subsequently, Robeyns (2006) noted that policies surrounding education are principally based on personal rights, personal capabilities or human capital.

Performance indicators used for quality assurance purposes show the growing importance of employability as a key outcome for Higher Education Institutions or HEIs (Morley, 2001). Employability is the gateway “to find, create and sustain meaningful work across the career lifespan and in multiple contexts” (Bennett, 2020, p. 1), and in some countries the associated responsibility has shifted from governments to HEIs (Cheng et al., 2021). Meanwhile, even before the COVID-19 watershed, work and careers generally were increasingly being contextualised by individuals as part of a holistic life/career balance. In this regard, 16 years before the 2019 pandemic, McMahon et al. (2003) presented an issues paper titled “Managing Life, Learning and Work in the 21st Century” in which they highlighted that for the new millennium, individuals:

will necessarily need to be proactive life/career managers in order to be responsive to their own changing needs and changes in the nature and structure of paid employment including the proliferation of short-term contract work, casual work, contingent work and a decrease in full-time permanent work, the irrefutable influence of globalisation and lifelong learning requirements.

Thus emerging definitions of career and career development are reflective of a proactive, individual centred, lifespan, life/career management process where individuals are active in responding and adapting to change and in creating, constructing, designing, and identifying paid employment opportunities, life and learning experiences that will enable them to create satisfying lives. (p. 4)

McMahon et al. (2003) made specific reference to lifelong learning and in the process alluded to lifewide learning, which has been referred to by Barnett (2010) as “learning across an individual’s lifeworld” (p. 2). Lifewide learning is all embracing and, in this regard, “an individual's lifewide experiences require them to learn holistically and integratively as they grapple with the opportunities, uncertainties and risks that emerge through the things they do every day of their life” (Jackson, 2011, p. 59).

Recognising the ubiquitous nature of lifewide learning, it is not confined to the classroom. In this regard, Jackson (2012) refers to the:

combining and integrating learning and development from formal education and training experiences where our learning is directed by others, from experiences that we direct ourselves through which we intend to learn and develop, and from experiences that make up daily life. (p. 21)

In regard to the above lifewide (holistic) learning and development, it is significant that in the lead up to the new millennium, UNESCO established an International Commission on Education for the 21st Century (Delors, 1996), which concluded that to best prepare students at all levels for their futures, education should cover four pillars of learning:

- Learning to Know – “combining a sufficiently broad general education with the possibility of in-depth work on a selected number of subjects” (p. 21).
- Learning to Do – “the acquisition of a competence that enables people to deal with a variety of situations, often unforeseeable, and to work in teams” (p. 2).
- Learning to Live Together, learning to live with others – “developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence - carrying out joint projects and learning to manage conflicts - in a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace” (p. 37).
- Learning to Be – “to develop one’s personality and be able to act with ever greater autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility” (p. 37).

The title given to the summary report from this UNESCO International Commission was “Learning: the Treasure Within” (Delors, 1996, p. 1). Helping students to unlock their inner treasure will in turn enable them to achieve “satisfying lives” (McMahon et al., 2003, p. 4). To this end, from a theoretical perspective, Kegan (1982, 1994)

referred to five stages of self-evolution, including a fourth stage of self-authorship which empowers the person to “coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states” (1994, p. 270). Baxter Magolda (2008) applied Kegan’s theory to a post-secondary learning environment and defined self-authorship more precisely as “the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity and social relations” (p. 269).

Shortly after the 1996 UNESCO report on education generally for the new millennium, specifically with regard to the expanding role of tertiary institutions, in 1998, the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century (UNESCO, 1998), included a primary mission to:

provide opportunities for higher learning and for learning throughout life as well as an opportunity for individual development and social mobility in order to educate for citizenship and for active participation in society, with a worldwide vision, for endogenous capacity-building, and for the consolidation of human rights, sustainable development, democracy and peace, in a context of justice... (pp. 3-4)

In this international reference point, UNESCO emphasised that higher education was not confined to career preparation but for wider personal development and active citizenship. How then, do educators play their role in support to parents and communities with the nurturing of individual and collective self-authorship (Kegan, 1982, 1994), towards “satisfying lives” (McMahon et al., 2003, p. 4)?

As a tertiary educator, parent and grandparent, the candidate has both an academic and intensely vested personal interest in promoting learning environments that purposefully engage young learners as they explore and develop their individual and shared identities. This cannot be a once off task or target as the playing conditions and goal posts are constantly changing. What constitutes a satisfying life for a tertiary student in 2023 could not have been imagined by the candidate as a then university student 50 years ago in 1973 and will in turn be technologically redundant in 50 years’ time, 2073, when today’s tertiary cohorts are compared to their grandchildren.

Accelerated changes in learning, working and living environments present a challenge in the consideration and determination of the extent to which tertiary learning institutions can and should contribute towards the lifewide learning, self-authorship and associated wellbeing of students. How can universities be responsible for any non-

curricular development and, if so, how can it be objectively assessed? Yet, if a university has knowingly only prepared a student for a professional career which is likely to be displaced by technology in the near future then has the institution failed in the nurturing of self-authorship (Kegan, 1982, 1994) and satisfying lives (McMahon et al., 2003)?

There has been much criticism of education systems generally and universities in particular regarding slowness of response to changes in preparing students for increasingly fluid career and general living environments, evidenced by sustained preoccupation with the academic report as the primary focus for both educators and students (Burgess, 2004; HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008).

Attempts have been made by governments and individual institutions to encourage and recognise the wider development of students. In this regard, initiatives such as the UK Higher Education Achievement Report (The Higher Education Academy, 2019), the EU Diploma Supplement (European Commission, 2019), and the USA Comprehensive Student Record (Green & Parnell, 2017), provide for inclusion in formal student reports of selected non-curricular achievements. However, in practice, HEIs remain rightfully cautious in the confirmation of achievements outside the curriculum and therefore only include accomplishments that can be readily “verified by the institution” (Burgess, 2012, p. 16).

Faced with the dilemma of wishing to promote wider student development but not being able to confirm many non-curricular achievements, individual universities have opted for award programs rather than more formal certificates and reports associated with extra-curricular pursuits. For instance, in the United Kingdom there are around 50 universities (Rickett, 2010) that offer programs and recognition for commitment to lifewide personal development. These include the Salford Advantage Award (University of Salford, 2019), the Lancaster Award (Lancaster University, 2019a), and the University of Manchester Stellify Award (The University of Manchester, 2019b).

Relating lifewide award programs to the overarching university mission in building student self-authorship (Kegan, 1982, 1994), and capability (Sen, 1995), there needs to be flexibility so that individual students are nurtured “to lead the lives they have reason to value and enhance the real choices they have” (Sen, 1999, p. 293).

Accordingly, lifewide learning frameworks for students should be purposed to:

(1) provide a rich higher education experience that seeks to develop professional as well as academic values and capability, (2) learning experiences that prepare students for living, working and learning in an increasingly complex world, and develop a framework that will encourage, recognise and value informal learning gained through experiences outside the credit-bearing academic curriculum. (Jackson, 2011, p. 248)

A detailed literature review relating to student development is included in chapter 3.

1.2 Background to research project

Mindful of the abovementioned research and applied programs related to lifewide development, from 2013, the candidate used the experiences of UK holistic recognition programs to develop an optional award within the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK). The subsequent ACK Award was designed to encourage and recognise student achievements across all four pillars of learning identified by the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century. In Section 4.7, the purposes and elements of the ACK Award are presented in detail. In order to obtain the ACK Award, participating students must use a Goals Action Plan (GAP) template (example at Appendix A), to initially set and then subsequently record progress towards lifewide goals on a regular basis, all with the support and encouragement of a staff mentor. There are incremental tiers of the ACK Award (Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum), as incentives for students to remain in the program so that lifewide learning is also seen as part of a lifelong learning journey. A flow chart of the process for participating students to obtain the ACK Award is at Appendix B and the ACK Policy and Procedures in relation to the ACK Award is at Appendix C.

The candidate developed and managed the ACK Award program from 2013 until his departure from Kuwait in 2020. In view of these experiences, the candidate obtained approval from the institutional President to interview 20 graduates who were former participants in the program to capture their experiences and reflections. As with other holistic developmental programs, the ACK Award was intended to emphasise the importance of both curricular and extra-curricular activities as learning experiences that have meaning within the degree-earning environment (Press & Padró, 2022). Co-

and extra-curricular experiences are indeed interrelated with formal curricular learning from the following perspectives:

- Formal curriculum design and the experiences it promotes inside (classroom) and outside (co-curricular) the classroom, as supported by how the learning experiences are delivered.
- Personal agency regarding choices students partake in, specific to seeking and engaging in additional learning opportunities (extra-curricular), and the extent to which they want to identify as proficient with the content being taught.
- Previously held values and motivation to become a practicing professional in the field of their choosing and the maturation (transformation) the student exhibits, as a result of the discovery emanating from learning experiences.
- Involvement in professional identity work, in the practices of professional community, and in its regime of competence to function effectively within and beyond the professional community. (Press & Padró, 2022, p. 841)

Linked to the above and highlighting learning beyond the classroom from co-curricular and extra-curricular pursuits, the ACK Award was deliberately based on promoting all four pillars of learning. The ACK Award is intended as a clear message to participants, parents, prospective employers and the wider community that, as an educational institution, ACK wishes to formally acknowledge the importance of a rounded developmental process.

From a theoretical perspective, in Section 3.2.4, it is noted that the four Delors' (1996) learning pillars, reflected in the ACK Award Goals Action Plan, closely relate to Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors of learning that interact as students form their learning experiences. In this regard:

- The Delors' pillar of Learning to Know relates to Chickering and Reisser's first vector of developing intellectual competence (conceptual, interpersonal and manual). These respective elements from the above models are reflected in the goals and achievements in the ACK Award component of academic and employability activities.
- Learning to Do has similarities with the sixth and seventh vectors of developing purpose and developing integrity. These are echoed in the ACK Award's component of personal development.

- Learning to Live Together aligns with Chickering and Reisser’s second, third and fourth vectors of managing emotions, moving through autonomy towards interdependence, and developing mature interpersonal relationships. This pillar and the related vectors are associated with the ACK Award component of community/environmental service.
- Learning to Be is congruent with the fifth vector of establishing identity and is part of the ACK Award component of personal development.

In Section 3.2, it is further noted that the ACK Award program mirrors Baxter Magolda’s (1998, 2014) concept of self-authorship and is also directly relevant to Kuh’s (1993, 2009) promotion of student engagement. The connected relationships are considered in detail in Sections 3.2.6, 3.4.3 and 4.2, and are illustrated diagrammatically in Appendix D.

1.3 Statement of the problem and purpose of research

This research project considers the purposes of formal learning and in particular initial tertiary education in this “conceptual age” (Huitt, 2007, p. 1), during which the nature and structure of workplaces and societies are facing wicked problems that are becoming increasingly complex (Soylu & Yelken, 2014). Is it, therefore, sufficient for universities to principally focus on academic qualifications and vocational certificates as their value-added contribution towards the transition of students to fully independent and engaged life/career self-management? If societies rely on young tertiary graduates to contribute more than just academic knowledge/vocational skills for collective future betterment (UNESCO, 1998), then what are the wider developmental expectations required of tertiary educators and institutions?

Currently, the principal focus by students, faculty, parents and other stakeholders is the best possible academic transcript as this is presented as the primary measure of successful education (Chen et al., 2016). Yet what does this document reflect concerning the holistic preparation of the student towards a future life of enrichment (wellbeing) for self and others in a world that is vastly different to that experienced by their elders upon graduation?

The research problem then relates to the lifewide development of students and specifically whether, in addition to the academic transcript/vocational certificate, a

separate document is of benefit to graduating students as evidence of wider development associated with enrolment at a higher education institution. In this regard, already various tertiary providers, at an individual and in some cases uniformly at a national level, offer to graduates an expanded report or additional document that summarises verified and significant non-curricular achievements (Burgess, 2012; European Commission, 2019; Green & Parnell, 2017).

Linked to the research problem, the purposes of this thesis are therefore to:

- 1) Explore any non-curricular functions of tertiary education; then
- 2) Consider existing models that encourage and recognise the wider development of students; and
- 3) Review the ACK Award program as one formal structure that enables tertiary students to self-manage their lifewide and lifelong goal setting and progress reflection, with the support of a mentor.

The first and second purposes of this thesis will be addressed as part of the literature review in Chapter 3. The third research purpose will be considered through the applied research case study in Chapters 5 and 6.

1.4 Justification of the research

When the candidate commenced work in 1971, graduation marked the end of formal study and most workers could look forward to a lifetime of secured employment, if they wished, within the one organisation. Career pathways were handled by the ‘Personnel Department’ and promotion was largely based on length of service. During the past 50 years, on the positive side, Personnel Departments have been replaced by Human Resources or Human Capital Departments to confirm that employees are a valued resource within the organisation. However, with continued and accelerating changes in technology, workers now require constant updating of knowledge and skills to maintain employability. Since the organisations themselves face increasing competition, not only locally but from anywhere through the internet, there is an ongoing need for staff restructures and therefore employers cannot offer the security of permanency. Indeed, nearly 15 years ago, it was noted “the most significant workplace change is the concept that a job for life is no longer a reality” (Ministerial

Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs [MCEECDYA], 2010b, p. 10).

As employers are no longer able to manage careers for their workers, the responsibility now rests with the employees themselves and hence the use of terms such as “protean career” (Briscoe et al., 2012, p. 308) and “life/career” (McMahon et al., 2003, p. 5) to signify that workers should “design and manage their [own] careers” (Hooley et al., 2013, p. 12) to provide the greatest meaning to them in the context of their overall life direction. Current graduates can therefore now expect ongoing “parallel or fused periods” (Chisholm, 2008, p. 145) of work and learning to “transition between a variety of life, learning, and work roles” (Hooley et al., 2013, p. 12).

How are young, inexperienced students being prepared to self-manage their future life/careers beyond graduation? For their part, most schools and universities currently hand their graduates an academic transcript/vocational certificate to confirm the completion of scholastic studies and vocational training. What do these transcripts/certificates indicate with regard to the ability of the holder to maintain self-esteem and life purpose amidst constant, significant and unpredictable changes in career paths and community dynamics. The recent COVID-19 crisis added yet another layer to an already complex matrix that young people must somehow navigate.

The World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century (UNESCO, 1998) identified that the primary mission of tertiary providers for this new millennium is to “educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens” (p. 3). In order to be a responsible citizen, the graduate must have the capability and confidence to not only purposefully self-manage their own life/career but at the same time actively support and encourage others within their community, for shared and sustainable development.

In addressing their mission to society, higher education institutions issue academic transcripts as authentication of “highly qualified graduates” (UNESCO, 1998, p. 3), but what evidence is presented concerning the nurturing of “responsible citizens” (p. 3)? Any community is only as strong as its weakest link. If tertiary providers are being relied on to nurture responsible citizens, then how is the question of responsible citizenship addressed, assessed and affirmed?

The justification for this research project is to highlight that many tertiary providers have yet to make the switch from a predominant focus on academic/vocational preparation for professional careers to holistic development for self-management of life/careers and responsible citizenship. The academic transcript, by its very title, only covers scholastic development; it neither acknowledges nor addresses the quantum shifts that have occurred and continue to unfold in relation to workplace, economic and social relationships.

Until such time as tertiary providers present graduation reports that also reflect development towards work-life balance and responsible citizenship, the students, parents and prospective employers have no incentive to prioritise non-academic development. Therefore, to confirm that nurturing “responsible citizens” (UNESCO, 1998, p. 3) is a critical part of higher education for the future betterment of the student and the wider community, some form of associated graduation documentation is needed that is valued by the student, the institution, employers and society generally.

The following literature review (Chapter 3) will consider the wider role of higher education and initiatives that are taking place to address this. The case study of the ACK Award program will then review the existing framework, established specifically to nurture self-management of student lifewide and lifelong learning, with a view to improving the award program as well as adding to the body of knowledge regarding holistic student development.

1.5 Role of the researcher

In 2004, the candidate and his wife were tertiary teachers at the Institute of TAFE Tasmania when it became an auspicing partner with the soon to be established Australian College of Kuwait (ACK). They were approached to be part of the set-up team for the college and viewed this as an exciting life/career opportunity as both their daughters had already moved to Melbourne for university studies.

From its beginnings, ACK encouraged all staff to pursue their own further and higher education and accordingly the candidate undertook a Master of Education majoring in Lifelong Learning. During this study, the candidate also became interested in lifewide learning and was especially impressed with associated award programs in the United Kingdom. He therefore submitted a proposal to the college for the establishment of an

ACK Award as an optional program of personal development for students. More details with regard to the subsequently developed ACK Award program are included in Section 4.7.

The ACK Award commenced in 2013 and the candidate managed this program for seven years until his departure from Kuwait in 2020. Accordingly, the candidate was fortunate to play a leading role in the design, establishment and ongoing management of the program, and was personally in contact with all participating students during that time.

Having been closely involved with the development of the ACK Award over an extended period from its inception, the candidate considered it important to capture the experiences and reflections of graduates who had taken part in the program in order to add to the body of knowledge regarding frameworks intended to nurture holistic learning. Although the candidate is no longer in Kuwait, this research project will be of personal benefit as the candidate intends to approach the management of the school to be attended by his granddaughters with a view to establishing a lifewide award program for interested students.

1.6 Context of the research

Chapter 4 includes a cultural background and context for this research project. It was conducted within Kuwait, which is a vastly different cultural environment to that of the candidate as an Australian from Caucasian descent. Chapter 5 then presents the methodology and specifically the use of a Yin (2018) Type 2 Case Study with the *context* of the research being a Middle Eastern, Islamic Higher Education Institution (the Australian College of Kuwait, or ACK), the *case* being the ACK Award as a program for lifewide student development, and the *embedded units of analysis* being interviews with 20 former participants of the optional program.

The ACK is a different learning environment compared to the previous experiences of the candidate as an accounting/management teacher at the Institute of TAFE Tasmania. Although both are tertiary settings, TAFE Tasmania is a government controlled educational institution, based in a Western setting with significant numbers of students being part-time and/or distance learners. In contrast, ACK is privately owned by a small number of local business persons in an Arabic/Islamic setting with

all current students being full-time, campus based. Accordingly, as highlighted in Section 7.4, there are several limitations associated with this research project. For example, it only considers the nurturing of lifewide learning within one comparatively new, private tertiary institution and in an Arabic, Islamic, relatively affluent setting. Therefore, the findings from the applied research need reasoned interpretation when compared to other learning environments and levels.

1.7 Research questions

In Section 1.3, the research problem associated with this study was identified as to whether, in addition to the academic transcript/vocational certificate, a separate document is of benefit to graduating students as evidence of wider development associated with enrolment at a HEI.

In considering the above research problem, section 4.8, Figure 4.1 (in conjunction with Figure 3.1 from Section 3.2.6) incorporates a diagrammatic presentation of the linkages between relevant theories associated with student development to the four Delors' (1996) pillars of lifewide learning, related higher education services (curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular), and current official student recognition (academic transcripts, vocational certificates, non-academic achievement reports, award programs and certificates), including the ACK Award program.

In relation to the above, this research project is intended to examine whether the ACK Award is a useful framework in nurturing student self-management of their lifewide and lifelong learning. To this end, as reflected in the final column of Figure 4.1 (Section 4.8), the three specific research questions associated with this study are:

1. Did the ACK Award program achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how and to what degree?
2. Has the ACK Award assisted in meeting the career-shaping aspirations of participants and, if so, how?
3. To what extent, if at all, did the presence and encouragement of a staff mentor assist participating students in clarifying and pursuing lifewide goals and, if so, how?

1.8 Significance of the study and contribution to knowledge

The candidate is not aware of any other tertiary holistic recognition program that has been structured to:

- Nurture students to set and regularly review progress towards goals across all four Delors' (1996) pillars of learning;
- Reflect at the end of each semester/term on achievements against past goals, leading to the setting of further goals for the coming semester/term;
- Include ongoing, structured meetings with an approved mentor whose role is to encourage and guide the participant(s); and
- Foster lifelong as well as lifewide learning through incremental levels of award.

Accordingly, the significance of this study is to capture the experiences and reflections of former participants within the ACK Award with a view to adding to the body of knowledge towards the nurturing of holistic learning within tertiary institutions. Further details concerning project significance are included in Section 7.2.

1.9 Outline of the thesis and conclusion

The structure of this thesis is as follows:

- Chapter 1 introduces the research project. It begins with a background to lifewide learning and then a description of the research problem and hence the purposes of this study. The chapter also includes the research questions associated with the study and the significance of the study as a contribution towards the body of knowledge relating to lifewide learning.
- Chapter 2 describes the Professional Studies ethos associated with this research project. During his seven years in managing the ACK Award, the candidate constantly received feedback from student participants and faculty mentors regarding the usefulness and framework of the Award. This all contributed to the ongoing reflective practice by the candidate and prompted his decision to document his insider research in this current thesis.

- Chapter 3 presents a literature review of foundational theories, published research and initiatives by others concerning wider student learning and, in particular, frameworks to nurture student self-authorship.
- Chapter 4 includes a cultural background to the context of this research project. In this regard, the research was undertaken within a Middle East, Arabic, Islamic HEI which has a different cultural environment to the previous experiences of the candidate as an Australian vocational teacher with Caucasian descent. An opportunity arose for the candidate to be part of the set-up team for a new college in Kuwait resulting in a period of 16 years working at the Australian College of Kuwait.
- Chapter 5 presents the methodology. Since the project is focused on a review of the ACK Award based on feedback from graduates who had taken part in the program, it follows that the ontology is relativist, the epistemology is subjectivist, the paradigm is interpretivist, and the research design is an exploratory case study using semi-structured interviews.
- Chapter 6 includes findings from the semi-structured interviews and an analysis of these against the three case study research questions.
- Chapter 7 presents the conclusions from this research project. Importantly, it identifies the limitations of this narrow research and, therefore, areas for future investigation. Taking these into account, it presents the anticipated contribution towards expanding the body of knowledge in relation to nurturing self-authorship as well as to ACK itself through refinement of the ACK Award and to the candidate for his own professional and personal purposes.

Having presented an introduction to this research project in Chapter 1, the following chapter describes the work-based Professional Studies approach to the research. It includes a statement of prior learning, the role of the candidate as an insider researcher, the anticipated triple dividend of returns from the research and the candidate's own personal learning objectives.

CHAPTER 2 : PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

2.1 Introduction

Professional Studies is “a personalised, self-designed and self-directed program of WBL (Work-Based Learning) and research, which seeks to deliver ‘triple dividend’ contributions to professional practice knowledge, work domains and the self (i.e. the personal and professional life of the practitioner)” (Fergusson, van der Laan, White, et al., 2019, p. 698). This chapter will unpack the above definition with reference to the WBL project associated with this case study research.

To better understand the emergence of Professional Studies, an historical context is useful. In 1966, the candidate’s eldest brother, Mike, finished school with a grade 10 School Certificate. At that time, this was sufficient to gain entry into, and progress upwards through, a then stable career within the banking sector. However, in the 1990’s, after thirty years’ service with one bank, Mike suddenly found himself redundant as a result of a head office decision to centralise online branch accounting for Tasmania from Melbourne. Mike then happily spent the rest of his working life in a radically different role, as a shift worker at the Nystar Zinc Works, Hobart.

The candidate’s elder brother, Paul, gained his grade 12 Higher School Certificate in 1969. One year of a follow-on Bachelor of Arts was sufficient for Paul to decide that a purely academic style university education was not for him. Paul therefore commenced a lifetime successful career within the then Commonwealth Employment Service. Neither Paul nor Mike pursued any further “formal” (Smith & Clayton, 2009, p. 6) post-secondary qualifications although both undertook numerous work organised training and development programs.

The candidate himself completed his Higher School Certificate in 1970 and, due to uncertainty regarding future career, accepted a position in the public service as an initial step. On his first day at work, the candidate was informed that up to five hours per week study leave was available for staff wishing to undertake approved tertiary studies. With this incentive, the candidate embarked upon a part-time Bachelor of Economics, majoring in Accounting and Economics. Had it not been for the leave inducement, who knows where the candidate’s career may have headed? Certainly, at that time, 1971, completion of a Bachelor’s degree was not considered a priority for

the majority of school leavers, with barely 35% of Australians aged 25 and above having achieved Higher School Certificate and less than 10% holding a post-secondary qualification. By 2010, a radical change had occurred with almost 85% of Australians completing year 12 schooling and more than 30% acquiring a post-secondary qualification.

When the candidate joined the workforce in 1971, completion of grade 12 was more than adequate formal education as a launchpad for a lifetime of secure employment in any large organisation. Indeed, promotion was largely on the basis of seniority and careers were managed on behalf of employees by the ‘Personnel Department’.

In sharp contrast, as a result of accelerating changes in technology, digitisation and robotics, organisations must now continuously review the size and structure of their labour force to remain competitive. Thus, Tynjälä (2008) noted that:

rapid development of information and communications technology, the growing production of knowledge in the economy, increasing internationalization and globalization as well as changes in occupational structures and in the contents and organization of work have challenged not only educational institutions but also work organizations to develop new ways of ensuring that the level of competence of the workforce meets these challenges. (p. 131)

These changes occurred during the working life of the candidate from 1971 to 2020. At the start of his career, the candidate, like many other work associates, accepted that promotion especially within the public service was primarily based on length of service and that, along with other large employers, there was the security of a “job for life (which) is no longer a reality” (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 10).

Within a workplace environment of continued reorganisation, often with associated redundancies, the prospect of a ‘job for life’ can no longer be guaranteed and therefore responsibility for career management has shifted from the organisation to the employees themselves. Hence the emergence of terms such as life/career (McMahon et al., 2003) to affirm that workers should proactively self-manage their future professional and personal goals in the directions that will lead to their enrichment.

As a result of the above radical and ongoing changes in the nature of work and general lifestyles, governments, educational researchers and practitioners have acknowledged the need for a broader role of higher education not just in the initial post-secondary

academic development of students but also in their ongoing learning, essential to maintain currency and competitiveness within a professional environment that is continuously impacted by emerging technologies. In this later regard, the focus of learning for students already established in their careers is not predominantly academic and intra-mural but largely extra-mural and specifically work-based for the purpose of strengthening their professional standing. Universities, then, have needed to switch to the development of “scholarly professionals” (Fergusson, van der Laan, White, et al., 2019, p. 700) rather than “professional scholars”.

This chapter will explore WBL with particular reference to the personal experiences of the candidate leading to the current Professional Studies doctoral project.

2.2 Work-based learning (WBL)

Even before COVID-19, workplace environments were becoming increasingly fluid. In 2012, Cross noted that the workplace has:

changed inexorably [in the last 20 years]. Business has become unpredictable. Results are asymmetric. Everyone’s connected. Value has migrated to intangibles. Organisations are becoming organic. Talent chooses where to work. Power is shifting from suppliers to customers. Learning and work are converging. Time has sped up. (Cross, 2012, p. 3)

Workplace change is far from a new phenomenon. What is relatively new are the unpredictable, exponential and “messy” (Fergusson, 2019, p. 108), environments within which professionals need to contribute to organisational survival, if not growth. COVID-19 added another layer of complexity with workplaces and educational institutions having to instantly transition to off-site, online activity unless onsite attendance was required for essential services. Experiences associated with the recent pandemic demonstrated to large numbers of employers and employees that some if not all work could be satisfactorily undertaken away from the physical workplace, through online connection. This has reinforced the distinction between work place and work space in recognition that “traditional places of work are either transformed or replaced by mobile, discontinuous and temporary work environments” (Fergusson, van der Laan, White, et al., 2019, p. 699).

Considering that for growing numbers of professional roles, work no longer requires a specific workplace, the term work-based learning and research is now used to reflect that work is often “not associated with a ‘place’ of work per se but a ‘domain of practice’—a professional sphere in which one works—irrespective of the specific location in which one’s work is carried out” (Fergusson et al., 2017, p. 2).

Along with changes in the nature of work, the meaning of career has also shifted from being purely work related to work as part of an overall enriching and unfolding life. In this regard, the Australian Blueprint for Career Development, commissioned by the Australian Government in 2010 (MCEECDYA, 2010a), listed eleven competencies for productive career development including Competency 9, “Maintain balanced life and work roles...understanding how our various life and work roles impact upon our preferred future or lifestyle” (p. 19). The message for workers was not to see career as unrelated to but part of a balanced life towards a holistic preferred future. This is reflected in a 2019 definition of work as the “innate human expression of effort, activity, and energy given to tasks that contribute to the overall social and economic welfare of communities and environments from which personal meaning and benefit are derived” (Fergusson, van der Laan, & Baker, 2019, p. 291).

Work has always required being able to contribute effectively to the team and organisation. The above definition expands the meaning to also take into account community and environmental sustainability as well as overall personal ‘meaning’ or wellbeing (Sen, 1993). With this broader definition of work, WBL:

is distinguished by what it is not: it is not training; it is not formal; it is not focused narrowly on skills; it is not about individuals; it is not disconnected from the needs and interests of society; and it is not a mere relocation of learning from the classroom to the workplace. (Fergusson et al., 2017, p. 3)

Following on from the above description of WBL, work-based research covers “the systematic and methodical process of investigating work-related ‘problems’” (Fergusson, 2019, p. 106). Specifically with regard to the work-related ‘problem’ under investigation by the candidate, in Section 1.2, the candidate described the contextual background to this research project. The candidate had been employed by the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) even before its opening in 2004. In 2013, he was given approval to establish the ACK Award as a structured program to encourage

and recognise the wider development of students in line with the four pillars of learning identified by the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century (Delors, 1996), as needed for the balanced development of students in the new millennium. With this general background, in Section 1.3, the research problem associated with this study was stated as to whether, in addition to the academic transcript/vocational certificate, a separate document (such as the ACK Award) is of benefit to graduating students as evidence of wider development associated with enrolment at a HEI.

2.3 Professional studies and WBL

PhDs require a significant investment of personal time and effort to become expert in a particular topic. As a contribution to the overall body of knowledge, such dedication has considerable merit; however, the limitation is that it has been described as “an inch square and a mile deep” (Fergusson, van der Laan, White, et al., 2019, p. 696). In the workplace, such detailed understanding of a narrow field is of little use until it is contextualised and applied within the broader organisational mission. For this reason, there has been a widening gap between “the knowledge needed at work and the knowledge and skills produced through formal education” (Tynjälä, 2008, p. 131).

The acquisition of knowledge and skills specific to the particular needs of an individual workplace, especially in times of rapid change, may simply not yet have been recorded in academic texts and journals. Accordingly, workers accumulate much of their professional knowledge “through doing rather than through knowing. Added to this there is an emerging appreciation of the important role that context plays in any learning” (Jennings, 2012, p. 1).

The response by universities in Australia has been to offer academic supervision “to aid mid- to senior-career professionals (particularly in relation to work-based research, writing and publishing skills) and contribute beneficial knowledge to communities (or domains) of professional practice” (Fergusson, van der Laan, White, et al., 2019, p. 697). Such Professional Studies programs involve a mix of scholastic and applied means of learning, utilising a “transdisciplinary field that sits outside of subject frameworks and has its own set of norms and practices” (Lester & Costley, 2010, p. 562).

By its nature, Professional Studies research flows across all related parts of the host workplace and respects all valid inputs regardless of the source. Accordingly,

In addition to analysing the published academic literature on the discipline, reviews of this type might also envelop government white papers and policy documents, company annual reports, competency models, trade journals, and so-called ‘grey literature’ (i.e., literature that exists outside standard academic and commercial domains, such as less public or unpublished organisational data), and may extend to root cause analysis or public policy analysis. (Fergusson et al., 2017, p. 6)

The term ‘transdisciplinarity’ is used to highlight that Professional Studies research has a wide, not narrow, lens. Accordingly, transdisciplinarity respects that:

the non-standard view of work-related problems is of an entirely different ilk: problems are, according to this mindset, always messy but can also be co-produced and wicked (or even super-wicked). These types of problems, which are common to contemporary workplaces and domains of practice, in addition to being difficult to define, require multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary methods due to the multifarious goals and organisational complexity associated with them. (Fergusson, 2019, p. 111)

The participation by an academic supervisor as a “critical friend” (Fergusson, van der Laan, White, et al., 2019, p. 701) is essential in Professional Studies so that the workplace experts learn how to “turn ideas, beliefs or doubts into inquiries with suitable research; which means learning about ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, [and] methods” (Bendell, 2012).

In recognition of the academic rigour associated with Professional Studies research, the Australian Qualifications Framework has set the standard for academic and work-based doctorates at Level 10, whereby “graduates at this level will have systematic and critical understanding of a complex field of learning and specialised research skills for the advancement of learning and/or for professional practice” (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2013, p. 13).

The academic output from a Professional Studies doctorate is the thesis whereas, for the host organisation, the valued output is an applied product such as a report or manual. Relating the above understanding of Professional Studies and WBL to the present research project, the candidate had been an ACK faculty member before moving across to non-teaching roles including Student Activities Manager, Senior

Manager Registration, Senior Manager Office of the Vice President Academic Affairs, and finally Senior Manager Office of the President. Especially in the latter roles, the candidate had direct access to decision makers across the college in both academic and non-academic developmental programs. Accordingly, in the process of developing the proposal to establish the ACK Award, the candidate conducted meaningful dialogue with faculty leaders and practitioners, as well as managers and officers associated with extra-curricular programs. Their inputs were essential in the initial development of the ACK Award as well as its presentation to students. Individual faculty members and selected other staff were approached to become mentors for participating students and this enabled ongoing feedback both from the mentors and the students regarding the usefulness of the ACK Award as a framework to help in setting and progressing toward lifewide goals.

The candidate also attended various international conferences on wider student development to gain a deeper understanding of research and applied programs towards holistic student development.

To ensure that the candidate had a structured and sound approach in developing the ACK Award, the academic guidance of the UniSQ Professional Studies Program was sought. It was therefore the combined input of the UniSQ academic supervisors, together with transdisciplinary dialogue between the candidate and workplace colleagues and students, as well as sharing with other researchers and student developmental program leaders at conferences that collectively enriched this research project.

2.4 Statement of prior learning

For the candidate, a Statement of Prior Learning needs to be lifewide-based as his life and career have always been tightly interwoven. Further, it is not simply a chronological listing of academic and work-based learning but rather a continuous, at times confused, journey towards life purpose and meaning. In this regard, it is deeply significant to the candidate that the title of the report, captured opposite, from the UNESCO International Commission on Education for the 21st Century was “Learning-the Treasure Within” (Delors, 1996). In this regard, the Commission highlighted that there is:

every reason to place renewed emphasis on the moral and cultural dimensions of education, enabling each person to grasp the individuality of other people and to understand the world's erratic progression towards a certain unity; but this process must begin with self-understanding through an inner voyage whose milestones are knowledge, meditation and the practice of self-criticism none of the talents which are hidden like buried treasure in every person must be left untapped. (Delors, 1996, p. 19 and 23)

This inner voyage that we are all encouraged to take is to literally find ourselves - what makes sense to us as we journey through life as individuals but equally as members of families and an increasingly globalised community.

The context of this inner voyage for the candidate during his own early student years was heavily influenced by his conservative Catholic parents, a Christian Brothers' education and being an Altar Server at Church. Accordingly, spirituality was always destined to be a major part of the candidate's life and learning. Zuber-Skerritt (2007) refers to the past habit of *Lectio Divina* or spiritual reading for the purposes of finding meaning and transforming one's life. Following a reading from scripture, the person would then internalise the words, pray and subsequently live a righteous life. Perhaps in keeping with today's liberated lifestyle, Zuber-Skerritt (2007) renamed the phase of praying as "reflecting" (p. 36), but, for the candidate, learning and reflecting have never been secular. Believing in the existence of God and His Presence in this life have always been foundational for the learning and life-career decisions and reflections of the candidate.

Although the candidate has a faith-based spirituality; as noted by Wane et al. (2011), spirituality need only extend to a temporal purpose for life. Regardless of the context, without such a foundation, emotional balance is weak, especially in times of crisis (Whitford & Olver, 2012). Accordingly, for the candidate, the pursuit of learning in relation to emotional wellbeing, for himself and for others, is a priority (Morisano & Shore, 2010).

As a result of annual meetings with Christian Brothers' Vocations Directors, the candidate searched for answers to an inner calling towards the priesthood. However, as a protected 17-year-old grade 12 student, the prospect of leaving home and living in a seminary for seven years was too great a step directly from school and so, as a fill in, the candidate accepted a public service position.

As mentioned in Section 2.1, the first day on the job opened the opportunity for unplanned part-time degree level studies through a work incentive program. For the next few years, the candidate was distracted between full-time work and part-time study and it was therefore only upon graduation in 1976 that the longer-term future came back into focus. By that stage, celibacy was unappealing; however, the candidate still felt called to work for the Church in some capacity and, therefore, gratefully accepted an administrative role within the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Hobart.

Finally, the candidate felt at home and thrived from this opportunity to live out his faith through support to others within a Christian care organisation. However, after sixteen years' service in a demanding role, time with family became a factor and hence a career change to vocational teaching which enabled long summer holidays with growing children. Suddenly, the candidate found himself standing in front of a class of 20 or more TAFE hospitality and tourism students, teaching accounting to learners with varying degrees of enthusiasm towards their studies.

At that stage, no formal teaching qualifications were needed to teach within the TAFE system, provided the teacher held relevant academic qualifications and industry experience. Nonetheless, the candidate undertook a course in Teaching and Learning which, together with peer support, somehow enabled him to stumble through the steep learning curve.

After seven years with TAFE, the candidate was enjoying the freedoms associated with being an empty nester when, in 2004, the opportunity arose for both the candidate and his wife (also a TAFE teacher, in IT and Office Management) to be part of the set-up team for a new vocational college in Kuwait, auspiced by their local institute. Although this meant being a long way from family and friends, the professional and general life experiences to be gained from such an opening could not be refused.

In Kuwait, tertiary faculty members are expected to hold at least a Masters level of formal qualification and so both the candidate and his wife decided to strengthen their academic knowledge in the field of education through an MEd program with UniSQ. This led to unplanned learning in relation to lifelong and lifewide learning and sparked an interest by the candidate to explore student holistic development within his Kuwait college. Over a period of time, with the support of ACK management, the candidate established the ACK Award in 2013, and managed this program until his departure

from the college in 2020. Throughout that period, the candidate was in regular contact with all student participants as well as faculty mentors, Student Activities staff, Marketing, Alumni Office and many other Departments. This enabled the candidate to directly learn from such dialogues as well as unintended feedback in discussions with parents at ACK Award certificate presentations and other college events.

The candidate has also gained from the input of academic supervisors and his own academic and applied research as part of the current Professional Studies doctorate. The purpose of enrolling in such a formal program of learning was primarily to ensure that the lifewide learning framework developed by the candidate at his college reflected latest academic research in the field and also took into account the experiences of similar programs elsewhere.

2.5 Lifelong learning (LLL)

Aleandri and Checchi (2015), present lifelong and lifewide learning as inseparable with both having personal, professional and societal consequences. By inference, lifelong learning suggests an ongoing experience. Lifewide learning considers the breadth of such lifelong learning. Aleandri and Checchi (2015) note that:

lifelong education does not look as a simple extension of traditional education into adulthood or beyond, but a real new pedagogical strategy aimed at enhancing all dimensions of life of individuals, a useful reference framework to address the need for solutions to many and unprecedented challenges in the cultural, social and professional, individual life and modern societies. (p.1191)

In Section 2.1 above, the candidate referred to rapid and escalating changes within individual workplaces as a consequence of technological advancements and online globalised competition. This has highlighted the need for structured Professional Studies programs that enable workplace professionals to benefit from academic supervision as they undertake applied research to address present challenges and/or future opportunities within their organisation. In Section 2.8, consideration is given to the resultant triple dividends to the candidate, the workplace and the academic/professional community generally.

In this section, Professional Studies is addressed as part of the overall lifelong learning journey of the candidate. A Professional Studies research activity is conducted over a

finite period and at times the usefulness of its outcomes is dependent on the ability of all stakeholders to finalise the project with minimal delay. Work-related problems usually “exist in constantly changing, unstable environments” (Fergusson, 2019, p. 107) and this is far from a recent phenomenon. Indeed, it is approaching 50 years since Ackoff (1979) noted that within such “turbulent environments” (p. 79) any potential solutions can only have a limited timeframe. Further, Schön (2016) has highlighted the complex, fluid and overlapping dynamics associated with ‘live’ workplace planning, decision making and action and, therefore, “some of the solutions advocated by professional experts ... [create] problems as bad as or worse than those they had been designed to solve” (p. 10). Therefore, Fergusson (2019) suggests that “according to the non-standard view, causes, effects and solutions are never straightforward nor are they easily modelled” (p. 108).

The above realities present a stumbling block for many Professional Studies research projects. On the upside, “Professional Studies practitioners are by nature curious and are generally pragmatic; they ask questions and seek answers to problems they see in their workplace or practice domain” (Fergusson, Shallies, et al., 2019, p. 6). On the flip side, Professional Studies practitioners are usually under considerable work pressure and therefore they “typically do not want (or cannot afford the time) to strain when learning, and therefore for them the experience has to be fun and rewarding, or at the very least not a process to be survived” (Fergusson, van der Laan, White, et al., 2019, p. 700).

There is no easy solution to the dilemma that, on the one hand, a university cannot provide a doctoral degree for less than academically rigorous research and yet, on the other, workplaces must remain viable and key mid to high level staff do not have the luxury of time for anything other than critical tasks. During the course of his Professional Studies research, the candidate struggled with such realities. As a senior manager, husband, father and grandfather, time was always in short supply and since the Professional Studies qualification was not essential for any career expectations, it remained on the backburner for extended periods.

Lifelong learning is a continuum but it is not divided into equal milestones of achievement. Similarly lifewide learning is not easily divisible into a rigid daily program as multiple internal and external variables are at play regardless of the level

of planning. For the candidate, it was only when he departed from ACK that he was able to commit the time needed to make deep inroads towards his research. The challenge for everyone is to somehow find the balance, day by day, to progress across all key life/career priorities and contextualise today's activity as part of a lifelong journey of learning.

The candidate believes in the value of Professional Studies programs; however, from a practitioner's perspective, the process would be so much easier if the potential exists for joint doctoral research, with a full-time academic student playing a leading role in the theoretical aspects and the work-based professional leading the applied research. The candidate suggests this would expedite the research process and provide more timely outcomes. In the process, it opens doors for fulltime students to gain a deeper understanding of workplace dynamics at the same time as reducing the stresses experienced by professionals in having to master theoretical aspects that are relatively low ranked in comparison to current workplace financial and operational imperatives.

2.6 Insider researcher

Insider research has been defined as “research conducted by people who are already members of the organization or community they are seeking to investigate as a result of education, employment, social networks or political engagements” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005 as cited in Humphrey, 2013, p. 2).

Insider research is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, being inside the organisation saves time in establishing contacts and understanding the workplace subtleties. However, there is the risk that an “insider researcher will have particular loyalties and antipathies” (Humphrey, 2007, p. 23). This is where the presence of outside academic supervision provides a checkpoint so that the insider researcher is able to take a step back when needed and recognise that s/he is holding “two distinct roles of being an ‘insider’ and being a ‘researcher’” (Humphrey, 2013, p. 13).

In this research project, a real dilemma was that the candidate was critically reviewing a program that he instigated. Therefore, he was in a similar situation to another insider researcher who commented that:

familiarity was extremely beneficial to the study especially in terms of providing context. However, I learned quickly that this

preunderstanding was also a barrier for new knowledge. It was only after outside researchers challenged my interpretations did I realize how my individual history was skewing my findings. It was a struggle for me to listen to participants when their interpretations of past event differed dramatically from my recollections. On a few occasions, I actually took their feedback personally. (Coghlan et al., 2014, p. 997)

For the candidate, who obviously believes strongly in the purposes of the ACK Award, the personal struggle throughout the insider research project was to ensure the ‘researcher’ hat was predominant to obtain objective results that will most benefit the future of the program.

On the positive side, because the candidate had been a staff member since the opening of the college in 2004, he was well known to all staff and students associated with the research project and, as explained in Section 4.2, it is essential in any dealings with Arabs that a relationship is established before genuine communication is possible.

The growth of Professional Studies programs confirms their overall value not only to the insider researchers themselves but to their workplace and the wider professional community. Insider researchers know their work structure but more importantly they know the pulse of the organisation and therefore how certain clinically determined outcomes just won’t fit within the organisational culture. For instance, “what are the core values held by the organisation, what assumptions underlie those values, and what behaviours and attitudes characterise and define the workplace?” (Fergusson et al., 2017, p. 5).

2.7 Reflective practice

Garnett (2016) summarised the growing dilemma facing individuals and organisations: “In a complex global world we are desperately in need of a different paradigm to make sense of real-life problems that do not neatly fit into our traditional concepts of single subject disciplines or multidisciplinary approaches” (p. 309). At a personal level, portable, digital technologies have blurred the boundary between work and private lives. At an organisational level, instant online communications and remote access to endless data have facilitated but also necessitated an acceleration in planning, decision making and review cycles. Therefore, personal and professional reflection are now fast-tracked. The candidate is reminded of an elderly couple sitting in the front seat of their car whilst travelling along an expressway and locked in by

fast traffic on either side. The wife looked across at her husband and sheepishly asked ‘Where are we headed?’, to which the anxious husband replied ‘I don’t know but we are making great time’.

When the candidate was young, there were three major and locally owned department stores in Hobart (Tasmania): Connor’s, Fitzgerald’s and Soundy’s. Over the years, they all fell victim to national competition and now many of the national retail outlets are closing as a result of online alternatives. Work roles are constantly changing and with these changes there is a continued need for ongoing or lifelong learning. Reflective practice must therefore include an eye for the future when reviewing the past.

The candidate’s first job was as a filing clerk at the then Post Master General’s Department (now Telstra), responsible to place documents on relevant files and control the location of the files when issued to staff. One morning, an engineer took a team of staff to the local tip to search for a file that he had placed on top of his rubbish bin beside his desk the previous day, as he had no room on his desk which was covered in large foldout plans. Of course, at the end of the day, he forgot to take the file off the bin and the cleaners assumed it was no longer needed. The file was never found and an enormous amount of time was lost in trying to re-create the missing documents from other sources. This experience adds a new dimension to reflective practice, not with regard to any major project under review but to simple, nonetheless essential, day-to-day continuing support functions.

The above two examples affirm that reflective practice must be multi-faceted and hence the use of terms such as double, triple and continuous learning (Fergusson, van der Laan, & Baker, 2019).

Reflective practice has been defined as “a crucial skill and method that creates a learning situation and ensures a learning outcome which combines previous experience, specific contexts, and theory-guided practice” (Fergusson, van der Laan, & Baker, 2019, p. 291). This definition highlights the three aspects of firstly taking into account previous experience, then positing these past experiences within the current and emerging contexts, and thirdly, factoring in related theories towards a more disciplined and structured approach to future focused outcomes.

It is in this later aspect of future focused outcomes that reflective practice:

can operate as a bridge – on one hand it is a personal tool to connect the individual (their own personal traits and preferences) with their professional growth and learning, while on the other hand it is a shared tool [that] can assist a workgroup to connect the now (current state) with the future (desired state) and through this informs improved practice and creates even more opportunities for learning. The power of disciplined, creative reflection seems to lie in its capacity to operate as a bridge that connects the territory on either side (be it inside with outside, personal with professional, or current state to future state). (Baker et al., 2017, pp. 8-9)

Accordingly, for the professional, reflective practice is not only about individual returns but also the bridge leading to improved outcomes for others within and beyond the organisation. In this regard, the terms ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ reflection have been used to confirm the need for, and benefits from, wider reflective practice. As part of this process:

macro-reflection is still conducted by the individual, but its application pertains to outer or external work-based ‘situations’, such as research projects or phenomena in work environments, not simply a micro-reflective practice carried out by workgroups on themselves. In this sense, micro- and macro-reflection can be understood as a way of coupling internal reflection with external situations or linking current work states with future, desired states. (Fergusson et al., 2014, p. 2)

Accordingly, the key usefulness of reflective practice is emphasised above as ‘linking current work states with future, desired states’. Helyer and Kay (2015, as cited in Fergusson, van der Laan, & Baker, 2019) present eight stages in the application of reflective practice, with the initial step being to consider what actually takes/took place and progressing to the critical stage requiring the candidate to “look to the future, and develop strategies, approaches, tactics” (p. 294).

As part of the future focus, broad ranging approaches have been presented such as “double-loop learning” (Hilden & Tikkamäki, 2013, p. 79), to fully consider external factors; triple-loop learning (Lozano, 2014) to allow for organisational sustainability; and continuous learning, to emphasise that learning should not be viewed as discrete but ongoing (Fergusson, van der Laan, & Baker, 2019).

For the candidate, as mentioned in Section 2.4, career and personal life are almost inseparable and hence reflective practice, particularly in relation to a significant activity such as this Professional Studies project, has provided numerous opportunities throughout the process to reflect not only on the usefulness of the ACK Award itself but also the wider working and personal relationships between the candidate and others within the project umbrella. During the course of his doctoral research, the candidate was caught up in the chaos of COVID-19 and was made redundant. Accordingly, reflective practice as it relates to this project has been truncated. However, the candidate's first granddaughter is about to start formal schooling after which an approach will be made for her school to consider trialling a primary school version of the ACK Award. From this perspective, the reflective process will take on a new purpose.

2.8 Learning objectives

At the commencement of this research project, the following learning objectives were identified as related to the candidate's professional development at the time. However, as noted in Section 2.7 above, the candidate ceased employment at ACK prior to the completion of the research and hence the initial learning objectives determined in 2013 subsequently took on a different context. The original learning objectives were to:

1. Develop the candidate's professional knowledge and emotional intelligence through high level research of current theory with regard to student lifewide learning and summarise this through a literature review;
2. Build the candidate's critical judgment skills through contrasting the documented results of applied research undertaken during the research project with regard to programs that involve students in setting and reviewing progress towards non-curricular personal goals, thereby identifying program features that have resulted in relatively higher levels of interest and involvement by the target market;
3. Improve the candidate's analytical and communication skills by evaluating the effectiveness of the Goals Action Plan template (Appendix A) and associated ACK Award as structured and supportive frameworks to assist students in setting and reviewing lifewide goals. The evaluation will include interviews

with former participants in the program and subsequent analysis, review and documentation of these findings in a comprehensive document;

4. Extend the candidate's cultural intelligence through a comparison, using participation rates of students with the ACK Award, as to whether significant variances exist between involvement by different nationalities and genders, and document the results for potential related research in other contexts; and
5. Strengthen the candidate's creativity and innovation skills as well as tolerance for ambiguity/adaptability by participating in conferences to network with other educators for the purposes of becoming aware of innovations in any areas of student development and reflecting as to how these may relate to the candidate's own research into self-managed lifewide learning and incorporate relevant new initiatives into future research reports.

The above original learning objectives will be revisited in Section 7.5 as part of the research project conclusions.

2.9 Triple dividend

As an accountant, the candidate is well familiar with the meaning of triple bottom line which factors in not only financial viability and value of staff but also community/environmental contribution. In a similar way, there is a "triple dividend" (Fergusson & van der Laan, 2021, p. 17) associated with a Professional Studies project. Firstly, for the professional researcher him/herself, there is an "individual dividend" (Fergusson et al., 2017, p. 13). This may be extrinsic in the form of a recognised formal qualification and workplace report that will hopefully lead to career acceleration. However, it may equally be intrinsic and the outcome of a deep inner calling to make a positive difference in the workplace or social setting regardless of any potential personal return. Since the candidate is an empty nester at the twilight end of his career, the intended personal dividend was almost totally intrinsic.

The second dividend is to the host organisation in any one or more ways including "significant contributions to workplace or organisational improvement through innovation, problem solving, new data and analysis, product development and/or

strategic insight. Other dividends may include aiding the development of practice, programs, policy and corporate culture” (Fergusson et al., 2017, p. 13).

With regard to this second dividend, there is a workplace artefact resulting from the Professional Studies project such as “as a framework, training manual, report, white paper, or other documentation of the project” (Fergusson et al., 2017, p. 12). For this research project, the intended dividend to the host organisation, ACK, was a set of recommendations, based on the feedback from former ACK Award participants, as to how the ACK Award could be further improved to contribute to the wider development of students across all four pillars of learning (Delors, 1996).

The third dividend is to the wider professional and academic community. In this regard, although the workplace artefact may be confidential to the host organisation, the thesis is available for wider sharing and therefore the “professional dividend is to academia and practice: the work-based project and the research study that evaluates it contribute to professional practice as supported by academically sound evidence and observations in terms of a rigorous research design” (Fergusson et al., 2017, p. 13).

The intended return to the professional and academic community from this research project was the thesis itself and the desired contribution to the wider body of knowledge regarding the holistic development of students.

In Section 7.6, the candidate revisits the above anticipated triple dividend and reflects on actual returns to the researcher himself, the host organisation and the wider professional/academic community.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter provided a contextual background as to how the candidate’s life/career meandered in a slow but steady direction towards the goal of finding the illusive “treasure within” (Delors, 1996, p. 1). Professional Studies can be undertaken purely for extrinsic returns such as increased career prospects. However, the triple dividend associated with Professional Studies research requires a wider lens and a contribution towards a shared better future. The accelerating challenge is to undertake such major workplace projects in as timely a manner as possible so that recommendations remain relevant amidst messy internal and external environments.

Artificial intelligence and robots will continue to take workplace roles away from humans. The future professional life beyond the relatively short-term for a fresh graduate entering the workplace now is almost unimaginable. Reflective practice for them will be fast paced, along with the rest of their lifestyles. Meanwhile, COVID-19 has precipitated a shift from fixed workplace to fluid work-based activity and learning.

Where are organisations and the people within those organisations headed? The Report from the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century highlighted that it is:

education's noble task to encourage each and every one, acting in accordance with their traditions and convictions and paying full respect to pluralism, to lift their minds and spirits to the plane of the universal and, in some measure, to transcend themselves. It is no exaggeration on the Commission's part to say that the survival of humanity depends thereon. (Delors, 1996, p. 16)

This sentiment is at the core of the candidate's Work-Based Learning project: to critically review a framework, the ACK Award, that was established for the purpose of encouraging and recognising students to set and progress towards lifewide goals that will help them to find their inner treasure and in the process hopefully "transcend themselves" (Delors, 1996, p. 16).

Having presented an introduction to this research project in Chapter 1 and the work-based, Professional Studies approach in this present chapter, the following chapter includes a literature review of the research and initiatives by others concerning student lifewide learning and in particular self-management of holistic development towards self-authorship (Kegan, 1994).

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

In Section 1.3, the candidate presented the research problem as to whether, in addition to the academic transcript/vocational certificate, a separate document is of benefit to graduating students as evidence of wider development associated with enrolment at a higher education institution.

To address this research problem, the purposes of the research project were presented as:

1. Exploration of any non-curricular functions of tertiary education;
2. Consideration of existing models that encourage and recognise the wider development of students, and
3. Review the ACK Award program as one formal structure that enables tertiary students to self-manage their lifewide and lifelong goal setting and progress reflection.

This literature review will address the first two purposes of the research project. Accordingly, it will consider the nature of learning, where it occurs, and how it is planned, measured and recorded. The findings from the literature review will then be used to address the third research purpose, through a case study review (see Chapters 5 and 6) of the ACK Award as one framework to nurture student self-authorship.

This literature review is presented in three parts:

- Part 1 incorporates the theoretical framework with a summary of relevant theories associated with holistic student development.
- Part 2 considers the interpretation and application of theories by governments as well as educational researchers and institutions.
- Part 3 describes the recognition of wider student development at international, national and institutional levels.

3.2 Part 1: Foundational theories

3.2.1 Introduction

In the following sections, the candidate presents theories that have been developed in association with student holistic development.

Learning at any level and particularly within higher education must be responsive to the emerging career and other developmental purposes of the learner for personal and wider benefit (King & Baxter Magolda, 2011). Therefore, any theory related to learning can only be context specific to the educational environment at the time. For instance, barely a century ago, in his book on *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916) wrote:

In the olden times, the diversity of groups was largely a geographical matter. There were many societies, but each, within its own territory, was comparatively homogeneous. But with the development of commerce, transportation, intercommunication, and emigration, countries like the United States are composed of a combination of different groups with different traditional customs. It is this situation which has, perhaps more than any other one cause, forced the demand for an educational institution which shall provide something like a homogeneous and balanced environment for the young.

Only in this way can the centrifugal forces set up by juxtaposition of different groups within one and the same political unit be counteracted. The intermingling in the school of youth of different races, differing religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment. Common subject matter accustoms all to a unity of outlook upon a broader horizon than is visible to the members of any group while it is isolated. The assimilative force of the American public school is eloquent testimony to the efficacy of the common and balanced appeal. (p. 17)

By the end of the same century, societal norms had changed radically so that instead of trying to ‘homogenise’ new members of a community, as presented by Dewey above, diversity through such vehicles as Queer Theory (Warner, 2012), was to be celebrated rather than suppressed across countries, cultures and curriculums. For educators at all levels, a priority currently is for intercultural understanding as part of globalised citizenship (Delors, 1996).

This is not to suggest the writings of Dewey are now redundant but they must be read within a radically different social landscape associated with the “ambiguity that

characterizes contemporary adult life” (Baxter Magolda, 2014, p. 25). As societies evolved during the past century, the original work by Dewey regarding ‘hands-on’ learning laid the foundation upon which Piaget (1936, 1948) subsequently developed his theories on Cognitive Development and Meaning Making, followed by Erikson’s (1959) Identity and Life Cycle Theory, which in turn influenced Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) with his theory on Identity Development.

In 1964, Bloom (Krathwohl et al., 1964), presented a Taxonomy of Learning covering the Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor Domains. Kegan (1982, 1994), and Baxter Magolda (1998, 2014) subsequently developed their theories on Self-Authorship and Transformational Learning, and Kuh (1995, 2001, 2009) on Student Engagement. Each of these theories and models emerged within the context of the community patterns and expectations at the time. Dewey (1916), himself noted that “social environment forms the mental and emotional disposition of behaviour in individuals by engaging them in activities that arouse and strengthen certain impulses, that have certain purposes and entail certain consequences” (p. 13). As presented by Dewey (1916), it is communities that form the intellectual and emotional tendencies of the individual and, therefore, educators have a professional role on behalf of parents and society to contribute towards the balanced development of students.

Following Dewey, in 1936, Piaget presented his theory on the four stages (sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete, and formal) of cognitive development (Piaget, 1936). As the child matures, (s)he is able to attain the highest or formal stage of cognitive development with the ability to reason and make rational judgements. According to Piaget:

Knowledge is not a copy of reality. To know an object, to know an event, is not simply to look at it and make a mental copy or figure of it. To know an object is to act on it. To know is to modify, to transform the object, and to understand the process of this transformation, and as a consequence to understand the way the object is constructed. An operation is thus the essence of knowledge; it is an interiorized action which modifies the object of knowledge. (Piaget, 1936, p. 176)

Piaget’s four stages of cognitive development focused on the period up until early adulthood. This was later expanded by Erikson (1959) who presented his theory covering eight stages of identity development throughout a person’s life from an initial Trust v Mistrust period in early infancy, where the baby either learns to trust or

mistrust carers, through until the final stage of Integrity v Despair, to represent the later years of life when a person either looks back with a sense of pride on achievement or regret from failure.

3.2.2 *Chickering and identity development*

Chickering (1969) drew on Erikson's work and undertook his own intensive study over a four-year period on identity development from the time his student cohort commenced their higher education in 1965 until their senior year. From this research, Chickering presented his theory in which he specified seven vectors in identity development from developing competency to managing emotions, moving towards interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose and integrity.

To reflect constant changes in workplaces and communities, Chickering revisited his work throughout the years. For instance, from an inclusive perspective, whereas in 1967, Chickering referred to a university student as "he" (Chickering, 1967, p. 289), later he affirmatively changed such references to "her" (Braskamp & Chickering, 2009, p. 27).

Relating Chickering's seven vectors in identity development to the ACK Award program (summarised in Section 1.2 and presented more fully in Section 4.7):

- 'developing competence' is reflected in the goal setting and achievements within the ACK Award components of academic and employability activities;
- 'managing emotions', 'moving towards interdependence' and 'developing mature interpersonal relations' are associated with the ACK Award goal setting component of community/environmental service, and
- 'establishing identity', 'developing purpose' and 'developing integrity' are reflected in the ACK Award goal setting component of personal development.

Just as Chickering did not present his seven vectors as being discrete but rather interacting "with movement along the others" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 34), so also with the ACK Award, there is constructive overlapping across the various developmental areas. For instance, a student may set a goal to organise a fund-raising activity for a community project which has linkages both to the pillars of Learning to Live Together and Learning to Do.

In 1993, over 30 years after his original work on identity development, Chickering revisited his theory with Reisser and, in 2010, wrote a reflection on his extended research into “character development” (Chickering, 2010, p. 54). His critique was forthright:

In the quarter century since the release of *Involvement in Learning*, have colleges and universities succeeded or failed in encouraging character development and social responsibility? In my judgment, they—I probably should say we—have failed. I believe that colleges and universities are the most important social institutions for sustaining our pluralistic, globally interdependent democracy.

Yet, they have so far failed to graduate citizens who have attained the levels of cognitive, moral, intellectual, and ethical development required to address complex national and global problems. To be effective, all our citizens must be able to function at the levels of intellectual, emotional, and social complexity required to meet our beleaguered globe’s economic, environmental, human, and political challenges. (Chickering, 2010, p. 57)

Has there been a misplacement of trust in higher education as being capable of preparing the next generation of workplace and community leaders? The above report card from Chickering is less than flattering. For him, higher education is a transformational period in the lives of young people, and institutions have a vital role to play in this regard, especially in view of rapidly changing lifestyles. Indeed, in 2011, Chickering wrote:

Today’s young adults run into a range of lifestyle, belief, and value-system choices far greater than the male-dominated, Christian, and community-based norms that defined our culture in the ’50 and ’60s. No other social institution is as well positioned to help address these issues as our colleges and universities. (Chickering, 2011, p. 31)

To nurture students to develop their characters as fully as possible towards global citizenship during their years in higher education, in a research paper with Braskamp, Chickering (2009) placed heavy responsibility on faculty as “the key interventionists”. In particular, they proposed that:

Faculty as mentors can play a powerful role in helping students become who they are by stressing what is unique and meaningful to each student. It is more nurturing than telling, bringing out from within rather than pouring in from the outside. (Braskamp & Chickering, 2009, p. 30)

As will be noted in Section 4.7, this mentorship role by faculty in the wider development of students is incorporated within the ACK Award program. Also built into the ACK Award (refer Sections 1.2 and 4.7) is the regular process of reflection, as emphasised by Chickering (2008):

The most neglected element is reflection. Without it, there is little learning that lasts. Reflection is the process by which we metabolize our experiences so they nourish us. Experiential learning, especially service learning, dramatically enriches what we are asked to ingest. But without significant opportunities for collective and individual reflection—being force-fed and then asked to regurgitate—the resulting developmental nourishment is much less than it could be. (p. 93)

With regard to the emphasis by Chickering above on ‘service learning’, one of the requirements to obtain the ACK Award is to set, and actively work towards, a goal associated with community/environmental care.

3.2.3 *Kegan and self-evolution*

As Chickering was reviewing his theory on character development, Kegan (1982, 1994), was researching and proposing his theory on self-evolution in which he described five stages of development from infancy to adulthood, with self-authorship being the fourth stage, at which point the learner is able to determine their own direction and priorities. More specifically, according to Kegan (1994), self-authorship empowers the person to “coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalisations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states” (p.270).

Baxter Magolda (2008) applied Kegan’s theory to a post-secondary learning environment and in turn defined self-authorship more precisely as “the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity and social relations” (p.269). With reference to holistic learning, in a joint paper with Barber et al. (2013) Baxter Magolda identified three dimensions of self-authorship:

1. Cognitive, or “how one makes meaning of knowledge” (p. 869);
2. Intrapersonal, or “how one views one’s identity” (p. 869); and
3. Interpersonal, or “how one constructs one’s relations with others” (p. 870).

Figure 3.3 (in Section 3.4.3), links these dimensions of self-authorship (column 1) to the four UNESCO pillars of holistic learning (column 2) and the four areas of lifewide goal setting and progress review within the ACK Award (column 5). In this latter regard, it is noted that:

- the self-authorship dimension of cognitive development covers academic knowledge (Bloom’s Cognitive Domain reflected in column 1 of Figure 3.1 in Section 3.2.6) and employability skills (Bloom’s Psychomotor Domain);
- the interpersonal dimension relates to community/environmental considerations; and
- the intrapersonal dimension is associated with finding the inner self (Bloom did not separate his Affective Domain into intrapersonal and interpersonal elements).

3.2.4 *Baxter Magolda and King: Path towards self-authorship*

Baxter Magolda and King (2012) identified ten positions on the path towards self-authorship, under three broad headings of reliance on:

1. “External” (p. 18) sources for decision making, through a
2. Transition or “Crossroads” (p. 18) phase, involving a mix of external and internal sources, to the
3. “Internal” (p. 18) or self-authorship point where the learner is confident of their own “internal voice” (p. 19).

In the early stages of learning, according to Baxter, Magolda and King (2012), a student is heavily reliant on outside guidance and even direction. Steadily, the student gains experience and confidence as (s)he transitions towards increasingly internal meaning making.

Significantly, in relation to the ACK Award program (refer Sections 1.2 and 4.7), which requires a monthly update of progress towards goals and an end of semester holistic reflection, Barber, King and Baxter Magolda (2013) highlight:

It is especially important to recognize the important role of reflection in promoting learning and development; building this into learning provides a vehicle for students to engage in the kind of “figuring out”

(e.g., personally weighing interpretations or knowledge claims, wrestling with dissonance) reported here. (p. 891)

Unfortunately, research has shown that “most college students do not evidence self-authorship by the time they graduate” (Barber et al., 2013, p. 870), despite the call by Baxter Magolda (2014) that it is needed “to thrive in the ambiguity that characterizes contemporary adult life” (p. 26).

Baxter Magolda (2012) has reminded educators of the new experiences faced by students as they transition from school to post-school life:

Many entering collegians come from highly structured and protective environments and are socialized to depend on authorities for guidance. In a few short years, the college experience must help them learn to take personal responsibility for their beliefs and actions, which amounts to asking them to literally “change their minds”—to go from depending on authority to becoming the authors of their own lives. (p. 33)

To nurture and support students in their significant and life changing shift from dependence to independence, Baxter Magolda (2012) has exhorted educators to empathise with their students and indeed apply self-authorship in their own lives. Specifically, Baxter Magolda (2012, p. 33) has emphasised that:

They (educators) must be able to envision the growth required for success in adult life; articulate it in the form of learning goals; develop educational practices that effectively support and challenge students to make the necessary mental shifts; and act on this vision despite students’, parents’, or administrators’ resistance to it. (p. 33)

Underscoring their critical role in nurturing students towards the capability of self-authorship, Baxter-Magolda (2012) warns that “unless faculty and staff acquire a new frame of mind about learning and learners, they will continue to encourage informational rather than that transformational learning” (p. 34).

As a practical means for educators to encourage student self-authorship, Baxter Magolda (2009) proposed the development of Learning Partnerships, with six components including “collaborating with them (students) to analyse their own problems, thereby engaging in mutual learning...encouraging them to develop personal authority by listening to their own voices in determining how to live their lives” (p. 251). This mentor style of educator/student engagement towards self-

authorship is parallel to the ACK Award program (refer Sections 1.2 and 4.7), which includes a requirement for participating students to have an approved staff mentor, usually a faculty member. The role of the ACK Award mentor (Sections 1.2 and 4.7), is to spend time with their mentee to:

- Initially at the beginning of each semester discuss lifewide goals; then
- At monthly interviews during the semester, encourage the student with their progress, and finally
- At the end of the semester, support the student during their reflection on achievements against goals, as well as discuss targets for the following semester.

3.2.5 *Kuh and student engagement*

During the same period that Kegan and Baxter Magolda were promoting self-authorship towards holistic development, Kuh (1993) was researching student engagement within higher education and built on the earlier theory of student involvement by Astin (1984). Kuh (2009) referred to student engagement as “the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities” (p. 683). Kuh therefore regarded student engagement as a two-way responsibility with faculty/staff nurturing the opportunities and students being responsive.

Student engagement was seen as important by Kuh (2009) as it “increases the odds that the student, educational and social background notwithstanding, will attain his or her educational and personal objectives, acquire the skills and competencies demanded by the challenges of the twenty-first century” (p. 698).

As a result of his research into student engagement, Kuh (1993) presented “five outcome domains: Personal Competence, Cognitive Complexity, Knowledge and Academic Skills, Practical Competence, and Altruism and Estheticism” (p. 277). In column 5 of Figure 3.1 (Section 3.2.6), these domains are mapped against Bloom’s (Krathwohl et al., 1964) Taxonomy of Learning, Chickering’s (1969) Vectors of Student Development, and Kegan’s (1982) and Baxter Magolda’s (1998) Self-authorship.

From his research, Kuh (1993) identified that out of classroom participation “made substantial contributions to student learning and personal development” (p. 300). Benefits from such involvement included “enhanced capacity for critical thinking, personal reflection, competence, and self-direction” (Kuh, 1993, p. 300). The inclusion of reflection in the process of student development highlighted by Kuh above is also recognised in the ACK Award program (refer Sections 1.2 and 4.7).

In 2007, Kuh was co-author of a report on student success issues (Kuh et al., 2007) which noted that many non-live-in students spend only a limited time on campus and therefore the “classroom is their only regular point of contact”. As a result, faculty members have a particularly important role in nurturing student engagement and “must be more intentional about teaching institutional values and traditions and informing students about campus events ...” (Kuh et al., 2007, p. 117).

Advising of students (by faculty or other staff members) is included by Kuh (2008) as a “high-impact” (p. 14) activity and therefore it should be “no longer a once-a-semester meeting with a person the student hardly knows, but an ongoing set of conversations about issues students are facing in real time” (p. 14). This advising role is parallel to the mentoring role by faculty (or other staff member) in support of students within the ACK Award program (Sections 1.2 and 4.7).

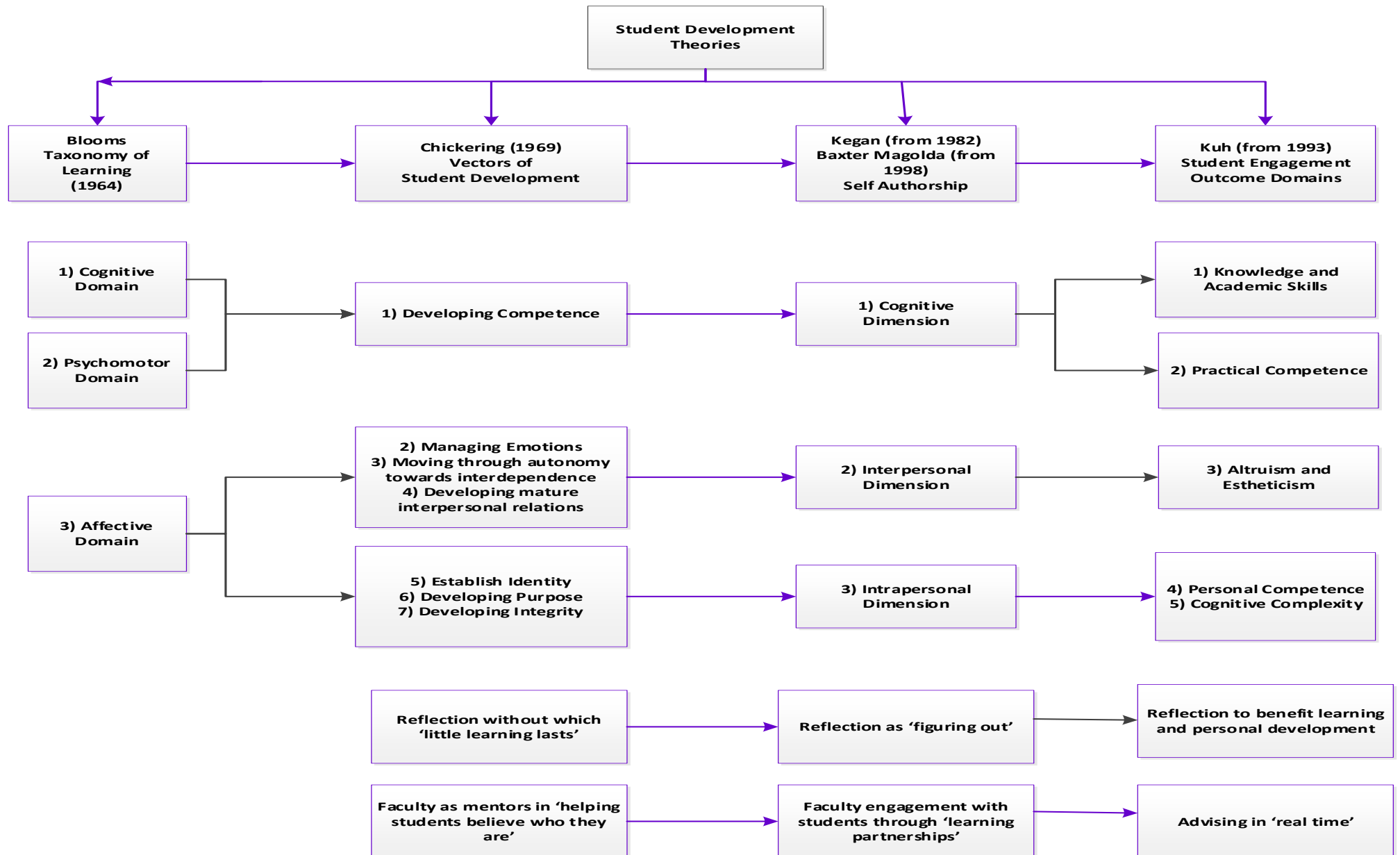
Having presented the above foundational theories on student development, in the following section their inter-relationship is cross-mapped. However, the candidate wishes to acknowledge the research work undertaken by Amartya Sen (1979) on capabilities and well-being although his capability approach regarding formal education is under theorised (Unterhalter, 2003). More recent research on student well-being within higher education has been undertaken, including Reich (2013), Wornast (2018) and Blackman (2020).

3.2.6 Cross-mapping theories associated with holistic development

The inter-relationship between the above theoretical perspectives on student development is illustrated in the following Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Holistic Development Learning – Conceptual Framework relating to Research Project

Figure 3.1: Holistic Development Learning- Conceptual Framework relating to Research Project



The above Figure 3.1 highlights linkages between the following key theories and models:

- Blooms Taxonomy of Learning (Krathwohl et al., 1964), covering the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of personal development;
- Chickering's (1969) seven Vectors of Student Development from developing competence through to developing integrity;
- Kegan (1982) and Baxter Magolda's (1998) Self-authorship with the associated cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions; and
- Kuh's (1993) five Student Engagement outcomes domains from knowledge and academic skills to cognitive complexity.

Listed below each of the above sub-headings in Figure 3.1, are the respective elements to enable a cross-mapping using arrows between the various theories/models and their respective elements. From Figure 3.1 and the previous sections describing the associated theories and models, the candidate presents the following similarities in relation to the below broad aspects of student development:

- Intellectual growth. Chickering's developing competence relates to Kegan and Baxter Magolda's cognitive dimension and in turn is covered by Kuh's knowledge domains
- Skills acquisition and expansion. This is also part of Chickering's developing competence vector which is part of Kegan and Baxter Magolda's applied cognitive dimension and relates to Kuh's practical competence domain;
- Social consciousness and participation. In this regard, Chickering refers to the personal development vectors of interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relations and managing emotions. Kegan and Baxter Magolda cover these in their interpersonal dimension of self-authorship and in turn, Kuh refers to the domains of altruism and estheticism; and
- General personal awareness and development. To these ends, Chickering presents the student development vectors of establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity. These are encapsulated in Kegan and Baxter Magolda's self-authorship intrapersonal dimension and Kuh's domains of personal competence and cognitive complexity.

Literature Review Finding 1

Theories and models related to student development, including Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning (Krathwohl et al., 1964), Chickering's Vectors of Student Development (1969), Kegan's (1982) and Baxter Magolda's (1998) Self-Authorship and Kuh's (1993) Student Engagement, present competencies, domains, vectors or dimensions of growth across the overlapping lifewide areas of:

- *Intellectual growth;*
- *Skills acquisition and expansion;*
- *Social consciousness and participation; and*
- *General personal awareness and development.*

Having undertaken the above review of foundational theories relating to student development, and their inter-relationship, the following Part 2 will interpret these theories by governments as well as educational researchers and institutions.

3.3 Part 2: Interpretation and application of development theories

Governments at international, national and local levels, are committed to improving the educational levels of citizens. However, the policy making and subsequent interpretation by educational researchers and institutions must take into account prevailing economic and social situations.

3.3.1 *Future simultaneous and liquid learning environments*

Governments and educational leaders face a constantly changing landscape but must nonetheless develop policies and practices that meet the wider developmental needs of the next generation. The task is becoming increasingly complex. In 2015, it was predicted that “by 2024, the development of social media will have blurred the boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning and consequently reduced the distinction between teacher and student” (Zepke, 2015a, p. 111). This is now a reality and, as part of this new learning and living environment, smart devices have transformed the lifestyles of youth, with an associated ability to multi-task, by “spending time with different media at the same time, such as watching television, listening to music, being on Facebook and sending SMS” (Erstad, 2012, p. 26).

As a result, the term “liquid learning” (Jackson, 2014, p. 1), is now used to recognise the reality that people inhabit “several learning spaces simultaneously.... physical and global mobility (actual and virtual), burst open the possibilities for learning” (p. 1). What relevance does this change in lifestyle have to higher education providers? Baumann (2006, as cited in Soylu & Yelken, 2014) contends that universities have become part of this “liquid life” (p. 2703), as they contribute towards new knowledge and changes in technology. Universities must and are changing: “Instead of being enclosed and inner-directed, they are becoming outer directed and liquid” (Soylu & Yelken, 2014, p. 2703).

As part of this transformation in higher education, what changes are appropriate with regard to reporting on student development? The academic transcript is now under increasing scrutiny:

The transcript, designed as a mechanism for reporting to other institutions, faithfully inventories each and every course during each and every term using measures in the form of grades, credit hours, and units. Missing but needed is a complementary record of learning that supports a purpose-driven approach to higher education, one that is grounded in the potential of learning beyond graduation (Chen et al., 2016, p. 1)

As a response to the limitations of the academic transcript to reflect future potential and current wider development of students, in 2017, a U.S. National Steering Group (Green & Parnell, 2017) was established to consider the recognition of non-curricular learning. This Comprehensive Student Record Project was commissioned by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). The Steering Group was tasked with responding to the question:

What constitutes student learning in American higher education? Is it only those topics covered by the syllabus of a course or does it extend to experiences outside those courses? There is already evidence that experiences outside the physical or virtual classroom of the institution are valued for institutional recognition, such as study abroad and internships.

The growth and regularity of these types of out-of-classroom experiences and the strong impression they make on students who engage in them have expanded the acceptance of out-of-classroom learning. There is wider acceptance that learning is not limited to

faculty-student interactions in a course but that students learn through a broader set of experiences that are part of many students' college experiences. (Green & Parnell, 2017, p. 2)

The goals for the above project included accelerating the creation of a broad-based student record of achievement, together with an associated framework for the development of such a document. The move towards a wider statement of student accomplishments gives rise to the question: what is the role of educators and educational institutions in the preparation of students for their futures? In this regard, significantly, on the eve of the new millennium, UNESCO established the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century. The resultant report commenced with a clear statement that “education has a fundamental role to play in personal and social development” (Delors, 1996, p. 11).

Far from limiting education to primarily knowledge acquisition, the Commission emphasised the importance of developing the whole person. Accordingly, although this pivotal international steering body affirmed that academic study (Learning to Know), was a key area of development, three other dimensions were also separately identified, including skills acquisition (Learning to Do), outward awareness (Learning to Live Together), and personal enrichment (Learning to Be) (Delors, 1996).

3.3.2 *UNESCO 4 pillars of learning*

The title given to the above milestone world reference for educators was “Learning: the Treasure Within” (Delors, 1996). The heading did not include perhaps expected words such as ‘education’ and ‘career’. This was deliberate to affirm the shift in focus that occurred during the later part of 20th century from teacher-led education to student-centred learning, whereby “teachers need to reconceptualise the changing teacher-student relationship” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 940), and also from a priority on career preparation to life/career foundation (McMahon et al., 2003). Accordingly, the UNESCO Commission referred to holistic development within the education system, covering four nominated pillars of learning:

- Learning to Know;
- Learning to Do;
- Learning to Live Together; and
- Learning to Be.

Recognising the growing trend towards multi-cultural societies, the Commission:

put greater emphasis on one of the four pillars that it proposes and describes as the foundations of education: learning to live together, by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values and, on this basis, creating a new spirit which, guided by recognition of our growing interdependence and a common analysis of the risks and challenges of the future, would induce people to implement common projects or to manage the inevitable conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way”. (Delors, 1996, p. 20)

With this statement, the Commission made it clear that learning, living and working in this new era of global physical mobility and virtual communication, require a rethink of education with priority towards the pillar of Learning to Live Together.

In relation to the second pillar of Learning to Do, the Commission clarified that it is not only confined to acquisition of occupational skills but in the also “learning to do in the context of young peoples’ various social and work experiences which may be informal” (Delors, 1996, p. 37). Accordingly, Learning to Do should be viewed from a life/career and not just a career perspective.

In Section 1.2 (and more fully in Section 4.7), the candidate highlighted that the four areas of lifewide goal setting associated with the ACK Award were specifically tailored to address the above.

Literature Review Finding 2

The UNESCO International Commission on Education for the 21st Century identified that for this new millennium, education should cover four pillars: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together, and Learning to Be.

3.3.3 World declaration on higher education for 21st century

Two years after the report from the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, in 1998, UNESCO facilitated the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century (UNESCO, 1998), specifically to focus on the role of tertiary level education for this new millennium. This global declaration confirmed that the primary mission of higher education is to:

(a) educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens able to meet the needs of all sectors of human activity, by offering relevant qualifications, including professional training, which combine high-level knowledge and skills, using courses and content continually tailored to the present and future needs of society;

(b) provide opportunities for higher learning and for learning throughout life, giving to learners an optimal range of choice and a flexibility of entry and exit points within the system, as well as an opportunity for individual development and social mobility in order to educate for citizenship and for active participation in society, with a worldwide vision, for endogenous capacity-building, and for the consolidation of human rights, sustainable development, democracy and peace, in a context of justice... (UNESCO, 1998, pp. 3-4)

According to this worldwide declaration, ranked above their research role, higher education institutions are asked to form “highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens ... and for learning throughout life ... as well as an opportunity for individual development” (UNESCO, 1998, pp. 3-4). The priorities in this 1998 World Declaration relating to Higher Education are in line with those contained in the UNESCO 1996 goals for the education system generally. In this regard, ‘highly qualified graduates’ need both the foundational pillars of Learning to Know and Learning to Do, ‘responsible citizens’ result from Learning to Live Together, and ‘individual development’ entails Learning to Be. Accordingly, the priorities for higher education in this new millennium are also reflected in the four goal setting areas of the ACK Award (refer Sections 1.2 and 4.7).

Literature Review Finding 3

The World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century confirmed that tertiary education should be directed towards holistic personal development, responsible citizenship and wider sustainable development as well as lifelong learning.

3.3.4 UNESCO 5th pillar of learning

In 2002, UNESCO nominated a fifth pillar, Learning to Transform Oneself and Society (UNESCO, 2010) for this “liquid age” (Barnett, 2010, p. 1). Life is changing fast and long gone are the days when a university degree was seen as the end of formal education in readiness for a lifetime career (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 8). Now, with rapid growth of knowledge and new technologies, some content of past qualifications

quickly becomes redundant (Luukkainen et al., 2012). As a result, the term lifelong learning is used to recognise that ongoing commitment to “unlearn and reskill” (Cobo, 2013, p. 82) is needed to maintain employability and to benefit generally from new information and technologies, both from individual and community perspectives.

With regard to transforming oneself and society, it was mentioned in Section 3.2.5 that Kegan’s (1982) theory on self-evolution described five stages of development from infancy to adulthood, with self-authorship being the fourth stage. The final stage is self-transformation. Unfortunately, as noted in Section 3.2.6, most college students do not even reach the stage of self-authorship by graduation (Barber et al., 2013).

3.3.5 Persistence of factory age education

Prior to the internet and smart devices, the primary learning source for formal education was face-to-face within educational institutions whereas, now, recognised tertiary qualifications are readily and increasingly available online (Allen & Seaman, 2016). Until the later part of the 20th Century, students sat in class and were essentially prepared for the Industrial Age (Cobo, 2013). Even though workplaces have subsequently progressed through the Knowledge Age (Biesta, 2013) to the Conceptual Age (Huitt, 2007), the education system generally has been reactive rather than proactive, prompting criticism such as:

The obsession with hyper-fragmentation and standardization is probably an industrial-era heritage that is still broadly adopted in education systems. Currently, this Fordist-Taylorist education can be seen in examples such as uniform assessment, similar mechanisms of incentives (qualification and certification), content disconnects between courses, distribution of classes in equal time intervals (usually 45 minutes), row seating in classrooms, and a clear vertical hierarchy in which a small group of adults dictates the performance of the rest. (Cobo, 2013, p. 77)

The formal education system generally persists in using outdated approaches to prepare students for a vastly different world to that entered by their more senior teachers at the time of their own graduation. This is evidenced by sustained preoccupation with the academic report as the primary focus for both educators and students (Burgess, 2004; HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008). Even with this critical document that significantly impacts the future of the holder, especially for higher

education, the presentation layout has persisted, largely unchanged, with the ultimate measure of student success still being expressed in the form of a graduating GPA.

The higher education academic transcript remains designed to only cover student achievement in the pillars of Learning to Know and Learning to Do despite calls for, and the need of, wider development during this key period in life development. The issue is well documented (Burgess, 2004; HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008); however, the process of introducing alternative and expanded reports is slow moving. As far back as 2004, the umbrella organisation, Universities UK, noted:

We have concluded that, in representing student learning and achievement, whether for formative or summative purposes, full consideration should be given to the significance of the process of learning (and the consequent development of capabilities such as enquiry, analysis, synthesis, problem solving, reflection and self-evaluation, criticality and creativity). Future work should therefore seek to represent such outcomes.

In terms of the overall representation of learning and achievement, in the curriculum context, there is a need to encompass a number of elements and we have concluded that future work will be needed to consider whether and how they might be validated and supported, and by whom. These are:

- subject-based learning (including the demonstration of knowledge and skills acquisition);
- personally recognised learning, (beyond that anticipated by those who designed the formal learning outcomes and objectives); and
- learning derived through the education process (both subject and self-related, such as the capabilities identified above). (Burgess, 2004, p. 16)

The above Universities UK Report highlighted that even within the curriculum; learning is not only confined to the subject matter but also through personal inspirations experienced by the learner as well as soft skills development via such class activities as problem solving and reflection.

This issue of broader student learning was also considered by the Inspectorate of Education for the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008), in a 2008 Report on Assessing, Recording and Analysing Learner Progress and Outcomes. The report emphasised that although educational institutions may consider the formal qualification as the ultimate goal and therefore focus of energy, students have their own learning purposes. Therefore, just

because a student failed to complete a qualification may not indicate that the student's learning goals were incomplete:

While it is the responsibility of professional educators to encourage learners to progress and fulfil potential, it is important to recognize that formal awards or employment may not be what individuals require from their learning. The absence of such a clear end point does not invalidate the progress they have made through learning. Learners decide for themselves what their goals are (employment, progression to further learning, or personal achievement and development) and of what their learning should consist. They should furthermore be involved at every stage of the planning, monitoring, assessment and accrediting process. (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008, p. 11)

Presently, a student who fails to complete their university or even school qualification is tagged as a 'dropout'. Is this the way in which society wishes to introduce this fledgling community member into its ranks? Yet, for most universities, the primary official record given to students is the academic transcript, which omits to capture or value the learning that has occurred beyond the curriculum. It is prepared by educators from an institutional perspective. It only reflects a narrow band of learning despite the growing need for change.

Literature Review Finding 4

The academic transcript remains the primary focus for students and educators even though it does not cover student development across all pillars of learning. Academic reports are prepared by educators from an institutional perspective despite calls for, and a growing need for, a broader statement of developmental progress.

3.3.6 Lifewide learning and higher education

Lifewide learning is a term that has been developed to confirm that people are multi-dimensional and, therefore, at any point in time, there is "learning across an individual's lifeworld" (Barnett, 2010, p. 2). Even a holiday, primarily taken as a vacation, may intentionally or unintentionally become a period of wider learning when faced with expected or unexpected situations (Liang et al., 2015).

Barnett (2010) provides the lifewide learning example of a university student who, during the course of any one semester, might be:

- enrolled in traditional academic learning through the curriculum but at the same time also be
- actively involved as a writer for the student newsletter,
- working in a student shop or manage the student bar,
- involved in a sports team or musical club, as well as
- participating in non-university developmental activities such as undertaking first aid and language courses for a forthcoming holiday, or volunteering for a community organisation.

International tertiary education is now big business (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015), with resultant benefits to students, host universities and local economies. Foreign students gain both a qualification and the cultural familiarity of living in a different country. The host university enjoys a financial return and staff members also benefit from the experience of developing tailored curricular and non-curricular programs for visiting students. Local economies likewise benefit. For instance, the Australian Trade Commission has estimated that by 2025, there will be 940,000 international students studying in the country (representing 3.2% of the predicted national population of 28,800,000), and contributing AUD33 billion to export earnings (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015). From a developmental perspective, international education is a means by which visiting and local students, host teachers, homestay parents and others can all positively share in expanding their lifewide learning.

Regardless of whether students are studying at home or abroad, in keeping with the lifewide pillars of learning nominated by UNESCO for living and working in the 21st Century, it has been noted that:

Today, Higher Education Institutions are expected to present a leading education to provide students with whole development. Life-wide learning is directly related to personal development of individuals which is a desirable feature for today's graduates. Furthermore, it enables people to improve themselves cognitively, socially and personally. Life-wide education makes it possible to train graduates well developed both in their own courses and in different ways of life-sports, art, travel, parental issues, etc.". (Soylu & Yelken, 2014, p. 2703)

To formally recognise the expanded role of higher education in the holistic development of students, Jackson (2013) has proposed the development of a "lifewide

curriculum” (p. 20) covering the traditional academic component as well as co-curricular and extra-curricular elements. Co-curricular activities include such programs as career management and study abroad that are not part of the formal curriculum but are “educator-designed” (Jackson, 2013, p. 20). Extra-curricular activities are those determined by the students themselves that are not part of the above, such as part-time work and volunteering, as well as participating in clubs and sports. Jackson (2014, p.10) has presented a lifewide curriculum diagrammatically with the academic curriculum on the left side, co-curricular activities in the middle with overlapping to indicate, for instance, that a work placement may either be part of the formal curriculum or a non-accredited but nonetheless curriculum related project. Extra-curricular activities are also included as a third category alongside the academic curriculum and co-curricular activities. Jackson (2014) proposes that “co- and extra-curricular awards and other forms of recognition” (p. 10) be issued to “encourage, recognise and value informal and formal learning gained through experiences that are additional to the academic” (p. 10).

Literature Review Finding 5

A lifewide curriculum would confirm to all stakeholders that tertiary education should cover and report achievement across all pillars of learning through curricular, co- and extra-curricular accomplishments.

3.3.7 Lifewide compared to lifelong learning

Lifewide learning is the breadth of learning across a person’s life at any one time. Lifelong learning is the forward movement of learning over the lifetime of the individual. The Swedish National Agency for Education described the relationship between lifelong and lifewide learning in the following terms:

The lifelong dimension is non-problematic, what is essential is that the individual learns throughout life. The lifewide dimension refers to the fact that learning takes place in a variety of different environments and situations, and is not only confined to the formal educational system. Lifewide learning covers formal, non-formal and informal learning. (Skolverket, 2000, p.18 as cited in Jackson, 2013, p. 4)

Literature Review Finding 6

Lifelong learning is continued leaning throughout the lifespan of an individual. Lifewide learning is the breadth of learning across various dimensions of life at any one time.

The forward aspect of lifelong learning is agreed; however, there are differences in interpretation regarding the breadth of lifelong learning. Some authors consider the scope of lifelong learning also covers lifewide learning, whereby:

lifelong education does not look as a simple extension of traditional education into adulthood or beyond, but a real new pedagogical strategy aimed at enhancing all dimensions of life of individuals, a useful reference framework to address the need for solutions to many and unprecedented challenges in the cultural, social and professional, individual life and modern societies. (Aleandri & Checchi, 2015, p. 1191)

In contrast to this all embracing viewpoint, the European Commission (2000) referred to lifelong learning in relation to “purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence” (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p. 3). This definition appears to focus on continued learning for career preparation and progress, and excludes non-purposeful learning such as unintended learning or “learning en passant” (Reischmann, 2014, p. 293). From the perspective of higher education institutions, it is important to consider whether their contribution towards learning is limited only to career development purposes or for a wider life/career.

3.3.8 *Learning for career or life/career*

The Australian Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA, 2010a) has confirmed from a university viewpoint that “gone are the days where a person could gain a single qualification that would sustain them throughout their entire working lives” (p. 8) and, regarding career stability, “the most significant workplace change is the concept that a job for life is no longer a reality” (p. 10).

The term “Risk Society” (Rogers, 2006, p. 126) has been used to highlight the uncertain futures now confronting most enterprises and employees. Faced with constant changes in technology and increasing competition against global online

alternative suppliers, employers are simply not in a position to confidently predict their own future let alone be able to assure individual employees that, based on their current skillset, they can expect continued employment beyond the short term. Unlearning and re-learning (Colon, 2016) are terms that have been recently introduced to confirm the fluid nature of position roles and associated skills.

On the upside, developments in technology create new opportunities for those willing and able to continue their learning path. This is indeed not a new phenomenon. In 2001, the Australian Bureau of Statistics published a 100-year time series of the Australian Workforce by sector. In the early part of the 20th Century, primary production was a major employer in Australia; however, by the mid-century, it was steadily overtaken by manufacturing and other secondary industries. In the last half of the century, relative employment opportunities in both sectors declined; however, there was more than compensating growth in the services market (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

Although developments in technology result in displacement of some workers, new jobs constantly emerge with associated career opportunities. The numbers are convincing. In 1901, the total population of Australia was 3.8 million. By 2001, this statistic had grown to 18.8 million and yet, despite the addition of 15 million inhabitants, the unemployment rate remained historically satisfactory at just over 6% by the end of the century compared to around 4% at the start (Department of the Treasury Australia, 2001). Impressively, around 14 million more jobs were available for Australian workers during the course the 100-year period.

Subject to any lasting impact from COVID-19, the employment market news into the immediate future remains favourable, with the Australian Government predicting in 2018 (Department of Employment Skills Small and Family Business, 2018) that “the future of Australian jobs is strong, with the number of workers in most industries expected to grow over the next five years. There are likely to be around 886,000 more jobs by 2023” (p. 1). Despite the recent pandemic, statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023, July) show that the growth in numbers employed exceeded the 2018 prediction and has now passed 14 million.

Labour Force Australia statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023, July) show an upward trend in labour force participation rates from 65% in 2013 to almost 67% in

2023. Therefore, despite the uncertainty regarding continuation of existing positions as a result of such innovations as artificial intelligence and robots, new opportunities are plentiful although, again, time will reveal the longer-term consequences of workplace restructuring associated with the post-pandemic economy.

To maximise the prospects for ongoing employability during periods of volatile change, “future proofing requires learners to apply ever-changing knowledge, skills and values in their own context for the betterment of their occupation and society” (Zepke, 2018, pp. 68-69). Surfing provides a useful analogy. Either board riders stay in front of the wave or they are dumped. Just as even the best surfer cannot hold back a wave; neither can the most experienced employee hold back technological change.

Therefore, since employers are no longer able to offer secure long term careers, expressions such as “life/career” (McMahon et al., 2003, p. 5) and “protean career” (Briscoe et al., 2012, p. 308), are currently used to highlight employee self-management of the process and that work should be regarded as just one, albeit important, part of life. Even the term ‘career management’ is now used in a context beyond the workplace. In this regard, the Australian Blueprint for Career Development (ABCD) was commissioned by the Australian Government to identify the “skills, attitudes and knowledge that individuals need to make sound choices and to effectively manage their careers” (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 9). The eleven associated competencies for productive career management are:

AREA A: PERSONAL MANAGEMENT

1. Build and maintain a positive self-concept
2. Interact positively and effectively with others
3. Change and grow throughout life

AREA B: LEARNING AND WORK EXPLORATION

4. Participate in lifelong learning supportive of career goals
5. Locate and effectively use career information
6. Understand the relationship between work, society and the economy

AREA C: CAREER BUILDING

7. Secure/create and maintain work
 8. Make career-enhancing decisions
 9. Maintain balanced life and work roles
 10. Understand the changing nature of life and work roles
 11. Understand, engage in and manage the career-building process.
- (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 15)

Throughout the above competencies, there are many seamless boundaries between proficiencies needed for the workplace and life generally. For example, Competency 3 above, ‘Change and grow throughout life’, requires “demonstrating good health habits, ... being aware of how mental and physical health impact life, learning and work decisions, ... knowing how to adapt to changes in all areas of our lives” (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 17). Similarly, Competency 9, ‘Maintain balanced life and work roles’, includes “understanding how our various life and work roles impact upon our preferred future or lifestyle” (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 19). Seemingly even more distant from workplace relevance, Competency 10, ‘Understand the changing nature of life and work roles’, covers “understanding how contributions, both inside and outside the home, are important to family and society” (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 19).

Based on the above scope of ‘career management’, there is official acknowledgement that, within the context of present and future dynamic living and working environments, a healthy and balanced career includes recognition and action towards holistic lifewide and lifelong learning relating to both the workplace and personal/community life generally. Indeed, at times, people can expect ongoing “parallel or fused periods” (Chisholm, 2008, p. 145) of work and learning focused on “permanent upskilling to enable all citizens to keep their competencies updated” (Cobo, 2013, p. 78). Who is responsible to manage this process? Each individual must have the skills and confidence “to transition between a variety of life, learning, and work roles” (Hooley et al., 2013, p. 12) and therefore “be empowered to design and manage their careers” (p. 12).

What are tertiary providers handing to students as a symbol that they have received such empowerment to capably manage their future? Does an academic transcript/vocational certificate state to employers and the community that the holder not only has needed disciplinary knowledge and skills but also the wider capabilities and attributes to manage work and personal fulfilment in constantly evolving environments? To address these realities, in designing courses and general developmental support to students, higher education institutions need to consider the broader context of ‘careers’ and preferably use the confirming term ‘life/careers’ in key documents to recognise all UNESCO pillars of learning. As Jackson (2013) identifies, “Preparation for life needs to be so much more than simply studying and learning an academic curriculum” (p. 8).

Literature Review Finding 7

Accelerating change necessitates regular consideration of an evolving professional career as part of an umbrella set of life goals and, therefore, educators must nurture students towards self-management of life/career planning and balance.

3.3.9 *Learning as preparation for life: Understanding the nature of today's learner and how they learn*

In Australia, as at 2018, over 40% of students who completed year 12 secondary education continued directly into tertiary studies (Norton et al., 2018). In preparing these fledgling cohorts for their future life/career, it is important to understand their nature and, in particular, how they learn best.

Terms such as ‘thumb generation’ (Lim et al., 2008, p. 137) or ‘digital youth’ (Erstad, 2012) are used to describe the new age of young people who take for granted instant online communication through Portable Electronic Devices (PEDs) such as smart phones and iPads. A dilemma for educators is that many of their students have access to more advanced digital hardware and software at home than in the classroom (Erstad, 2012). As a result of spending large amounts of time online with various applications, young people are skilled with researching and gaining information fast (Erstad, 2012). The associated challenge for the community and educators at all levels is to nurture balanced and responsible internet and other online activities by youth to avoid addictive (Ang et al., 2018) or dysfunctional behaviours (Khayat et al., 2018).

Young people of today have also been referred to as “learning nomads, increasingly inhabiting all kinds of social and economic situations that afford different kinds of learning” (Barnett, 2010, p. 2). They use their smart devices for information, communication and commerce, and are highly proficient at multitasking (Moreno et al., 2012). Life itself is now lived at an accelerating pace but “hurry and overload of things to do are also an excuse for not thinking” (Gabrielli, 2006, as cited in Aleandri & Checchi, 2015, p. 1193). In this regard, tertiary institutions are intended to “play an active role in assisting young adults with their journey towards developing a sense of purpose” (Buyarski et al., 2015, p. 288). The real measure of success in any class is not how much the teacher knows but how much the students have learned. Students

have to be connected, or they become disconnected, and the first semester of tertiary education is critical in this transition (Bowman et al., 2018).

Literature Review Finding 8

Educators need to understand the nature of their students and use latest technologies to fully engage them in holistic learning. The real measure of success in any class is not how much the teacher knows but how much the students have learned.

Universities are faced with an increasing dilemma: what do students need to know and how to best connect with them in this process? Many universities persist with the approach that what matters most is qualifications that meet “both institutional and industry standards” (Bourke, 2017, p. 829). Yet, aspects of the curriculum become outdated (Ocampo-Gómez & Ortega-Guerrero, 2013). A further conundrum is that a:

university prepares citizens who are lifelong, lifewide learners, yet they do not learn the skills to self-assess their ongoing learning, to understand how to recognise and utilise the skills of those around them, or to assess their own role in understanding and engaging in the novel tasks presented to them. (Bourke, 2017, p. 829)

What, then, constitutes a successful education? Is it a high GPA that only indicates the ability to perform well in academic assessments, or is it some broader indication of “deep learning, wellbeing and active citizenship” (Zepke, 2018, p. 1)?

Individual well-being and the associated research by Sen (1993), Reich (2013), Wornast (2018) and Blackman (2020) were mentioned in Part 1 of this Literature Review (Section 3.2.8). If universities only focus on a syllabus of required knowledge for a particular qualification, what has the student missed in the pillars of Learning to Be and Learning to Live Together? Inside every person is “an aspect of learning that only they know” (Bourke, 2017, p. 838) and therefore, universities need to ignite the flame that enables each learner to find their “treasure within” (Delors, 1996, p. 1).

Although students are well connected through their virtual communities, “learners are citizens and should become active citizens through their learning” (Zepke, 2018, p. 68). It is therefore of concern that a 2014 Australian study of first year university students showed an increasing trend away from social activity (Baik et al., 2015). In this regard, digital technology is a double-edged sword. Online access to class and

library resources enables students to spend less time on campus. However, in so doing, there has been a decline in engagement:

Fewer than half the students surveyed in 2014 reported feeling a sense of belonging to the university community, and significantly more students kept to themselves, from 32 per cent in 2009 to 44 per cent in 2014. In addition, compared to 74 per cent of students who had made at least one or two close friends at university in 2009, only 65 per cent had in 2014. These are important findings, as making friends is positively associated with overall satisfaction with the university experience. (Baik et al., 2015, p. 4)

Educational institutions therefore need to actively promote at least engaged, if not on-campus, life. Humans are social beings and, as part of this, “Youth grow up in communities, not programs” (Akiva & Petrokubi, 2016, p. 257). Apart from the importance of social connectedness for personal and shared growth, from a purely financial perspective, universities should be aware that student engagement and retention rates are positively correlated. In this regard, “students who don’t feel they belong are more likely to leave early” (Zepke, 2015b, p. 699). The above concerns directly reflect Kuh’s (1993) developmental theories in relation to Student Engagement (Section 3.2.7) and are further highlighted in the following section.

Literature Review Finding 9

With increasing access to online and instant information, tertiary institutions must stimulate student interest and participation in shared learning and general activities for personal wellbeing and active citizenship.

3.3.10 Student engagement and student learning

Even if students are not motivated by the subject matter in a particular course, universities may be able to justify content and standards of learning if they are needed for the learners’ futures. However, a 2010 European questionnaire of young people between the ages of 18-30 showed that “less than one-third of the people surveyed believed that they were definitely given (or were currently being given) the required career skills” (Cobo, 2013, p. 70). The same survey disclosed that many respondents felt “they had to learn everything again at the workplace, because the knowledge they got at university ... was useless” (Cobo, 2013, p. 71).

In Section 3.2.7, student engagement was emphasised by Kuh (2009) for each student to “attain his or her educational and personal objectives, acquire the skills and competencies demanded by the challenges of the twenty-first century” (p. 698). For learning to have any useful purpose, it must be relevant to the student’s future (UNESCO, 1998). Learning is built on the past but it is not for the past. Learning is a preparation for what is ahead in the life and career of the learner.

Literature Review Finding 10

Learning is based on the past but it is for the future. Educators must liaise closely with industry and include relevant and current, not redundant, content in their courses.

3.3.11 Assessment of learning and assessment for learning

A distinction has been made between assessment of learning and assessment for learning. In this regard, “Assessment of learning is usually used to test learning in order to judge or grade learners’ achievement; meanwhile, assessment for learning is intended to enhance learners’ learning” (Chianese, 2012, p. 2927). Assessment of learning is an historical measure of academic ability and is focused on standards set by the institution and/or industry. Assessment for learning is student and future focused. The emphasis is not on compliance but stimulation and “metacognition” (Chianese, 2012, p. 2928). Assessment for learning is as important as assessment of learning so that students view learning as a lifelong and lifewide process and not just a task to complete for a once off qualification. Assessment for learning is intended to “incite” (Bourke, 2017, p. 830) further learning.

Literature Review Finding 11

With assessment of learning, students walk away with a sense of completion, whereas with assessment for learning, students come to understand that learning is not just a product to acquire but rather a lifelong process.

3.3.12 Linking learning to life

Importantly, universities should not view the curriculum as separate to other development that is taking place simultaneously in the lives of students. Indeed, learning should be approached as a “dynamic and active process that goes beyond the framework of formal education” (Cobo, 2013, p. 72). Accordingly, faculty should

ensure that wherever possible the curriculum is made relevant to the day to day lives of students. For instance, teaching “life skills can be integrated into every aspect of the curriculum through discovery-oriented teaching methods that include interactive learning, applying knowledge to real-life problems, integrating team work and peer tutoring into the learning process, and inviting student input into the structure and subject matter of lessons” (Fares et al., 2006, p. 75).

Literature Review Finding 12

Wherever possible, learning should be made relevant to the day to day lives of students through real world challenges, team work activities, peer tutoring, and student input regarding format and content of learning programs.

3.3.13 Workplace-based online learning

One means of linking universities more closely to the life/careers of students has been the “Ultraversity” (Powell et al., 2008, p. 63) project at Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom, as a “fully online, 3-year duration, undergraduate, work-integrated degree with students using action research methodology” (Powell et al., 2008, p. 65). Through this program, although students are posited in separate workplaces, the structure of the project being intentionally “designed to be highly personalised and collaborative in nature rather than individualised and isolated. Students engaged in the process of inquiry together as a cohort collaborating and supporting each other while studying their own work context” (Powell et al., 2008, p. 65). The model related to such work-integrated learning (Powell et al., 2008, p. 66), shows that students use digital technology to remain connected even though they are based in different locations of work and learning. Each student is focused through development of an Individual Learning Plan but simultaneously engaged in shared online learning, including team projects and peer review with, and of, other students at the same time as gaining direct workplace skills and experience.

The immediate benefit of such workplace-based learning is that students are able to concurrently relate their studies to their workplace and although they may not have physical contact with their fellow students, they are part of both an online learning community and an onsite work team. There is a rich combination of engaged assessment for learning as well as regulatory assessment of learning. An added

incentive is that students “learn while they earn” (Powell et al., 2008, p. 79) and regardless of whether or not the industry position continues beyond graduation, the learners are able to add both a qualification and work experience to their resumes.

3.3.14 Immersive experiential learning

Even with campus based learning, educators are using experiential learning (McConnell & Chilvers, 2014) as an immersive means to provide opportunities for students to contextualise academic theory with workplace challenges. For instance, the CDIO (Conceive, Design, Implement and Operate) model (CDIO, 2019), was developed especially for engineering students and involves their active participation to:

- initially research information and potential solutions to a particular challenge (Conceive); then
- create (Design) a system, process or product to address the challenge; followed by
- set up and structure of the nominated solution (Implementation); before
- actual operating and testing of the model (Operate).

During the course of the learning project, students are encouraged wherever possible to work in teams as they would be expected to in the workplace, and ideally consult with industry as well as supervising faculty. This also provides important opportunities for faculty to liaise with industry leaders and stay abreast of emerging trends, technologies and techniques (CDIO, 2019).

Across any disciplines, Project or Problem Based Learning (PBL), is a means of “encompassing the generation, capture and transfer of learning by individuals and groups within project settings” (Scarborough et al., 2016, p. 492) with an emphasis on “absorption and reflection” (p. 504).

Such innovative approaches to student learning obviously necessitate active participation by coordinating faculty to ensure that requirements are met for related qualifications and, in the process, learners are fully engaged. The term “boundary workers” (McMillan, 2011, p. 558) has been used to present faculty as being actively involved in meaningful campus-based and extra-mural learning experiences for

students. In this context, faculty are “agents who assist participants make new connections across communities of practice, enable co-ordination and, if experienced, open new possibilities for meaning and therefore learning” (McMillan, 2011, p. 558). This may take some faculty members out of their comfort zones as they feel much more at ease standing at the podium and lecturing rather than actively connecting with their students. In this regard, universities have been asked the question:

If we are serious about developing new teaching and learning practices such as service learning, we need to start re-assessing the skills, knowledge and values that are required, as academics and educators, to be successful in this boundary worker role. Universities, if they are to serve as ‘boundary institutions’ (Hall, 2003) and contribute to the public good, need to take up this challenge, and soon. (McMillan, 2011, p. 563)

As universities become more closely linked to local businesses and communities, and with current emphasis on the holistic development of students, the formal curriculum should be viewed as immediately relevant, immersive and integrated with a person’s lifewide and lifelong learning.

Literature Review Finding 13

Students must be able to relate their classroom learning to marketplace professional settings and therefore educators should create opportunities for relevant, immersive and integrated learning in the workplace and community.

3.3.15 Universities and the relationship between formal, non-formal and informal learning

The distinction between formal, non-formal and informal learning is clarified through the following definitions:

formal learning is defined as learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction and which is linked to the attainment of a formal qualification or award. Non-formal learning is defined as learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction, but does not lead to the attainment of a formal qualification or award. Informal learning, on the other hand, is not intentionally accessed by the learner, and thus is neither structured nor institutionalized. (Smith & Clayton, 2009, p. 6)

It has already been noted in Section 3.3.7 that lifewide learning can take place across formal, non-formal and informal learning environments. Zepke (2017) provides a useful reference to illustrate various locations for these different types of learning. In this regard, Zepke (2017) notes that formal learning is traditionally associated with educational institutions, however, many vocational qualifications are now largely completed at the industry workplace with electronic support and guidance from a college or university (Thorpe & Gordon, 2012). Zepke (2017) associates non-formal learning with such activities as career enrichment programs either within the workplace or from professional bodies such as Engineering or Chartered Accountants' Associations. Regarding informal learning, Zepke (2017) clarifies that this can occur anywhere such as a museum visit to learn more about history, or simply acquiring tacit knowledge and skills by watching and helping nana bake a cake during a visit.

Formal, non-formal and informal learning all provide opportunities for “intended and unintended learning” (Zepke, 2015a, p. 101). For example, a faculty comment made during a formal ‘intended’ learning session may spark “unintended learning in the form of hidden insights not intended by the lecturer” (Zepke, 2015a, p. 101). Hence, there are wider benefits in classroom brainstorming during which not only the students but also the lecturer are collectively able to take a thread of discussion and have an engaging session in the course of which strands of learning are explored in intended and unintended directions. Newton did not intend to witness an apple falling from a tree but this unintended learning experience led to his Law on Gravitation (Achinstein, 2013).

Unintended learning and informal learning differ to the extent that a student may experience intended, informal learning by taking part in a bushwalk with their university hiking club on a known route, during the course of which unintended learning may also occur if weather conditions suddenly change, necessitating the group to work collaboratively in securing shelter in the elements overnight.

Most universities already provide opportunities for a combination of formal (through the curriculum), non-formal (e.g., organised summer work placements not part of the curriculum) and informal learning (e.g., general campus activities, clubs and sports). A work-in-progress for many universities is the determination of whether, and how, to officially recognise learning that occurs outside the curriculum. For instance,

international travel experiences usually lead to “building life skills” (Liang et al., 2015, p. 232); however, the translation of such ventures into recognition as part of any formal learning necessitates “a sound pedagogic framework which (a) ensures academic rigour, (b) establishes and measures resultant learning outcomes, and (c) ascertains whether proposed goals are achieved” (Grabowski et al., 2017, p. 145). Research has shown that the process of gaining formal recognition for learning that has previously occurred is not student friendly, with evidence requirements considered “excessive” (Smith & Clayton, 2009, p. 7).

The clouding of boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning is further highlighted by the ubiquitous nature of smart technology. A student sitting in a lecture hall waiting for a class is able to use their mobile ideally to access online preparatory reading (part of formal learning) but more likely to check social media (source of informal learning), or potentially work online towards a sports trainer certificate (non-formal learning). The question is then asked whether indeed the student needs to be sitting in the lecture hall at all for the class or, alternatively, have remote access either in real time through live streaming or by subsequent downloading from a digital storage facility. What matters more than whether the student is in the classroom is whether the student is learning. This has led to the term “u-learning” (Cárdenas-Robledo & Peña-Ayala, 2019, p. 299) which is student centred and student managed, whereby learners “freely move along indoor and outdoor settings using mobile devices which deliver ubiquitous educational content available at anytime, anywhere and anyway in an enhanced and rich learning scenery supported by embedded and context-aware pervasive technologies to perform educational tasks” (p. 302).

‘U-learning’ shifts the focus and momentum from faculty-driven to student-centred learning.

Literature Review Finding 14

Associated with the exponential growth in online technology, tertiary educational institutions must offer increasingly flexible and blended means of learning that stimulate rather than stifle student engagement. U-learning recognises that, in the digital age, students have the instant means to learn from multiple locations. Educational institutions must create rather than block pathways for students to learn.

The issue is not whether the student is in the classroom but whether the student is learning.

Literature Review Finding 15

Tertiary institutions should increasingly factor into their planning that the ubiquitous nature of smart technology is incrementally blurring the boundaries between formal (part of curriculum), non-formal (related to but not part of curriculum) and informal (casual and often unstructured) learning.

3.3.16 Student centred learning

If students are sitting in rows facing a teacher, where is the focus and what is the subliminal message? Before the lesson even starts, the roles are clear. The teacher teaches and the students listen. This is not the optimal way for students to learn, yet the model persists despite clear messages as far back as 2002, when it was highlighted that:

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classrooms listening to teachers They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it in their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves. (Chickering & Gamson, 2002, p. 9)

Students are not numbers and learning is much more than a product. Each student is unique and must be respected as “a thinking, acting, and feeling being in a life-wide context” (Jääskelä & Nissilä, 2013, p. 25). Students are multi-dimensional and although the core purpose of a particular lesson may relate to geo-physics, it will make far more sense to the learner once it is made relevant to their personal life. Hence, use of terms such as “student-centred learning” (Jääskelä & Nissilä, 2013, p. 25).

With student-centred learning, the students’ mindsets change from passive to active and instead of gaining “knowledge about the world” (Barnett, 2006, as cited in Powell et al., 2008, p. 64), their learning is part of “being-in-the-world” (p. 64). From an institutional perspective, this student-centred approach has to take “primary place in the conceptualizations that inform university teaching” (Powell et al., 2008, p. 64).

Deep learning does not occur from being a spectator in the passenger’s seat. Learning requires the teacher to make sure that it is the students who are sitting in the driver’s

seat. The associated shift in focus from teaching to learning is not without adjustments from both sides. Three challenges have been identified for institutions: “teacher doubt, teacher know how, and the curriculum” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 941). It is much easier to stand in front of a class and read from PowerPoint slides while students take notes rather than set core reading as pre-class preparation and use the lesson time to tease out discussions and/or have purposeful activities that fully engage students in their learning. To persist with a lecture-style approach within lessons “often accords low priority to students’ individuality or emotional responses” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 941). In a lecture environment, students are treated as sponge objects rather than people with feelings. Even worse, subsequent assessments tend to reflect the institutional “gatekeeper role, foregrounding credentialing and a focus on ‘outcomes’ instead of focusing on supporting, inciting or enabling student learning” (Bourke, 2017, p. 829).

What is learning? Is it the ability to pass an exam or the ability to understand, connect with, and apply knowledge beyond the point of assessment? Before smart phones, students needed to sit in classrooms to gain essential knowledge for their future life/careers. Now, all this information is held within their hand and even better, it is current, not dated, in comparison to some of their redundant course content (Ford & Hibberd, 2012; Grami, 2010) . Therefore, increasingly, the emphasis must be on the approach to learning, not the content per se. In this regard, “Targeting how to learn, and not just what to learn, stresses the relevance of being adaptable as well as thinking scientifically in different spaces, times, and contexts beyond the boundaries of traditional formal education” (Cobo, 2013, p. 73).

Verification of individual learning for regulatory and grading purposes is a separate issue. Of course, educators have a responsibility to ensure that it is the learner and not someone else who is the author of submissions. However, independent supervision of assessment work can easily be undertaken outside the classroom and institution, at approved locations, and the student submission then safely and securely forwarded to the campus, either in hardcopy or digital format, for marking (Linehan, 2008). The issue is not to discount the importance of confirming authorship of individual student assessments for qualifications purposes but rather to allow for new means of learning within and outside the classroom: “We don’t need our students to be a good

encyclopaedia; we need them to have critical and creative thinking’ (Bidokht & Assareh, 2011, p. 1452).

Literature Review Finding 16

Students should not be treated as sponge objects that soak up information; learning must be student-centred and immersive with a focus on how to learn, not what and where to learn.

With rapid changes in technology and exponential growth in new knowledge, students must see learning as a “continuous, incremental and efficient process, free from the restrictions of any specific discipline or teaching programme” (Cobo, 2013, p. 73). A smart phone is a highly integrated, not fragmented device. Young people now use such technology to rapidly access and connect various pieces of information. Similarly, within the workplace there is a growing shift from specialised knowledge to multi-skilled professionals, especially in smaller businesses (Lindorff, 2011). Therefore, in preparing students for such dynamic lifestyles and workplace environments, the approach within educational institutions should be “self-learning, networked learning, connectivity and interactivity, and collective learning” (Cobo, 2013, p. 75).

Terms such as “culture of learning” (Tuckett, 2017, p. 244), “learning society” (p. 244), and “learning lives” (Erstad, 2012, p. 40), are used to reinforce that, to not just cope with but preferably be an active participant in the inevitable changes that are ahead both within communities and workplaces, there is a collective role for everyone to view learning as a means of enablement and that it be “lifelong, life-wide and life-deep” (Erstad, 2012, p. 40). Life-deep learning reflects the depth of lifewide learning. For instance, the candidate loves to travel. On one occasion, his wife had organised a Ugandan walking holiday to observe silverback gorillas in the wild. Unfortunately, the candidate had been busy at work in the lead up and it was only when seated on the plane that he realised he had done no prior reading about these remarkable animals and their environment. Yes, the silverback lifewide experience on the bucket list had been ticked, but the associated learning could have been so much deeper and thereby more enriching.

Relating life-deep learning to the formal setting, to prepare the next generation to be ongoing and engaged participants in evolving societies and enterprises, students must

be nurtured accordingly and, as a stepping stone, “to take responsibility in their empowered status as partners in the classroom” (Bourke, 2017, p. 829). In the process, students are transformed from “consumers to co-producers of knowledge” (Zepke, 2015b, p. 608) and “active citizens” (Zepke, 2018, p. 69). Accordingly, learning must go beyond the surface to a deeper level requiring understanding through a “repeating cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting” (Wright et al., 2012, p. 159). Such “deep learning” (Wright et al., 2012, p. 159) is “more personally relevant, and becomes part of who the student is, not just something the student has” (Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 117).

Literature Review Finding 17

Educators must not view students merely as consumers but rather as growing co-producers of knowledge for personal and shared enrichment.

3.3.17 Students as co-producers and self-regulators of learning

As part of the change from being consumers to contributors within the classroom, and as a step towards self-management of their lifelong learning, students should be guided towards self-regulation which “empowers students to handle their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, enabling them to become aware of their strengths and limitations, as well as monitoring their own behaviour in terms of learning goals” (Cárdenas-Robledo & Peña-Ayala, 2019, p. 300).

A similar term used in the handover of responsibility for learning to students is self-directed learning which has been defined as:

A process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning goals, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. (Beckers et al., 2016, p. 32)

Although related, the terms self-regulated and self-directed learning are not interchangeable. In this regard:

Self-directed learning refers to macro-level processes such as determining what is to be learned and selecting appropriate resources and strategies for learning. Self-regulated learning, on the other hand,

refers to the micro-level processes of planning and executing specific learning tasks and monitoring progress”. (Husmann et al., 2018, p. 782)

Research has shown the longer term benefits of nurturing self-directed learning skills, whereby students “will be capable of managing their educational needs in such a manner that it can lead to lifelong learning” (du Toit-Brits & van Zyl, 2017, p. 123).

If students are restricted to an essentially passive role in their learning and assessment during formal education, how are they being prepared to self-manage their futures beyond graduation? Self-directed learning and self-regulation are not by any means simple to acquire; however, they are essential skills for the independent and capable futures of students beyond completing their qualification (Din et al., 2016).

Literature Review Finding 18

To prepare students to take responsibility for their lifelong and lifewide learning beyond graduation, they must be nurtured within the education system increasingly away from passive to active and self-directed learning.

3.3.18 Self-directed learning, self-evaluation and self-marking

A Conceptual Framework for Self-directed and Self-regulated Learning (Husmann et al., 2018, p. 780) illustrates the process of self-directed learning including defining learning goals, planning, monitoring and evaluating progress, culminating in self-reflection.

To acquire the ability to successfully undertake self-directed learning requires nurturing and guidance (du Toit-Brits & van Zyl, 2017); however, in addition “self-discipline is an indispensable building block” (p. 135). To be effective self-directed learners, students need to develop self-motivation, self-management, self-monitoring and self-modification “to change their behaviour” (du Toit-Brits & van Zyl, 2017, p. 138), if needed as a result of self-monitoring.

If students are to be trusted with self-direction of their learning, they must also be capable of determining whether they have achieved their learning goals through self-evaluation as to whether they:

know and understand the material (judgement of learning). With this understanding, judgement of learning could then also be seen as a link

between self-evaluation and the critical thinking that is necessary to determine whether something is known and understood. (Husmann et al., 2018, p. 781)

By way of analogy, it is unimaginable that a civil engineer be entrusted to manage a building construction and yet have no ability or responsibility to determine whether, after completion, it has met the specifications and is structurally safe. Likewise, it is limiting to endow students with self-direction of their learning but have no ability or responsibility to determine whether they have actually met the required learning outcomes (Bourke, 2017).

It is important to clarify that self-directed learning does not imply learning in “isolation” (du Toit-Brits & van Zyl, 2017, p. 138). Indeed, quite the opposite and with increasing trends towards online learning, a growing field of research is taking place in networked collaborative learning for the “postdigital world” (Hodgson & McConnell, 2019, p. 43). For this new era of pedagogy, some of the emergent guiding principles for “networked learning” (Hodgson & McConnell, 2019, pp. 45-46) are:

1. Focus is on learning which has a perceived value to the learners;
2. Responsibility for the learning process should be shared (between all actors in the network);
3. Time has to be allowed to build relationships;
4. Learning is situated and context dependent;
5. Learning is supported by collaborative or group settings;
6. Dialogue and social interaction support the co-construction of knowledge, identity and learning;
7. Critical reflexivity is an important part of the learning process and knowing; and
8. The role of the facilitator/animater is important in networked learning. (pp. 45-46)

The above guidelines for networked learning place emphasis on peer responsibility for shared learning and social interaction. Significantly, the role of the learning facilitator is also highlighted so that students initially acquire the technical skills to take part in online sessions and, subsequently, have continued engagement.

Literature Review Finding 19

Self-directed learning requires not only the capacity to effectively plan and manage the learning process but also the ability and responsibility to self-evaluate whether learning achievements have adequately met the original objectives.

Self-assessment (comparison by student of performance against assessment expectations) and self-evaluation (comparison by student of achieved learning against original learning goals) are not the same as self-marking, where the student contributes towards determination of their grade (Bourke, 2017). Self-assessment and self-evaluation are for personal benefit; however, teachers may choose to use self-assessment and self-evaluation as part of the grading process to recognise that the student has critically reviewed their own performance and identified any gaps together with justifications. For instance, a student with a failed experiment result could potentially receive a higher grade than otherwise if reasons are submitted that explain the failure and solutions offered to enable future success. In this context, the student has achieved deep learning. Therefore, self-assessment should be viewed as “a way of rethinking outcomes, curriculum and pedagogy away from a focus on disciplinary knowledge to what students can do in the real world” (Boud & Soler, 2016, p. 4).

Self-assessment has been referred to as “the springboard for your lifelong learning” (Tan, 2007, p. 120). Once students have demonstrated the ability to effectively self-assess their performance, the door is open for co-assessment, requiring “the student and the teacher to reach a mutually agreed appropriate grade for an assignment through discussion and negotiation, which must be supported by evidence and reasoned argument” (Bourke, 2017, p. 830). Sometimes, it happens that an assessment may be interpreted in a different way to that intended by the teacher. If a student is able to justify that a variant construct was reasonable and this led to a sound alternative solution, then, at the least, the student may be given the opportunity to resubmit the assessment in line with the intended approach.

Self-directed learning, self-assessment, self-evaluation and co-assessment are skills that take time and coaching (Beckers et al., 2016) for students to acquire. This necessitates a conscious decision and investment by all stakeholders including the institution, teachers and the students themselves.

Literature Review Finding 20

So that graduates are able to assess the effectiveness of their lifelong and lifewide learning in their futures, they should be coached as students with opportunities for self-assessment and co-assessment.

3.3.19 Self-authorship and personal narratives

The ultimate goal of self-directed learning, self-assessment, self-evaluation and co-assessment is to prepare students to be confident and capable in their individual and collective futures. In this regard, from a lifewide and lifelong context, the student is being nurtured not only towards self-directed learning but, in the process, self-authorship, which is “the capacity to internally coordinate external influence to define beliefs, identity and social relations, (and) is the developmental capacity necessary for critical thinking, intercultural maturity, effective leadership and good citizenship” (Jackson, 2014, p. 4). Self-authorship is self-directed learning for self-determined lifewide and lifelong purposes. The learners consciously determine what makes sense to them, what they want to achieve in life, how they plan to attain their goals, and how they see themselves connected to others.

In the Theoretical Framework Section of this thesis (Section 3.2), the candidate referred to the personal development theories of Kegan (1982) and Baxter Magolda (1998) with regard to self-identity and self-authorship. Self-authorship is not a once off step but a lifelong process to allow for internal and external changes in circumstances. The documentation of self-authorship is useful in firstly clarifying, considering and confirming goals and, later, to reflect on progress. This can be achieved by means of personal narratives which:

create deeper meanings for ourselves because they help us make sense of complex situations and reveal, with the benefit of hindsight, the significance of particular events and actions. Through the process of creating narratives about our lives we have the means of revealing to ourselves and others our learning, development and achievements. This is a fundamental process that we can make use of and honour in lifewide learning. (Jackson, 2013, p. 18)

Narratives can be broad ranging or specifically written about particular episodes at significant times in a person’s life (Heersmink, 2017). Autobiographical writing is, in comparison, all embracing. It is descriptive of the past and present experiences for the purposes of “reflective learning” (Aleandri, 2015, p. 355) and for people to “understand increasingly wider meanings and to positively and profitably plan for their own future” (p. 356).

Whether it be through promoting narratives or autobiographical writing by students, tertiary institutions have a vital role to play in guiding learners to establish and follow a purposeful path in their lives. To this end, “Programs placing critical thinking, problem solving and reflection at the heart of learning, support learner success in times of rapid technological and social change” (Zepke, 2018, p. 64). In their futures beyond graduation, students will need to map out their own pathway within an environment of continuous change in both their personal and workplace lives. Accordingly, whilst at university, students should acquire the:

ability to reflect on practice, to identify potential solutions to identified problems and issues, and to be able to adapt and refine actions and practice. We see these as developing a capacity for lifelong and lifewide learning, and facilitating the transfer of learning from one situation to another. (Henderson et al., 2013, p. 55)

The continuous habit of contextualising learning and life experiences against personally established lifewide goals enables learners to see purpose and direction in their lives.

Literature Review Finding 21

Developing skills in narratives and self-authorship enable students to consider and document their goals, then record progress and reflect on their achievements, taking into account changes in both internal and external variables.

3.3.20 Frameworks for self-authorship and critical reflection

Various tools have been developed to assist students in recording their goals, document achievements and reflect on progress. This section presents a number of such tools.

Personal Development Plans (PDPs)

A Personal Development Plan (PDP) is a “structured and supported process to develop the capacity of individuals to reflect upon their own learning and achievement, and to plan for their own personal educational and career development” (Quality Assurance Agency, 2001, p. 2).

A Personal Development Plan requires four steps:

1. Self-audit. During this phase, the participant critically reviews their present life situation and personal competencies and, as part of this, undertakes a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis as a foundation towards forward planning;
2. Definition of the plan. Having completed the self-audit, the participant is now able to document learning plans to move forward during the year ahead in the directions nominated as important to them;
3. Diary of activities and monitoring. The participant records achievements towards their nominated learning goals and also documents their reflection on progress as part of self-monitoring; and
4. Definition of the report. At the end of the year, the participant undertakes a full review of progress against plans, which becomes the foundation point for starting the cycle again. (Chianese, 2012)

The objective of a PDP is to “improve the ability to understand what and how we are learning and to review, plan and take responsibility for our learning” (Chianese, 2012, p. 2929). It is envisioned that by using a PDP, the participant will benefit from being able to relate their individual learning to the bigger picture of their life, as well as improving their goal setting, planning, review and self-management skills (Chianese, 2012).

PDPs are intended to support three types of reflection:

- “What? (past)”. During the first phase of self-audit, participants reflect on their past life/learning and work experiences;
- “So what? (present)”. During the third phase, involving a diary of activities, participants reflect on achievements as they occur and monitor whether these are taking them in the direction and at the pace they previously set for themselves; and
- “Now what? (future)”. During both the second phase incorporating definition of the plan and the fourth phase covering definition of the report, the participant is reflecting for the future. Firstly, at the beginning of the year, the participant is looking ahead and setting goals for the coming twelve months. Then, at the end of the year, as well as looking back on achievements during the past twelve months, the primary goal is for the future and using the recent past as a launchpad for self-determined further development (Chianese, 2012).

E-portfolios

E-portfolios take PDPs into the digital format, thereby facilitating convenient online storage of relevant learning achievements for future retrieval either by the participant or other parties granted access. Alternative terms used for e-portfolio include E-portfolio, and e-Portfolio; however, for consistency the candidate will use the term e-portfolio. An e-portfolio is:

a product, created by the learner, a collection of digital artefacts articulating experiences, achievements and learning. Behind any product or presentation, lie rich and complex processes and planning, synthesizing, sharing, discussing, reflecting, giving, receiving and responding to feedback. These processes- referred to as ‘e-portfolio-based learning’- are the focus of increasing attention, since the process of learning can be as important as the end product. (Joint Information Systems Committee, 2008, p. 8)

E-portfolios can be created for specific purposes such as a digital collection of materials relating to a particular learning project required by a teacher as part of assessment. Equally, a person may decide to establish a generic e-portfolio for autobiographical purposes. In this regard, there are obvious benefits as it is highly accessible as well as being “light...lifelong... lifewide” (Baris & Tosun, 2013, p. 493). E-portfolios can literally contain anything that is capable of digitisation such as text, graphics, video, audio, photographs and animation. Content can be updated, deleted or expanded instantly, as well as being readily tailored for specific purposes such as attachments to job applications.

From an institutional perspective, the use of e-portfolios has been presented as:

one possible way to encourage a paradigm shift to a more learner-centred approach Since e-portfolio compilation is not content specific, it allows flexibility to furnish students with both disciplinary knowledge and employability skills such as self-management and teamwork for lifelong and lifewide learning. (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 932 and 934)

Literature Review Finding 22

Personal Development Plans and e-portfolios are structured frameworks that enable students to document goals, achievements and critical reflection either for assessment purposes or for self-managed lifewide and lifelong learning.

Although e-portfolios are intended to be individualistic, enabling each student to express creativity and include content meaningful to them, inevitably, if the e-portfolio is part of an assessment, there is concern as to whether it meets teacher expectations. This drives risk-averse students in the direction of “conformity to evaluation criteria as a more pressing imperative than individuality” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 940). Therefore, in a bid to show students that e-portfolios are envisioned for their use and benefit beyond any particular course or campus, and towards their future life/career, certain educational institutions (Buyarski et al., 2015; Eynon et al., 2014), and even public agencies (Cambridge, 2008), provide ongoing access to facilitate “lifelong and lifewide learning” (Cambridge, 2008, p. 1228). To these ends, at a university level, in 2009, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) introduced an electronic Personal Development Plan (ePDP) with the goal for:

students to take ownership of their college experience and map a meaningful, cohesive journey; students who successfully complete the ePDP ideally build the cognitive and affective capacity to engage in lifelong, lifewide learning in the multiple contexts and roles they will inhabit as adults”. (Buyarski et al., 2015, p. 285)

The four learning domains in the IUPUI electronic PDP model (Buyarski et al., 2015) are:

1. Increasing awareness of self and others. This domain enables students to reflect upon their own “personal characteristics, values, beliefs, and key life experiences that have shaped who they are” (Buyarski et al., 2015, p. 288). Significantly, within IUPUI, at any time, students can be asked to share their portfolio with others. Although this may at first seem invasive, the intention is that through a process of shared feedback and critical questioning, the experience “pushes students’ depth of thinking as well as providing a community for exploring one’s self in relation to the views and comments of others” (Buyarski et al., 2015, p. 289);
2. Setting self-concordant goals. Having completed the awareness process above, students are then invited to map out academic and career goals, and how these link to their particular interests, strengths and personality. Then, on an ongoing basis, students are “challenged to revisit both their emerging identity and their aims to ensure consistency and concordance remain at the centre of their goal-

setting” (Buyarski et al., 2015, p. 289). As a result, students are supported to remain focused in their studies and lifestyle to continue along the track that they have determined as important for their self-fulfilment;

3. Developing hope. This is the nuts and bolts domain where students document specific pathways to achieve the academic and career goals nominated in step 2 above. This includes details of plans regarding “course taking, cocurricular engagement, and community engagement” (Buyarski et al., 2015, p. 290). By considering, determining and documenting such lifewide detailed plans, students are able to build hope as they see a clear path towards the future they envision as leading to their enrichment; and
4. Shaping education and career plans. This capstone domain brings together the reflections and goals set in the preceding elements. It is a longer-term vision of confirming a self-determined four-year plan for the period of undergraduate study, detailing the sequence of study and non-curricular activities that are considered as enhancing career prospects. In this regard, to aid students in fully exploring their professional futures, they are guided through a process “to complete in-depth research on career options and develop plans for obtaining the knowledge, skills and abilities required for their future vocation” (Buyarski et al., 2015, p. 290).

As students work their way across the four learning domains above, it is intended that they become increasingly aware of what they consider important for their future, drawing on past experiences, and mapping out a determined pathway that will provide them with the combination of academic and other preparations needed for their desired career. This integration of their undergraduate holistic learning gives “life-purpose and meaning-making” (Buyarski et al., 2015, p. 285) to their college experience as well as establishing a habit for future lifelong and lifewide learning.

Significantly, research undertaken at IUPUI (Buyarski et al., 2015) showed that first year students who completed the ePDP program had “higher first-to-second year retention, as well as GPAs” (p. 284). In this regard, improved retention is not only of direct benefit to the student but also to the institution, in terms of fees income and reputation, as well as to the broader community with respect to social wellbeing.

Similar improvements have been noted at LaGuardia Community College, New York, where a study showed that the pass rate in courses using e-portfolios was 77.1% compared to the 72% in other courses (Bass & Eynon, 2009, p. 17). Data on student retention at the college revealed a similar pattern. Some of the student feedback after participation in e-portfolio courses was encouraging, including:

Creating an ePortfolio was not only challenging but also a rewarding experience for me. Through the development of my ePortfolio, not only have I improved my technological skills but I have learned how to express myself as a hard-working student. Being a shy girl and not able to open up was always an issue for me. This ePortfolio helped me to see a new me who was unaware of her creative side...

This ePortfolio shaped me up as a dedicated student and helped me to be a better organized person. My experience with ePortfolio at LaGuardia has made me see the potential I have as a student and what I want to accomplish in my life. I feel like I was living under a rock up until I was introduced to ePortfolio. Working on the About Me page was interesting because I got to think about myself the way I never thought before...

After successfully completing my ePortfolio, I was given a great opportunity of presenting my ePortfolio at the ePortfolio student showcase. Even though I was scared and wanted to flee from there at the beginning of my presentation that experience brought me a lifetime pleasure that I never felt in my entire student life since it was the first time I have talked and shared my experience in front of respected professors... (Bass & Eynon, 2009, pp. 8-9)

Sadly, the above student had never previously had the structured opportunity to critically look at her life direction from a holistic perspective. Her statement that 'I feel like I was living under a rock up until I was introduced to ePortfolio', reflects negatively on her pre-college development. It was therefore encouraging that the student had a life changing experience in using the ePortfolio: 'I got to think about myself the way I never thought before'.

Literature Review Finding 23

Surveys at tertiary institutions have shown that active participation through e-portfolios lead to better grades and improved retention rates.

Significantly, another student noted the importance of having ongoing guidance to obtain maximum benefit from an ePortfolio:

I could not have done my ePortfolio without the help and support of my professors, student technology mentors and classmates. Student technology mentors were very helpful. They were patient with me and with all other students. I really want to say thanks..... To have a nice ePortfolio needs lots of time....

The ePortfolio really helps me improve my critical thinking, writing and communication skills and most of all my computer skills...

I will continue to work on my ePortfolio. I would add more reflection and things that are useful for my future. ePortfolio is my showcase, it is a place I can show every aspect of my life and my work in school to show others my academic achievement. I will continue to make it more professional. I will use my ePortfolio in my job interview....

The part I enjoyed the most in creating my ePortfolio is the About Me page. I got to talk about myself and share my goals with others. Besides sharing with others, I got to explore myself more by thinking about all the questions I had about my life. I was able to explore and be sure of my goals once again. The most challenging part I found was writing reflection on the assignments. I love to write reflection, though; it helps me think about what I learned and what I did not do well on in the past. It also improves my critical thinking so I will not make the same mistake again. (Bass & Eynon, 2009, pp. 11-12)

Comments such as these confirm educational institutions that invest time and effort to introduce, promote and support ePortfolio usage by students, realise substantial benefits, not only in terms of improved academic performance and retention, but also personal growth and, in particular, the critical skill of reflection, which has been described as a “quintessential learning objective when students engage in e-portfolio creation” (Ching et al., 2016, p. 109).

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) actively promotes the use of e-portfolios across higher education and provides resources and support services to member institutions, including annual forums (AACU, 2021).

A 2013 survey by the Center for Analysis and Research (Kahn, 2014), indicated that although there had been a broad uptake of e-portfolio usage across higher education institutions:

adoption is spotty: only a quarter of students reporting engagement with e-portfolios over the past year said that they had used the portfolio in more than half of their courses, and the great majority of institutions reporting e-portfolio adoption characterized this adoption as ‘sparse’. (Kahn, 2014, p. 1)

Similar experiences have been reported in Australia. A review of the Australian ePortfolio Project in 2008 (Hallam & Creagh, 2010) revealed that the “extent of ePortfolio use in Australia’s tertiary sector was found to be patchy”. Since it is faculty who must drive the uptake of ePortfolios by students, the immediate challenge is time, both to fully train teaching staff and the students. This had led to “concerns about the increased workload for teaching staff undertaking, implementing and supporting their students using ePortfolios” (Hallam & Creagh, 2010, p. 10). Nonetheless, there is a vibrant network, ePortfolios Australia, which hosts annual conferences and ongoing sharing of ideas and experiences by users and researchers (ePortfoliosAustralia, 2021).

E-portfolios and self-directed learning (SDL)

A useful guide has been developed for institutions wishing to use e-portfolios to facilitate Self-Directed Learning (SDL) (Beckers et al., 2016). Five key factors have been identified:

- Institutional level. The organisational vision should value SDL and allow faculty professional development to become familiar with the purposes and processes of e-portfolios so they are in a position to coach student users.
- Curriculum level. E-portfolios “should not exist parallel to the curriculum but rather be integrated seamlessly into them” (Beckers et al., 2016, p. 42). This again requires a high level of understanding and capability by faculty who are the principal drivers to incorporate e-portfolios within coursework.
- Learning process level. Within classes, and in out-of-class curriculum related activities, students need to see how their e-portfolio is assisting with their learning and providing evidence for assessment. Therefore, academics should work closely with their IT Department to ensure that adequate and reliable systems are in place that have been fully tested to minimise inconvenience and disruption.
- Personal level. Students must become engaged with the extended benefits of e-portfolios, not just for assessment purposes but also for wider personal use. This requires appropriate and dedicated technical training and general encouragement by faculty so that students feel connected with the project, and confident in their ability.

- Portfolio level. The infrastructure of the e-portfolio itself should be broad ranging and allow for meaningful input of personal as well as academic information, goals, achievements and reflection.

Literature Review Finding 24

For students to gain maximum benefit from e-portfolios both during their studies and in their future lives, comprehensive initial training and ongoing mentoring should be available.

Specific guidelines for each of the above five factors associated with e-portfolios have summarised on the basis of experiences at various tertiary institutions (Beckers et al., 2016, p. 43). By way of example, at a curriculum level, at least initially until students see personal benefit from actively using their e-portfolio, it is suggested that tangible incentives exist such as allocation of assessment status to the portfolio. At a personal level, for the student to facilitate regular updates to individual e-portfolios, it is useful to have structured class time for portfolio use.

By 2014, over 50% of USA colleges and universities were offering “some form of ePortfolio experience” (Eynon et al., 2014, p. 95). A number of wider benefits from usage have been documented including:

- University of Delaware, where students were required to use a presentation-style e-portfolio for review by external parties, “creating a high stakes setting that replicated a position interview process” (Eynon et al., 2014, p. 102);
- Boston University, where groupings of five to seven students were required to use an e-portfolio to create a presentation to cover a real-world issue and proposed solution. It was found that development of the shared e-portfolio facilitated collaborations by participating students (Eynon et al., 2014); and
- Guttman Community College, where students were asked to comment on each other’s ideas, as expressed in the course e-portfolio and to “generate insight and analysis into their own writing” (Eynon et al., 2014, p. 102).

Literature Review Finding 25

Although there are proven, wider benefits to students through developing an e-portfolio, at least initially, to facilitate student engagement, educators may wish to allocate an assessment status to an e-portfolio and allow class time for updating content.

Some universities develop tailor-made e-portfolio software for specific purposes. For instance, Boise State University in Idaho uses a Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) e-portfolio system for teacher trainees (Ching et al., 2016). Faculty had previously observed that students were not writing deeply reflective papers to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required for graduation. Accordingly, the university designed the TPACK e-portfolio framework to support students in documenting their reflections. As they work their way through completing the various sections of the e-portfolio, students are supported by “a set of guiding questions, and annotated positive and negative examples” (Ching et al., 2016, p. 112). The results of a case study covering participating students showed that “With proper guidance, students valued the opportunity for reflection and engaged in critical reflective examination of their learning growth, connecting theories with practice, and realising their achievement of important competencies” (Ching et al., 2016, p. 117). Again, it is significant that the usefulness of the e-portfolio experience is dependent upon receipt of adequate support to understand and operate the software.

In Hong Kong, the Polytechnic University designed an e-portfolio for selected English language courses “to chronicle and demonstrate their learning progression and accomplishments in English, as well as competence and confidence with technology, to peers, teachers and prospective employers” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 934). The university conducted a study of participants’ experiences associated with use of e-portfolios, from which the following five themes were evident:

1. Choice and ownership. Although the design of the e-portfolio was standardised, students were able to determine their own goals and choice of artefacts for inclusion “to allow for creativity and ownership” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 936). This prompted one participant to comment “I feel close to the e-portfolio; it’s not like an assignment” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 936);

2. Feedback. Interestingly, although peer feedback is an option, and encouraged with regard to e-portfolio content, there was minimal exchange of comments between learners; however, the students identified the value of teacher feedback “both in cognitive and affective terms” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 937);
3. Technological competence. It was observed that a side benefit from regularly using their e-portfolio was the development of wider computer skills, as a result of “alternative interaction patterns supported by the e-portfolio system” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 937);
4. Self-improvement and strategies. Since the e-portfolio needed to be updated regularly, teachers observed that learning was ongoing and that e-portfolio use “exerted metacognitive demands on students” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 938). One student commented “I need to keep writing, because I think the main benefit is I can learn English as a process.... When I check the e-portfolio and see that it contains mostly reading materials or videos, I realise I should write more” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 938); and
5. Dual perceptions. Students came to realise that their e-portfolio was both a product and a process. One teacher commented, “It’s like a diary which regularly records students’ experiences...for self-development, self-reflection and self-enrichment” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 939).

Challenges associated with use of e-portfolios

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Chau & Cheng, 2010) study identified three challenges with regard to e-portfolios:

1. Focus. If students are preoccupied with crafting an e-portfolio that they consider will maximise their grade for the project, then the opportunity for wider personal benefit is discounted.
2. Teacher engagement. Teachers must be fully on-board with the project and see real and wider benefits for students. In particular, as e-portfolios are part of a paradigm shift towards student self-managed learning, teachers need to understand the rationale and be trained and confident in their adjusted role as learning facilitators.

3. Selling personal as well as other benefits. The institutional promotion of e-portfolios should emphasise that they are for personal as well as for assessment and career purposes. Otherwise, there are risks such as “dressing up” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 942) achievements for the purposes of presenting the most attractive e-portfolio for job-seeking purposes “at the expense of candid interrogation of weakness for progress” (p. 942).

Findings from the above study have wider application. From a student perspective, perhaps there is benefit in having at least one official and one personal e-portfolio that may overlap. By developing a purely personal e-portfolio, students are not placed in the situation of having to decide whether to leave out certain reflections that they perceive may negatively impact upon their grade or job seeking chances. Equally, in their personal e-portfolio, it is counterproductive to include cosmetic images or statements that might otherwise be written to attract higher grades rather than describe honest self-reflection. For teachers, meaningful e-portfolios take considerable time and effort in training and subsequent ongoing guidance for students. Therefore, teachers must believe in the wider and longer-term benefits of e-portfolios and not just for the specific student project within their umbrella. Accordingly, the institution itself should establish a clear set of guidelines for all parties so that e-portfolio participation is as meaningful as possible.

Principles for e-portfolio design

Based on their experiences, the Hong Kong study presented four principles for e-portfolio design:

1. To ensure active student involvement, “align learning goals with the content and structure of the curricula” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 943).
2. Build in flexibility to maximise the wider benefits to students including “knowledge construction, social interaction and independent learning” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 943).
3. Ensure appropriate levels of initial support and ongoing guidance through “multi-dimensional scaffolding” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 943), both for teachers and students, not only in relation to technical aspects of the e-portfolio

but also in understanding of, and engagement with, the wider purposes of e-portfolios.

4. Factor in any cultural aspects so that participation is inclusive, and with a goal that the e-portfolio experience contributes to a growing “sense of self and identity” (Chau & Cheng, 2010, p. 943).

Literature Review Finding 26

To avoid situations where students may feel uncomfortable about including certain information in their e-portfolios, it may be appropriate to establish a number of e-portfolios for different purposes and audiences or alternatively to have the capacity to restrict access to particular sections of an e-portfolio.

For curriculum purposes, e-portfolios have been shown to facilitate and encourage both assessment of learning and assessment for learning. In this regard, some of the benefits associated with e-portfolio use include “efficiency (such as time savings for students, academics, and administrators), enhancement (such as improving quality of evidence and feedback, skill development, satisfaction and increases in recruitment and retention), and transformation (such as innovation and changes to institutional policy)” (Joyes et al., 2010, p. 21).

E-portfolios are student-centred (Beckers et al., 2016) and encourage creativity (Bass & Eynon, 2009). As students add to their e-portfolio, they see tangible progress with their learning and, in view of the digital nature of the materials, adjustments can be made at any time. Online access is convenient not only for the students but also for other learners who may be part of a team or who are invited/required to provide feedback (Buyarski et al., 2015; Chau & Cheng, 2010). In addition, the teacher is able to conveniently monitor progress and provide support as needed (Ching et al., 2016).

E-portfolios for career purposes

Specifically for career preparation, Deakin University in Australia developed a digital learning management system, CloudDeakin, (McKenzie et al., 2015) with the capability of students building online portfolios to evidence learning outcomes and skills. The institutional motivation was to “ensure that based on their university education, students not only mature during their studies but also build a portfolio of skills for employability” (McKenzie et al., 2015, p. 339).

From the viewpoint of industry, it is interesting that an Australian survey of employers (Leece, 2005), regarding the role of e-portfolios in graduate recruitment, concluded that although portfolios are useful, there was “no real evidence that employers respond positively to the electronic form- especially if it does not interface with their own electronic application processes” (Leece, 2005, p. 78). Some of the limitations expressed regarding e-portfolios included instances where the material was too general and not sufficiently relevant to the job in question, that it was overly time consuming to fully review, and the issue of plagiarism. On the positive side, employers commented that benefits of e-portfolios included the ability to submit comprehensive examples of relevant work, highlight creativeness, and reflect the candidate’s personality (Leece, 2005).

Literature Review Finding 27

When constructing or modifying e-portfolios for job applications, students should ensure that only relevant and verifiable information is included.

Portfolios as a product and as a process

With regard to a political perspective concerning use of portfolios, in 2010, the Australian government endorsed the Australian Blueprint for Career Development (ABCD) (MCEECDYA, 2010a), as a “framework that can be used to design, implement and evaluate career development programs for young people and adults” (p. 9). The Blueprint has been adopted by individuals and career development practitioners in industry and education, including universities, to prepare and add to “career portfolios” (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 58), which may be physical or electronic in format. The professional development kit associated with the Blueprint distinguishes between a portfolio as a product and as a process:

- As a product, the career portfolio is a “portable means of storing, tracking and presenting tangible evidence which demonstrates an individual’s skills and abilities... Individuals can use portfolios to show others what they have accomplished, learned or produced across all aspects of their life, learning and work” (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 29). As a product, the career portfolio may be regarded as a portfolio of learning.

- As a process, “compiling the portfolio involves both reflection and analysis. It places the individual in the driver’s seat and enables career development practitioners to work as facilitators in the process. As an ongoing developmental process, the career portfolio provides documentation of the past and offers a guide for the future” (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 29). As a process, the career portfolio may be regarded as a portfolio for learning.

It was previously noted in Section 2.2 that in using the term ‘career’, the MCEECDYA intention is that it be interpreted from a life/career perspective. This is clearly evident as individuals use the ABCD toolkit to work their way through the eleven nominated competencies for effective career management. For example, Competency 6 involves the ability to “Understand the relationship between work, society and the economy” (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 45). At a post-secondary level of education, it is anticipated that users of the Blueprint will have the ability to consider competencies at phase III of the IV phase gradation scale (MCEECDYA, 2010b, p. 37). Accordingly, for Competency 6, a university student should aspire, at a general level, to “Explore how people’s personal values and interests determine the importance placed upon different kinds of work” (MCEECDYA, 2010a, p. 45), and, at an individual level, “Evaluate how your values and interests influence the value you place on different kinds of work” (p. 45).

The Blueprint was designed to nurture consideration of life/career goal setting and management even from primary school level (MCEECDYA, 2010a) so that it becomes a lifelong habit as users of the framework advance through schooling to tertiary education and their independent futures. However, progress along the various phases is individual and depends on such factors as family, community circumstances and opportunities for advancement (MCEECDYA, 2010a).

E-folios for lifelong and lifewide learning

At a community level, eFolio Minnesota “invites all residents of, and students within, the State of Minnesota to capitalise on their learning before, during, and after formal education” (Cambridge, 2008, p. 1229). A survey of users (Cambridge, 2008) disclosed that the range of active participants was from 16 to 66 years, with a median age of 35 years. It was shown (Cambridge, 2008, p. 1233) that students, educators and workers used their e-folio for a range of purposes, with the most popular across all

categories being for the documentation of KSAs or Knowledge, Skills and Abilities. Further, it was evident from the survey (Cambridge, 2008, p. 1233), that eFolios were actively used for other purposes, including educational planning (most popular with educators), evaluation within a course (most popular with students), performance monitoring (most popular with educators), and finding a job (most popular with workers):

The experience of the eFolio Minnesota program has been that, to facilitate widest learning, there should be emphasis on personal as well as educational and professional usage. Accordingly, the associated framework “should be designed to actively encourage and support the integration of personal life into the authors’ portfolios” (Cambridge, 2008, p. 1244).

Literature Review Finding 28

Various governments, at national and state levels, are actively encouraging all members of communities to establish and use e-portfolios for personal, educational and career purposes including goal setting, tracking of progress, and reflection on achievements.

It is evident that individual educational institutions and governments are actively encouraging students and graduates to create and maintain physical or electronic portfolios for self-managed, lifewide and lifelong goal setting, with subsequent monitoring and evaluation of attainments. The unanswered question is whether there should be a standardised approach by educational institutions regarding formal recognition of student development across all pillars of learning.

3.3.21 Cross-mapping of Part 2 to Part 1 student development theories

In Part 1 of the Literature Review, foundational theories and models relating to student development were presented and, in Figure 3.1, these were cross-mapped to highlight linkages. In Literature Review Finding 1, it was noted that Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning (Krathwohl et al., 1964), Chickering’s Vectors of Student Development (1969), Kegan’s (1982) and Baxter Magolda’s (1998) Self-Authorship, and Kuh’s Student Engagement (1993), present competencies, domains, vectors or dimensions of growth across the overlapping lifewide areas of:

- Intellectual growth;
- Skills acquisition and expansion;
- Social awareness and participation; and
- General personal awareness and development.

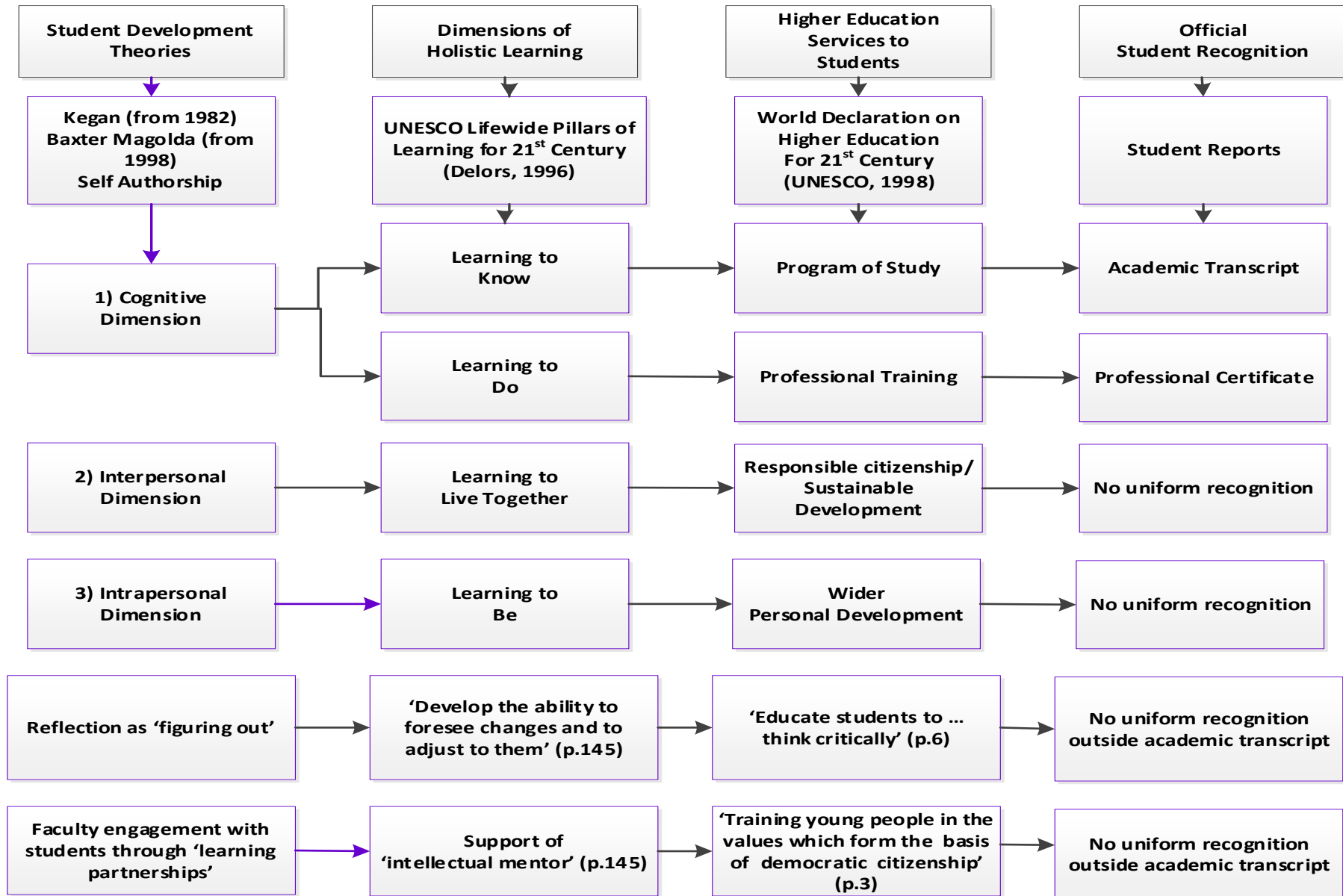
In Part 2 of the Literature Review, the candidate explored the interpretation and application of foundational theories by governments as well as educational researchers and institutions. From a global perspective, Literature Review Finding 2 highlighted that the UNESCO International Commission on Education for the 21st Century identified four key pillars of learning needed for this new millennium: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together and Learning to Be. Literature Review Finding 6 refers to the use of lifewide and lifelong learning to encapsulate the holistic learning associated with the above four pillars. Specifically in relation to tertiary students, Literature Review Finding 3 referred to the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century which confirmed that tertiary education should be directed towards holistic personal development, responsible citizenship and wider sustainable development.

In Figure 3.2 below, the linkages between the key areas of student development from Kegan's (1982) and Baxter Magolda's (1998) foundational theories on self-authorship in Part 1 of this Literature Review are cross-mapped against the elements of lifewide learning highlighted in Part 2. Although Figure 3.1 (Section 3.2.6) included the cross-mapping of a number of theories and models related to student development, and all of these are included in the comprehensive mapping in Appendix D, for simplicity of comparing these theories to higher education services to students, Kegan and Baxter Magolda were selected for representational purposes as their reference to student self-authorship resonates with the candidate both in terms of process and results.

It is apparent from Figure 3.2 below that the key elements of foundational theories (column 1, in conjunction with Figure 3.1 from Section 3.2.6), are reflected in the four pillars of learning for education at a global level (column 2) and also within the primary mission of higher education for the 21st century (column 3).

Figure 3.2: Holistic Development Learning- Conceptual Framework relating to Research Project

Figure 3.2: Conceptual Framework relating to Student Development Learning



The remaining Literature Review Findings within Part 2, consider specific aspects of nurturing lifewide and lifelong learning by governments, educational researchers and institutions and may be summarised as follows.

Lifewide curriculum

The academic transcript remains the primary focus for students and educators even though it does not report on student development across all pillars of learning (Literature Review Finding 4). Accordingly, a lifewide curriculum would confirm to all stakeholders that tertiary education should cover and report on achievement across all pillars of learning through curricular, co- and extra-curricular accomplishments (Literature Review Finding 5). In the process, assessment for learning is as important as assessment of learning so that students view learning as a lifelong and lifewide process and not just a task to complete for a once off qualification (Literature Review Finding 11).

Student engagement

Educators must not view students merely as consumers but rather as growing co-producers of knowledge for personal and shared enrichment (Literature Review Finding 17). Learning should be student-centred and immersive with a focus on how to learn, not what and where to learn (Literature Review Finding 16). Latest technologies should be used to fully engage students in holistic learning (Literature Review Finding 8) as well as participation in shared learning and general activities for personal wellbeing and active citizenship (Literature Review Finding 9).

Wherever possible, learning should be made relevant to the day to day lives of students through real world challenges, team work activities, peer tutoring, and student input regarding format and content of learning programs (Literature Review Finding 12).

Learning spaces

Students must be able to relate their classroom learning to marketplace professional settings and therefore educators should create opportunities for relevant, immersive and integrated learning in the workplace and community (Literature Review Finding 13) to stimulate student engagement (Literature Review Finding 14). In the process,

educators should liaise closely with industry and include relevant and current, not redundant, content in their courses. (Literature Review Finding 10).

Tertiary institutions should increasingly factor into their planning that the ubiquitous nature of smart technology is incrementally blurring the boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning (Literature Review Finding 15).

Towards self-managed learning

Accelerating change necessitates regular consideration of an evolving professional career as part of an umbrella set of lifewide goals and, therefore, educators must nurture students towards self-management of life/career planning and balance (Literature Review Finding 7) and increasingly away from passive to active and self-directed learning (Literature Review Finding 18). In addition, students should be involved in self-evaluation as to whether learning achievements have adequately met the original objectives (Literature Review Finding 19), together with opportunities for self-assessment and co-assessment (Literature Review Finding 20).

Developing skills in narratives and self-authorship enable students to consider and document their goals, then record progress and reflect on their achievements, taking into account changes in both internal and external variables (Literature Review Finding 21). Frameworks towards self-authorship include Personal Development Plans (Literature Review Finding 22) and e-portfolios which have led to better grades and improved retention rates (Literature Review Finding 23) but which require comprehensive initial training and ongoing mentoring for maximum benefit (Literature Review Finding 24). To facilitate student engagement, educators may wish to allocate an assessment status to an e-portfolio and allow class time for updating content (Literature Review Finding 25). Further, it may be appropriate to establish a number of e-portfolios for different purposes and audiences or alternatively to have the capacity to restrict access to particular sections of an e-portfolio (Literature Review Findings 25, 26 and 27). E-portfolios are portable and therefore various governments, at national and state levels, are actively encouraging all members of communities to establish and use e-portfolios for personal, educational and career purposes including goal setting, tracking of progress, and reflection on achievements (Literature Review Finding 28).

Although each of the above findings is significant, they are collectively encapsulated within the umbrella headings in Figure 3.2, associated with the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century and the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century.

Having presented foundational theories and models related to student development in Part 1 of this Literature Review and then the interpretation and application of theories by governments as well as educational researchers and institutions in Part 2, the following Part 3 reviews official and other forms of recognition given to wider student development at international, national and institutional levels.

3.4 Part 3: Recognition of wider student development

In this Part 3 of the Literature Review, the candidate explores the recognition of lifewide learning within higher education.

3.4.1 *Official recognition of all UNESCO pillars of learning*

At an institutional, national and international level, there have been attempts to varying degrees with official documenting of student lifewide achievement:

United Kingdom Higher Education Achievement Report

The British government introduced the HEAR, or Higher Education Achievement Report, in 2008, to provide a fuller record of student development. Specifically:

HEAR enables institutions to provide a detailed picture of student achievement throughout a student's time at university, including academic work, extra-curricular activities, prizes and employability awards, voluntary work and offices held in student union clubs and societies that have been verified by the institution. (The Higher Education Academy, 2019, p. 1).

Initially, there were eighteen participating institutions with the HEAR model and, as at 2019, this had increased to ninety (The Higher Education Academy, 2019).

An example of a HEAR Report for the University of Sheffield is available on the university website (The University of Sheffield, 2019). Sections of the report include information covering:

1. Identity of the holder of the qualification;
2. Identification of the qualification;
3. Level of the qualification;
4. Contents and the results gained;
5. Function of the qualification;
6. Additional information;
7. Certification of the HEAR; and
8. Description of the national higher education system (The University of Sheffield, 2019).

Section 6 of the HEAR Report covers non-curricular, lifewide achievements by students. According to the HEAR Implementation Steering Group (Burgess, 2012), this particular section is:

one of the major components at the heart of the HEAR. It enables institutions to add additional information in order to create a HEAR which provides a rich picture of each individual student's achievement, related to wider academic and non-academic contexts. This section provides a record of a broad range of extracurricular activities and achievements – for example, prizes awarded, employability skills awards that attract additional credit not registered at Section 4 or otherwise assessed, and positions held, such as course representative or students' union officer. (p. 16)

The example of a HEAR Report for the University of Sheffield (The University of Sheffield, 2019) also includes the following sample information for Section 6, covering non-curricular achievements:

Additional recognised activities undertaken by students, which demonstrate achievement:

2015-16

Student Ambassador

This student has worked as a Student Ambassador, acting as a professional representative of the University. Student Ambassadors participate in a range of initiatives to support departmental and faculty recruitment, e.g. acting as tour guides for visitors and supporting Open Days and departmental visit days. They demonstrate commitment, reliability and develop key transferable skills, including team work and the ability to tailor communications to engage effectively with a diverse range of audiences. In order to receive recognition for this role, students must contribute a minimum of fifteen hours during an academic year.

2016-17

Landmark Society Committee Member: Secretary

This student was a member of the Landmark Society Committee. This society encourages students studying Landscape Architecture and those with related interests to build communities by providing opportunities to participate in a range of activities and by enabling a network of peer academic support. The committee organises a variety of social events for society members as well as academic and subject-related activities and events such as workshops and field trips.

The Secretary should ensure that the general administration of the society is accurate and up-to-date. S/he should provide administrative support to the President by: writing and responding to emails, preparing and circulating meeting agendas, keeping and circulating meeting minutes and booking meeting and event spaces. S/he may also answer enquiries from prospective members, acting as the first point of contact in the society. (The University of Sheffield, 2019, pp. 3-4)

Although the HEAR Report formally includes lifewide achievements during the program of study and thereby encourages and recognises the holistic development of the student, the above sample only has generic content that has not been specifically tailored to the individual student. A further and major limiting factor is that this particular section can only include information that has been “verified by the institution” (Burgess, 2012, p. 16).

From an international perspective, the HEAR Report has been widely recognised and “conforms to the data fields for the European Diploma Supplement” (Burgess, 2012, p. 5).

Literature Review Finding 29

The United Kingdom Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) is a holistic graduation document for participating institutions that includes details of academic and non-academic achievements. However, recorded accomplishments outside the curriculum must be verified by the institution.

European Union Diploma Supplement

The European Commission (2019) has coordinated the development of a Diploma Supplement (DS) as:

a document accompanying a higher education diploma, providing a standardised description of the nature, level, context, content and

status of the studies completed by its holder. It is produced by the higher education institutions according to standards agreed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. (European Commission, 2019, p. 1)

The European Diploma Supplement is divided into the following sections:

- the holder of the qualification;
- the qualification;
- its level and function;
- the contents and results gained;
- certification of the supplement;
- details of the national higher education system concerned; and
- any additional relevant information. (European Commission, 2019, p. 1)

The last section above is intended to allow for individual institutions to record non-curricular achievements; however, only to the extent that they are relevant to the program of study. In this regard, the explanatory notes (European Union, 2020) associated with the Diploma Supplement are precise with regard to the content of this additional information section which should:

Indicate any individual learning achievements gained outside of the programme and/ or any additional information not included above that have been certified by the institution and are relevant to the purpose of assessing the nature, level and usage of the qualification. For example, a mobility period abroad, a work placement, voluntary work etc. for which the student has not received credits or recognition, but which nonetheless contribute to the graduate's learning outcomes. (European Union, 2020, p. 8)

An example of a European Diploma Supplement (European Commission et al., 2019), for Germany includes the following content for Section 6 covering Additional Information: “The student participated in tutorial programmes in his third year. He also worked as assistant in the International Faculty Office where he contributed to several publications on the Bologna Process” (European Commission et al., 2019, p. 3).

A significant difference between the European Diploma Supplement and the United Kingdom HEAR Report is that the former is not a substitute for the original qualification (European Commission, 2019), whereas the HEAR Report was designed to be “the central vehicle for recording all undergraduate level higher education

student achievement in all UK higher education institutions” (Burgess, 2012, p. 4). However, the European Diploma Supplement is part of a wider Europass (European Union, 2019a) program, which offers further support to young people. In this regard, the Europass package consists of a number of standardised documents developed by the European Commission particularly to assist with mobility of young people and transferability of their qualifications across Europe (European Union, 2019b). Specifically, young people have access to three official documents:

1. Diploma Supplement, which includes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees;
2. Certificate Supplement, covering knowledge and skills acquired by holders of vocational education and training certificates; and
3. Europass Mobility, which details the knowledge and skills acquired in another European country. (European Union, 2019a)

In addition, through Europass, young people are able to use standardised online templates for Curriculum vitae, as well as a Language Passport, which is a self-assessment tool for language skills and qualifications (European Union, 2019a).

Literature Review Finding 30

The European Diploma Supplement is separate from the original academic qualification and includes non-academic achievements but only those relevant to their program of study and which are not incorporated in the academic transcript.

United States of America Comprehensive Student Record (CSR)

In 2015, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA) established an exploratory program (Green & Parnell, 2017), initially involving eight universities, to prepare recommendations relating to a Comprehensive Student Record (CSR). The Steering Group considered the United Kingdom HEAR Report and it was noted that:

although the UK has been working on this project for about 15 years, there are variations in the academic records section, different ways of recording and expressing learning outside the classroom and that it is not used by all universities across the national system”. (Green & Parnell, 2017, p. 23)

As with the European Diploma Supplement, the United States CSR is not intended to include or replace the traditional academic transcript.

In the final report from the CSR Steering Group, it was noted that the move towards official documentation of non-curricular experiences is “at a very nascent stage in higher education” (Green & Parnell, 2017, p. 152). Therefore, although extensive reference was made to individual initiatives among the participating universities in the research project, it was considered premature to nominate a generic CSR template. However, the Report (Green & Parnell, 2017) included a number of recommendations for consideration regarding progress of the CSR initiative:

- There should be a standardised set of definitions to “help avoid confusion when creating transcripts and student records” (Green & Parnell, 2017, p. 153).
- Decisions are needed with regard to criteria for inclusion of particular achievements in an extended student report and authorised positions to confirm such participation.
- As an initial step towards a consolidated document, perhaps three separate records be prepared to cover curricular, curricular related vocational competencies, and co-curricular activities such as sport and voluntary community work; however, “there could be significant benefits for students, employers, and other audiences for a document that pulls these three documents together” (Green & Parnell, 2017, p. 157).

In the USA report, the term co-curricular is used to cover any activities that are not within the formal curriculum. In reference to a separate co-curricular report, the following issues were identified for consideration:

1. What activities should be included in the co-curricular record?
 - a. Validated experiences that are verified by the institution.
 - b. Non-validated experiences that are self-reported by the student.
2. For those activities that are validated, who will validate these experiences?
3. How does the institution determine what constitutes learning outside the classroom and how is this learning measured?
4. Does the student need to provide consent for everything that appears in this record? If a university chooses to have non-validated elements on the transcript how will those items be

submitted and recorded? (Or is there a separate section of the co-curricular record for non-validated, self-reported activities with an accompanying caveat that they are not independently confirmed.)

5. A common concern is that non-traditional students, particularly adult students with family and work obligations, don't have the time to participate in many of the activities that will be recorded in the co-curricular report. Therefore, how do campuses construct this report to enable non-traditional students to display co-curricular experiences? Factors to consider include:
 - Are there experiences that are more common for non-traditional students that could be validated through portfolios, prior learning assessments based on their work, military experiences, etc.?
 - Would they be able to record non-university sanctioned activities, such as serving on boards, volunteer activities, etc.?
 - Is it feasible for a protocol be created at a university to review and validate these experiences?
6. Where are these experiences recorded and maintained at the campus? What are the policies surrounding retention of data for this type of transcript?
7. If institutions build experience-based components into the curriculum, would transfer students be able to transfer these components to meet degree requirements?
8. What about standardization of high impact practices to pave the way for electronic data exchange? (Green & Parnell, 2017, pp. 162-163)

In points 1 and 4 above, the USA Comprehensive Student Record Steering Committee faced the same challenge as the United Kingdom HEAR report regarding appropriate verification for inclusion of non-curricular achievements within an official university document. How can the institution confirm not only the presence but also meaningful participation by the student in any such activity? Within the curriculum, formal assessments enable considered grading of achievement. With non-academic activities, is mere attendance worthy of recognition or should there be an official evaluation by a qualified assessor to confirm the extent of active involvement? For instance, does mere presence at a university charity event warrant recognition or should there be a minimum period of participation at a nominated level such as direct personal involvement in stated activities (Iucu & Platis, 2012)? These issues are not easy to resolve within a particular institution, let alone be standardised across a national system (Green & Parnell, 2017).

Literature Review Finding 31

In the USA, many universities have developed tailored versions of Comprehensive Student Records (CSRs) with details of non-academic achievements to accompany the academic testamur; however, to date, no standardised format has been achieved. In an attempt to acknowledge as many non-academic achievements as possible, some universities include both 'validated' and 'non-validated' (self-reported) activities.

Although the AACRAO/NASPA report was not able to present a uniform Comprehensive Student Record, it did include, for wider benefit, examples covering a range of individual co-curricular statements used by various institutions that were part of the research project. For instance, a sample of the Borough of Manhattan Community College Achievement Report (Green & Parnell, 2017, p. 32) included various sections for convenience and to highlight the extent of student involvement in areas such as Sport, Clubs, Community Service and Leadership. Within each section, the student accomplishments are recorded chronologically, together with details regarding the organising department or agency, nature of the activity and the type of participation.

In preparing for introduction of the Borough of Manhattan Community College Achievement Report, many infrastructure issues needed to be considered with a resultant lag time of 18 months and, even with this delay, as at the research report date (2017), the recording process had not yet been fully digitised. However, one major efficiency that had been achieved was the introduction of swipe cards to record student attendance at approved co-curricular events (Green & Parnell, 2017). It was clear from the case study report by this institution to the steering group that the framework to set up an integrated and online CSR system requires major commitment and cooperation of key stakeholders across the organisation.

At Brandman University, in order to avoid the issue of deciding which co-curricular activities should be covered in their Comprehensive Student Record, it was decided to include two separate sections for “verified” and “unverified” (Green & Parnell, 2017, pp. 41-42) achievements. This enabled the university to record all student participation in non-curricular activities but to give special recognition where such involvement has been officially substantiated. An example of the ‘unverified’, student generated

section of the Brandman University Comprehensive Student Record is also available for reference (Green & Parnell, 2017, p. 41).

Elsewhere, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) uses a pictorial approach in the development of their Experiential and Applied Learning Record (Green & Parnell, 2017, p. 65) and includes, for each year and semester, achievements according to six classifications: diversity, global, internship, leadership, research and service. In the example given, during the summer semester of 2016, the student participated in an accounting internship and also diversity scholars research. Upon graduation, the top part of the Experiential and Applied Learning Record provides a numerical summary of accumulated student participation for each of the six classifications. For instance, in the above example, the student achieved 560 hours of internship placement and 180 hours of service. The layout is easy to comprehend for all stakeholders, and includes endorsement by the university that “IUPUI validates all achievements presented in this Record and it is an official University document” (Green & Parnell, 2017, p. 65).

The University of Central Oklahoma adopted an even more visual approach with their “Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR)” (Green & Parnell, 2017, p. 96). The report is divided into five sections covering:

- Global and Cultural Competencies;
- Research Creative and Scholarly Activities;
- Health and Wellness;
- Service Learning and Civic Engagement; and
- Leadership.

Within each of the above sections, students are rated according to three separate criteria of transformation, integration and exposure. The university has a dedicated webpage to provide detailed information to students regarding the STLR report (University of Central Oklahoma, 2019). The scope and extent of individual non-academic participation is evident by the number of rectangular boxes in each domain, and then according to the criteria of transformation, integration and exposure. The greater the number of boxes, the greater the level of participation. This enables a comparison between students and also, for the same student, a visual indication of

those areas of non-curricular achievement that are at a higher contributory level than others (Green & Parnell, 2017).

Literature Review Finding 32

Comprehensive Student Records (CSRs) in the USA have a range of formats, with some using graphics to highlight scope and scale of participation in non-curricular activities.

Kuwait, GUST Transcript of Student Life Records

Within Kuwait, the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) provides a Transcript of Student Life Records from the OSL or Office of Student Life (GUST, 2021). In this regard:

The OSL believes that the student experiences and professional performance outside the classroom should be recorded and documented officially to be presented in the students CV. The Co-curricular Transcript will enlist and verify all the programs, seminars, workshops, university official sports teams, student's employment program and other campus activities and events where the students attended and participated in. (GUST, 2021)

The purpose of this additional graduation record is to formally recognise and reward student development outside the curriculum. A sample of a GUST Transcript of Student Life Records is available from the university website (GUST, 2021)

Literature Review Finding 33

The Gulf University of Science and Technology in Kuwait issues a Transcript of Student Life Records covering non-academic achievements as it believes that student experiences and professional performance outside the classroom should be recorded and documented officially.

The decision by an individual educational institution, group of institutions, national or international governments to introduce an official expanded report of student achievement not only requires the related technical infrastructure to collect, verify and record the details but also resolution as to what type and level of activities to include. Therefore, perhaps as a stepping-stone, many institutions have developed and promoted optional award programs, as noted in the following section.

3.4.2 *Optional tertiary award programs for achievement beyond curriculum*

Across the United Kingdom, there are around 50 universities (Rickett, 2010) that offer programs and recognition for commitment to lifewide development, as well as particular awards for involvement in specific areas of non-formal learning such as leadership and employability. Rickett (2010, p.98), presented a typography of awards that recognise and value learning gained outside the academic curriculum. In the typography, awards were categorised according to particular emphases. For instance, the Exeter Leaders Award is available for students who wish to gain non-curricular knowledge and skills in leadership, and the Loughborough Employability Award recognises student achievement in an employment related scheme. Other programs such as the Sussex Plus Award acknowledge student commitment to holistic development. The following paragraphs provide details of various UK university award programs.

The Salford Advantage Award is specifically career focused and is available from the University of Salford, Manchester (University of Salford Manchester, 2019). The award is promoted to students through the tag: “Your step to career success” (University of Salford Manchester, 2019, p. 1). To obtain the award, a student must complete at least 55 hours of approved activities in areas such as volunteering, mentoring, sport and club participation. Students are also required to “write a reflective account of what you have learnt and how the 55 hours of experience has helped you to improve on existing skills and learn new skills to aid your personal and professional development” (University of Salford Manchester, 2019, p. 2). Upon completion of requirements for the award, participants have the opportunity to make a presentation to a panel of university staff and employers. This is a unique occasion for students to demonstrate their commitment to development beyond the curriculum and potentially fast track their job hunting.

Likewise, the Lancaster Award (Lancaster University, 2019a), offered by Lancaster University, is career focused. It is designed to enhance “future job prospects by encouraging you to acquire new skills valued by employers” (Lancaster University, 2019a, p. 1). There are three levels of the Lancaster Award: Bronze, Silver and Gold. To achieve any level of the award, a student must complete a requisite number of hours in skills related activities. There is a minimum of 35 hours for Bronze level up to a

base of 65 hours for Gold level. These hours are spread across four domains covering Work Experience, Campus Activity, Volunteering and Workshops (Lancaster University, 2019a).

Upon completion of the required hours for the nominated level of the Lancaster Award, students prepare a formal application for consideration. Participants are assessed according to the structure and clarity of their submission as well as their ability to engage the reviewers. Students may be required to resubmit their application if it is not at the expected standard. As an added incentive, those students who are successful with their first submission for the Gold Award are granted the prestigious Lancaster Excellence Award (Lancaster University, 2019b). Recipients of this special honour are also given the opportunity to take part in industry programs with key local employers:

to accelerate their career starts. For instance, Hilti Great Britain offers a day at Hilti GB Headquarters comprising a tour of facilities including the Northern Europe training centre, insight from each support functional department, including HR, Finance, Marketing, Engineering as well as an overview of our Sales divisions. The day would also include a 1-hour social media workshop, a 2-hour individual interactive CV workshop with a relevant key stakeholder from the business relevant to students interests and career aspirations. (Lancaster University, 2019b, p. 1)

Although the Lancaster Award has three levels, there is no requirement for students to progress incrementally (to nurture lifelong learning) from Bronze to Silver to Gold. A student may immediately apply for Gold level, provided the requirements have been fulfilled.

Again with an employability focus, the York Award (University of York, 2019a), available from the University of York, is “a certificate of the University that demonstrates to employers that you have taken a proactive approach to life at university, going beyond your academic studies to enhance your own personal and professional development” (p. 1). To obtain the award, a student must be in at least second year of study and is required to complete an application that provides details relating to activities in the domains of work experience, volunteering, personal interests and skills training.

Students in at least third year of their studies may apply for the York Award Gold, which has a “much greater emphasis on reflective learning” (University of York, 2019b), as well as higher-level skills in developing job applications and interviews. As with the Lancaster Award, there is no requirement for a student to complete the York Award before joining the York Award Gold program.

Other predominantly career related UK university awards include:

- Lincoln Award from the University of Lincoln, which is “an employability framework designed to support, enhance and recognise extracurricular activity” (University of Lincoln, 2019, p. 1);
- Exeter Award from the University of Exeter, offered as an “employability achievement award” (University of Exeter, 2019, p. 1);
- Warwick Advantage Award, available from the University of Warwick for participating students who wish to “explore new interests, further personal development and develop skills in order to stand out from everybody else when approaching prospective employers” (University of Warwick, 2019, p. 1);
- Nottingham Advantage Award, from the University of Nottingham, which is promoted as a careers and employability service from which students are able to “show potential employers that you've gained valuable skills through making the most of university life” (The University of Nottingham, 2019, p. 1);
- University of Birmingham Personal Skills Award (PSA), which is a “recognised employability programme” (University of Birmingham, 2019); and
- Aberdeen STAR (Students Taking Active Roles) Award, which, significantly, is offered through the Aberdeen University Students’ Association to recognise “co-curricular contribution and enhance employability” (University of Aberdeen Students' Association, 2019, p. 1).

For more general purposes, the University of Manchester Stellify Award (The University of Manchester, 2019b), is not specifically promoted for career enhancement but rather for personal development. The Stellify Award is presented by

the university as “our most prestigious extra-curricular accolade. It demonstrates that you know what it means to do more and be more. It’s proof that you’re ready to take on your next challenge and shape your future” (The University of Manchester, 2019b, p. 1). The title Stellify was deliberately chosen to encourage students to reach for the stars: “Everyone brings their own unique spark with them to Manchester. Be inspired by the leaders and star makers that started out here ... and inspire others with your own story of Stellification” (The University of Manchester, 2019a, p. 1).

Unlike the previously mentioned UK university awards, students do not need to apply for the Stellify Award. During their studies at the University of Manchester:

All of the Stellify activities are recorded on your Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR), alongside your academic accomplishments. Before you graduate you’ll be able to see your record, and share it with potential employers as a verified account of all of your successes as a student of The University of Manchester. If you’ve completed each of the three main activity areas, you’ll be presented with the Stellify Award at graduation. (The University of Manchester, 2019b, p. 1)

The three required activity areas for the Stellify Award are:

1. Ethical Grand Challenges, relating to sustainability, social justice and workplace ethics;
2. Minimum of 40 hours verified volunteering for the local community; and
3. At least two recognised leadership activities, such as peer support, student representative, university club committee member or student wellbeing champion (The University of Manchester, 2019b).

Literature Review Finding 34

Many universities in the United Kingdom offer award programs for student achievements outside the curriculum. Some are heavily focused on career preparation; however, others are intended for wider, personal enrichment.

Although numerous UK universities offer lifewide award programs to students, none of the identified programs required continuing participation to obtain tiered levels of the Award as a step towards nurturing lifelong learning. Rather, higher levels of Awards are in recognition of extra effort.

During the candidate's previous studies towards his Master of Education, he became aware of various optional award programs such as the above and over a period of time this led to exploration towards the establishment of the ACK Award within his own institution. As mentioned in Section 1.3, a key purpose of this research project is to now critically review the ACK Award, incorporating a literature review as well as feedback from former participants. This chapter has addressed the critical input of foundational theories, government policies, academic research and institutional experiences. In the following chapter, the candidate presents the cultural background and context for this professional study, followed by the methodology for the research and later, the associated case study findings, analysis and conclusions.

3.4.3 Cross-mapping of Part 3 to Parts 1 and 2

In this Part 3 of the Literature Review, the candidate explored the recognition of holistic learning by higher education institutions. In addition to the standard academic transcript, Literature Review Finding 29 noted that the United Kingdom Higher Education Achievement Report allows for inclusion of accomplishments outside the curriculum; however, they must be verified by the institution. Literature Review Finding 30 related to the European Union, where the Diploma Supplement is separate from the academic transcript and includes verified non-academic achievements; however, they must be relevant to the program of study.

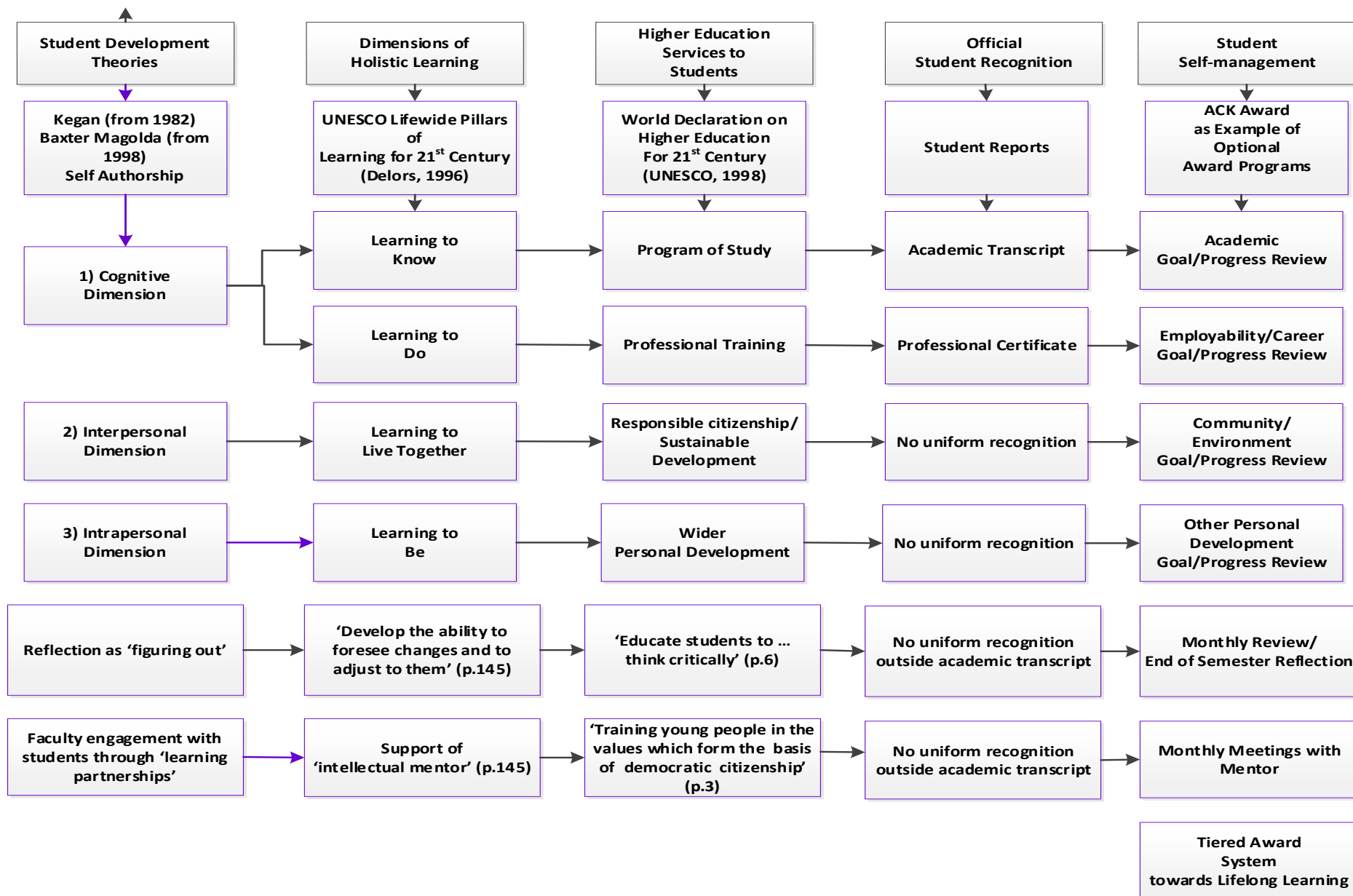
In relation to the United States of America, Literature Review Findings 31 and 32 referred to the use of Comprehensive Student Records, again separate to the academic transcript, which include non-academic achievements; however, generally they must be verified and no standardised format has been achieved to date. Brandman University does provide for inclusion of an "unverified" (Green & Parnell, 2017, pp. 41-42) section of non-curricular achievements prepared by the students themselves; however, this is clearly identified as such on the Comprehensive Student Record. In Kuwait, the Gulf University of Science and Technology issues a separate Transcript of Student Life Records covering non-academic achievements undertaken in association with their Student Life Department (Literature Review Finding 33).

To overcome the practical difficulties associated with institutional verification on non-academic achievements, some universities, particularly in the United Kingdom, have established optional award programs. In this regard, Literature Review Finding 34

noted that whilst many are focused on career preparation (such as the Lancaster Award and the York Award), others recognise holistic student development (including the University of Manchester Stellify Award). The last column in Figure 3.3 below includes the ACK Award (refer Section 4.7 for a detailed description of this award) as an example of recognition by higher education institutions of student lifewide development together with a cross-mapping against Kegan's (1982) and Baxter Magolda's (1998) educational theories on self-authorship from Part 1 of the Literature Review, as well as the interpretation and application of theories by governments and educational researchers/institutions from Part 2.

Figure 3.3: Cross-mapping of HEI Recognition Programs including ACK Award to Holistic Learning

Figure 3.3: Cross-mapping of HEI Recognition Programs including ACK Award to Holistic Learning



From the Literature Review and as reflected in Figure 3.3 above (in conjunction with Figure 3.1 from Section 3.2.6), whilst higher education institutions support the wider development of students, official recognition beyond the curriculum is not universal. In this regard, the Literature Review highlighted the practical issues facing institutions with regard to verification of accomplishments not included on the academic transcript as well as challenges associated with recording the extent and level of participation in any non-curricular pursuits.

To avoid complications associated with measuring and verifying non-academic achievements, some universities have introduced optional award programs and these are also reflected in Figure 3.3 (final column), using the ACK Award as an illustrative example. A description of the ACK Award is included in Section 4.7 and then, in Section 4.8, a cross-mapping is undertaken of the various elements of this award against the student development theories and models presented in Part 1 of the Literature Review and the interpretation and application of these theories and models in Part 2.

Having completed the Literature Review, the candidate will now summarise the findings and consider these in the context of the first two purposes of this research study. The third purpose of the study, to review the ACK Award program, will be addressed in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.5 Comparison of literature review findings to research purposes

In Section 3.1, it was noted that the focus of this literature review was to address the first two purposes of the research project, specifically:

1. Exploration of any non-curricular functions of tertiary education; and
2. Consideration of existing models that encourage and recognise the wider development of students.

Accordingly, the findings from the literature review in Sections 3.1 to 3.4 above can now be discussed in relation to the above research purposes.

Summary of literature review findings in relation to first research purpose

From Section 1.3, the first research purpose of this study was to explore any non-curricular functions of tertiary education. To address this, in Section 3.2, theories and models related to student development were presented including Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning (Krathwohl et al., 1964), Chickering's Vectors of Student Development (1969), Kegan's (1982) and Baxter Magolda's (1998) Self-Authorship, and Kuh's Student Engagement (1993). These various theories and models include competencies, domains, vectors or dimensions of growth across the overlapping lifewide areas of:

- Intellectual growth;
- Skills acquisition and expansion;
- Social consciousness and participation; and
- General personal awareness and development (Literature Review Finding 1)

In Section 3.2.6, and in particular Figure 3.1, the above theories were cross-mapped to highlight their interconnection.

In Section 3.3, the literature review considered the interpretation and application of these theories by governments and educators. In this regard, on the eve of the new millennium, the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century identified four pillars of learning for the new millennium including academic studies (Learning to Know), but also covering skills acquisition (Learning to Do), sustainable development awareness and practice (Learning to Live Together), and personal edification (Learning to Be) (Literature Review Finding 2). This holistic approach has been referred to as lifewide and lifelong learning (Literature Review Finding 6).

Specifically in relation to tertiary education, the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century, confirmed that tertiary education should be directed towards holistic personal development, responsible citizenship and wider sustainable development as well as lifelong learning (Literature Review Finding 3). Nonetheless, even though formal education, including higher education, should be directed towards the holistic development of students, the academic transcript (and any associated vocational certificate) remains the primary focus despite calls for, and a growing need for, a broader statement of developmental achievement (Literature Review Finding 4).

In Section 3.3.21, and in particular Figure 3.2 (in conjunction with Figure 3.1 from Section 3.2.6), the above interpretations, from Part 2 of the Literature Review, of the foundational theories from Part 1 were cross-mapped to highlight the interconnections.

To prepare students for their independent futures, educators must nurture self-management of life/career planning and associated balanced lifestyles (Literature Review Finding 7). Accordingly, learning should be student-centred and active, not passive (Literature Review Finding 16). Further, students should develop the capacity to self-evaluate whether learning achievements have adequately met the original objectives (Literature Review Finding 19).

Self-managed and self-directed learning should ultimately lead to development of skills in preparing narratives and self-authorship which enable students to consider and document their goals, then record progress and reflect on their achievements, taking into account changes in both internal and external variables (Literature Review Finding 21).

Relating the above findings to the first research project purpose of exploring any non-academic functions of tertiary education, it is considered that to reflect foundational theories related to student development as well as the UNESCO World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century, tertiary institutions should not only prepare students for their future careers but to also be rounded and engaged members of their communities. Further, the learning environment should increasingly shift from students being passive to active in the management and direction of their learning in preparation for having the needed skills and confidence to map out their independent futures within increasingly dynamic workplace and community surroundings. In this regard, the lingering focus on the academic transcript as the primary measure of student success fails to record non-curricular growth and also the preparedness of the holder to self-manage their future life/career.

Despite the relative lack of formal reporting on non-academic achievements, there have been initiatives in this direction at international, national and institutional levels. In this regard, the second research purpose of considering existing models that encourage and recognise the wider development of students was also covered as part of the literature review.

Summary of literature review findings in relation to second research purpose

Parts 2 and 3 of the Literature Review (Sections 3.3 and 3.4) specifically covered the models used by educational institutions to nurture and recognise wider development of students. The relevant findings were:

- **Concerning official graduation documents**

At an international level, the European Union has promoted the European Diploma Supplement as a separate document apart from the academic qualification which provides a standardised description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by its holder and also allows for inclusion of verified non-academic achievements; however, only those relevant to the program of study (Literature Review Finding 30).

At a national level, the United Kingdom Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) is a holistic graduation document from participating institutions that includes details of academic and verified non-academic achievements (Literature Review Finding 29).

Also at a national level, in the USA, a joint project by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA) was aimed at developing a Comprehensive Student Record (CSR) with details of non-academic achievements to accompany the academic testamur; however, to date, no standardised format has been achieved (Literature Review Finding 31). Nonetheless, certain participating universities have enacted their individual version of a CSR using a range of formats, with some incorporating graphics to highlight scope and scale of participation in non-curricular activities (Literature Review Finding 32).

At an institutional level, the Gulf University of Science and Technology in Kuwait issues a Transcript of Student Life Records which highlights non-academic achievements of students (Literature Review Finding 33).

- **Other official recognition but not part of graduation documentation**

Concerning other official models to encourage and recognise holistic student development but which do not form part of the graduation documentation:

- At a national level, various governments are actively encouraging all members of communities to establish and use e-portfolios for personal, educational and career purposes including goal setting, tracking of progress, and reflection on achievements. Examples include the United Kingdom Personal Development Plans, Australian Blueprint for Career Development (ABCD), and eFolio Minnesota in the USA. (Literature Review Finding 28).
- At an individual institutional level, many universities are promoting e-portfolios not only as portfolios of learning but also as portfolios for learning. Examples include Boise State University in Idaho which uses a Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) e-portfolio system for teacher trainees, and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University e-portfolio system for English Language Courses (Literature Review Finding 26).
- As an extension of such e-portfolios, some institutions formally promote the self-management of lifewide goal setting through Personal Development Plans (PDPs). For instance, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) introduced an electronic Personal Development Plan (ePDP) with the goal for students to build their cognitive and affective capacities to engage in lifelong and lifewide learning in the multiple contexts and roles they will inhabit as adults (Literature Review Findings 23 and 24).
- Various institutional award programs to encourage and recognise non-academic achievements. These awards may be for specific purposes such as enhanced employability (e.g., Birmingham Personal Skills or PSA Award), or for wider personal development (e.g., University of Manchester Stellify Award). Certain award programs have tiers of recognition to encourage higher levels of participation (e.g., Bronze, Silver and Gold levels of the Lancaster Award), although no programs were identified that require continuing participation (towards lifelong learning) to achieve incremental levels. Rather, the higher level is a reward for extra effort. Various award programs require personal reflection (e.g., York Award Gold level) on achievements as a means of stimulating self-management of lifewide learning. Particular award

programs include mentoring support such as the Salford Advantage Award, which requires participants to present their accomplishments to a panel of university reviewers and industry representatives for feedback (Literature Review Finding 34).

In Section 3.4.3, and in particular Figure 3.3, the above recognition of wider student development is cross-mapped, in conjunction with Figure 3.1 from Section 3.2.6, against foundational theories from Part 1 of the Literature Review and also the interpretations of those theories by governments and educational researchers/institutions from Part 2.

Relating the above findings to the second research project purpose of considering existing models that encourage and recognise the wider development of students, it is evident that at international, national and institutional levels, there is a range of means used to encourage and recognise the wider development of tertiary students. However, major difficulties are faced by governments and educational institutions with regard to determining the type of non-curricular achievements to be included in any official report as well as verifying the extent of participation. For this reason, limitations have been placed on the scope of non-curricular achievements to be included in official reports. Accordingly, many institutions have opted for award programs rather than official transcripts to record non-curricular achievements.

With regard to optional award programs, this professional study is focused on the ACK Award and the third purpose of this research project is to review this particular program. The case study review is covered in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.6 Conclusion

This literature review specifically addressed the first two purposes of the research project (Section 1.3):

1. Exploration of any non-curricular functions of tertiary education.
2. Consideration of existing models that encourage and recognise the wider development of students.

To address the above, the Literature Review was undertaken in three stages:

- Part 1, incorporating the conceptual framework with a summary of relevant theories associated with holistic student development;
- Part 2, to consider the interpretation and application of theories by governments as well as educational researchers and institutions, and
- Part 3, describing the recognition of wider student development at international, national and institutional levels.

In Part 1, key theories and models related to student development were presented. In Section 3.2.6, and in particular Figure 3.1, the elements of these theories were cross-mapped from which it is evident that the various theories and models on student development, using their own terminologies, cover the following broad aspects of student development:

- Intellectual growth;
- Skills acquisition and expansion;
- Social consciousness and participation; and
- General personal awareness and development.

Part 2 of the Literature Review then considered the interpretation of these theories by governments and educational researchers/institutions.

The four pillars of learning identified by the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century and the broadened mission for tertiary institutions covered by the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century both reflect the lifewide dimensions of student development encapsulated in the Part 1 foundational theories.

In Section 3.3.21, and in particular Figure 3.2 (in conjunction with Figure 3.1 from Section 3.2.6), these interpretations of theories are cross-mapped and confirm the positive correlation.

Finally, in Part 3 of the Literature Review, the focus shifted to recognition of student achievement by educational institutions and it is in this area that practical challenges have arisen. Although there is strong evidence from Part 2 that governments and tertiary institutions are committed to the holistic development of students, it is yet to be determined how this translates into official recognition. Major hurdles identified in the Literature Review included the verification of participation as well as the scope

and scale of individual performance. For instance, is mere attendance at a charity event sufficient to warrant inclusion as participation in a voluntary community project or are more precise requirements needed such as duration and extent of participation. Who monitors this and how is the level of involvement assessed? It is therefore understandable that institutions have used such strategies as ‘verified’ and ‘unverified’ sections on non-academic reports or alternatively the promotion of optional award programs.

In Section 3.4.3, and in particular Figure 3.3, the various means used to recognise student achievement identified in Part 3 of the Literature Review are cross-mapped against the developmental theories from Part 1 (in conjunction with Figure 3.1 from Section 3.2.6), and the interpretation/application of these theories in Part 2.

An unanticipated but recurring theme throughout the Literature Review was the need to shift the focus from the institution to the individual so that student development is increasingly led by the students themselves. In this regard, in Part 1, relevant key theories and models included Kegan and Baxter Magolda’s Self-Authorship, Kuh’s Student Engagement, and Sen’s Capabilities and Wellbeing. In Part 2, it was noted that these theories/models have been interpreted and applied through such means as promoting Personal Development Plans or e-portfolios for personal, academic and career goal setting, progress updating and reflection on achievements. However, from Part 3, it is evident that recognition of student achievement remains institutionally driven with a predominant focus on the curriculum. Accordingly, it is not surprising that students remain underprepared to confidently and capably self-manage their independent life/career beyond graduation with relatively few reaching the developmental stage of self-authorship (Barber et al., 2013).

In this later regard, from an umbrella perspective, and in relation to the third research project purpose of reviewing the ACK Award program as a framework to nurture students’ self-management of their lifewide and lifelong learning, the literature review did not identify any holistic model or program which provides for:

- Nomination of lifewide goals at the start of each semester/year, across all UNESCO pillars of learning;
- Regular documentation of progress;

- End of semester/year reflection on achievements to nurture self-directed learning;
- Tiered award structure over sequential levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum in the case of the ACK Award) to encourage continued participation and develop a habit of lifelong self-management of lifewide learning;
- Active support of approved mentor throughout the above process; and
- Official recognition of participation by the institution.

This Literature Review has addressed the first two research purposes to explore any non-curricular functions of higher education and to consider existing models that encourage and recognise wider student development. With this background, the candidate will now consider the third research purpose, to review the ACK Award as one framework to encourage and recognise student self-management of lifewide development. To this end, the following chapter provides a cultural background to the professional study and a detailed description of the ACK Award. The chapter also includes Section 4.8 and in particular Figure 4.1 which cross-maps the key elements of the ACK Award to the foundational theories from Part 1 of this Literature Review as well as the interpretation/application of these theories in Part 2 and the official recognition of student development in Part 3.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 will then present the research methodology, leading to the case study findings, analysis and conclusions.

CHAPTER 4 : CULTURAL BACKGROUND/CONTEXT **OF CASE STUDY**

4.1 Introduction

This research project has been undertaken in relation to the ACK Award for student lifewide learning at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), a privately-owned tertiary education institution in Kuwait. The following background is provided for non-MENA (Middle East North Africa) residents to contextualise the regional geographic, historical, cultural and educational setting. This background is especially relevant to the lifewide developmental pillar of Learning to Live Together, highlighted in the Literature Review (Chapter 3), as prioritised by the UNESCO International Commission for Education in the 21st Century (Delors, 1996). The Commission put “greater emphasis” (Delors, 1996, p. 20) on this dimension of student development in “recognition of our growing interdependence” (p. 20).

Kuwait is an Arab, Islamic, oil rich, desert country and therefore the higher education case study setting is radically different to the tertiary experiences of most western born faculty members who, shortly after arrival in the country and with minimal orientation, stand in front of and lead impressionable students during their critical developmental years. Lifewide learning prepares young people for their globalised futures but it has its roots within a rich local cultural heritage. English medium, western style education is increasingly welcomed across the MENA region so that local economies and populations can fully benefit from transnational commercial and social exchange. However, lifewide learning for a conservative, covered female in Kuwait has, at least for the moment, a different context to that for her counterpart in a western country. One simple example is that many female students at ACK (and therefore within the ACK Award program) are not able to participate in extra-curricular events of an evening or weekend as they are only permitted outside the family environment unaccompanied for educational purposes, and even on those occasions they are driven to and from college.

Especially in conservative families, the expectation is that marriages are arranged and with no unchaperoned dating before the wedding. This is the culture that has been in place for generations. The growing tension is that with increasing exposure to western

style education in the classroom, and social media anytime, young Kuwaitis are growing up with one foot planted in tradition and the other in transition.

4.2 Geo-political description of Kuwait and wider MENA region

According to the geographic classification of the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region, it covers the region from Morocco on the North West of Africa, across the Arabian Peninsula and Levant countries towards Turkey and Iran. Within the broader MENA region, the Middle East only includes Egypt from the African side. The Arabian Gulf covers the Peninsula countries from Oman and Yemen in the South to Kuwait and Iraq at the top (Gasirowski & Yom, 2017, p. 2).

The MENA region is predominantly Muslim with the notable exception of Israel, a subject which is the lingering cause of tensions and hostilities following the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (Kattan, 2009), associated with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In this regard, it was the great pleasure of the candidate during his time in Kuwait to gain personal insights from casual discussions with ACK Board Member, Dr Usameh Jamali. He is the son of a former Iraqi Prime Minister (from 1953-1954), Muhammad Fadhel Al-Jamali, who subsequently held the critical position of Foreign Minister at the time of the military takeover in 1958. Dr Jamali recalls as a child in Baghdad during the 1930's that the local Jews, Christians and Muslims lived in harmony. However, that all changed following World War II and the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 which displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs from their homeland. Dr Jamali noted that this action was always going to be viewed as hostile by the Palestinians and, indeed, it has proved to be a sensitive matter not only within the Middle East but also for external religious, political and economic stakeholders.

From a lifewide learning perspective, during another discussion, Dr Jamali further enlightened the candidate as to how history can be interpreted from different perspectives. The candidate had proposed that a special event be held one ANZAC Day at ACK so that local students might have the opportunity to become aware of the significance of this national commemoration day in Australia. The original ANZAC Day was 25 April 1915, when Australian troops, alongside New Zealand, British and other allied forces landed at Gaba Tepe, Turkey, subsequently named Anzak Koyu

(Anzac Cove), by the Turkish government in remembrance the 11,500 members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) who remain buried at the peninsula. The candidate had wanted a special activity on the ACK campus as, back in Australia, ANZAC Day is one of the most significant annual occasions. However, Dr Jamali reminded the candidate that from the perspective of the Turks, a fellow Middle Eastern country, the day is remembered for a different reason, as an attempted hostile invasion of that country. With this understanding, the candidate immediately discontinued plans for the anniversary event.

It is important for visitors and longer staying expatriates in foreign countries to be culturally aware of sensitive differences. For instance, in 2009, the candidate attended an international education conference in Bahrain. The visiting British Master of Ceremonies sat on stage during one keynote session with his legs crossed and the sole of one shoe pointing directly at a front row Arab dignitary. At the start of the next session, the MC apologised profusely as he had not realised this was a highly offensive gesture within the local culture.

Another cultural factor that should be noted by expatriates at both a personal and professional/business level is that relationships are paramount. Accordingly, at the start of any meeting with an Arab it is important to spend an amount of time in general conversation. Further, especially elder Arabs prefer to remain silent rather than communicate negative decisions and, in this regard, the candidate witnessed many expatriates leave meetings with the feeling that agreement had been reached only to find out through protracted silence that this was not the case.

4.3 Historical significance of the Middle East

The Middle East has always been a major part of global history, with five of the seven ancient wonders of the world located within this geographic region. Egypt, under the Pharaohs, was a leading civilisation and even after 4500 years, the great pyramid of Khufu at Giza still attracts admiration. Nearby, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, previously known as Mesopotamia and now Iraq, is commonly referred to as the cradle of civilisation as it was the first known place where structured urban centres were established.

The MENA region has a rich and somewhat chequered history, having endured various periods under the direct influence of the Greek and Roman Empires. Indeed, Failaka (from the ancient Greek word Failakue, meaning outpost) Island off the coast of Kuwait has ruins associated with the expeditions of Alexander the Great. Kuwait itself has held a long geographic significance as it has the deepest port closest to the top of the Arabian Gulf and therefore became a staging point for sea cargo from India and other origins for subsequent overland camel caravans north, east and west. Pearl diving was a traditional means of lucrative income for local residents until the arrival of cultured substitutes from Japan in the early 20th Century. Fortunately, around the same time, progressive discoveries of oil and natural gas within the Arabian Peninsula marked a turning point in history and local prosperity.

Like many neighbouring Gulf countries, Kuwait benefited from safety as a British Protectorate during the later part of the Ottoman regime across the wider region but, following the collapse of that empire after World War I, throughout the mid part of the 20th Century, successive Gulf States gained their independence and, for Kuwait, this occurred in 1961. In a relatively short period, rapid expansion and growth in standards of living occurred, which were not unnoticed by neighbouring Iraq. Increasing tensions resulted, including claims of oil poaching, leading to the Iraqi invasion in 1990. Australia was part of the coalition forces that liberated the country in 1991 and subsequently, in 2003, when Australian troops returned to Kuwait as part of a coalition force to remove Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq.

Although Kuwait is still heavily reliant on oil revenues, various strategies such as the New Kuwait 2035 Vision (Kuwait Government, 2019b), and the Silk City Project are targeted at stimulating diversified development. One of the seven pillars to support the New Kuwait 2035 Vision is Human Capital, including the target of an extra 13 colleges increasing student capacity by 40,000 as well as “Reform(ing) the education system to better prepare youth to become competitive and productive members of the workforce” (Kuwait Government, 2019a, p. 1).

As with many Gulf States, Kuwait has a disproportionate number of expatriates living in the country, with only 1.4 million nationals among the total population of 4.2 million (World Population Review, 2020). Historically, Kuwaiti’s have preferred to work for the public sector since this is viewed as an easier pathway for a comfortable

lifestyle. In this regard, a report for the Kuwait Investment Authority in 2017 included a graph (Carvalho et al., 2019, p. 3), highlighting the situation across the Gulf States. For Kuwait, nationals represented 30% of the population but only 5% of the private workforce. Although this is considerably below Bahrain and Oman, it is much better than the United Arab Emirates and Qatar where citizens only represented around 12% to 15% of the population and a mere 2% or less of the private workforce.

For future economic sustainability, a cultural change is needed to encourage more Kuwaiti nationals “to embrace self-reliance and aligning education and skills to the needs of an emerging private sector” (Carvalho et al., 2019, p. 3). Indeed, there is a growing sense of urgency caused by the increasing national population and falling oil revenues. In this regard, there was a significant drop in national revenues from US\$105b in 2012 to US\$43b in 2017, largely as a result of declining oil prices (Carvalho et al., 2019, p. 4). The overall national situation has not improved with the estimated budget deficit for 2023/2024 being in the vicinity of US\$22b (National Bank of Kuwait, 2023, Feb).

There is also a relative reliance on oil for national income, representing 94% in 2012 and 89% in 2017 (Carvalho et al., 2019, p. 4). There has been little change, with the percentage in 2023 being 92% (National Bank of Kuwait, 2023, Feb).

The revenue per barrel of oil has also fluctuated dramatically in recent years from US\$107 in 2012 down to US\$45 in 2017 (Carvalho et al., 2019, p. 5). This drop of almost 60% in the sale price drastically collapsed oil revenues, with the result of budget deficits in 2016 and 2017. In the short term, there are accumulated reserves to cover the shortage; however, such a trend is unsustainable in the medium to longer term. As at February 2024, the price of oil had increased to around US\$78 per barrel (Kuwait Petroleum Company, 2024), which is considerably above the 2017 price of US\$45 but still significantly below the 2012 price of US\$107. Not only because of unstable oil prices but also to generally benefit from a diversified economy, the Kuwait government is actively promoting higher education (Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, 2019), and supporting initiatives especially by young entrepreneurs to establish new ventures (Saadouli, 2010).

4.4 Education in Kuwait and the MENA region

The first recorded writing by humans is attributed to the region of Sumer in then Mesopotamia, now Iraq, around 3400BCE and perhaps this was adapted by the nearby Egyptians circa 3100BCE. Around 972CE, the Fatimid's in Cairo established Al-Azhar University as a Centre for Islamic Studies, pre-dating the University of Bologna, Italy (1088CE) and Oxford, UK (1096CE). In more recent times, Christian European influences in Middle East mandates included the establishment in Lebanon during 1875 of the Université Saint-Joseph and Université La Sagesse. However, it was the oil wealth of the 20th century that led to an explosion in the number of tertiary institutions such that while "In 1940, only 10 universities operated in the region; by 2000, the number had reached 140 and, as of 2007, the figure was 260. Approximately two-thirds of these institutions emerged after the 1980s" (Nauffal & Nasser, 2012, p. 32). This rapid growth in local tertiary education also reflects the increasing opportunities for schooling has been tabulated by Campante and Chor (2012, p.169), indicating that nine of the top twenty countries worldwide for increased educational opportunities are from the MENA region. As part of this growth process, large numbers of new educational providers within the region are English language and western influenced. In a separate study of international higher education branch campuses across the world as at 2011 (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012, p. 11), it was noted that by far the largest number of international Higher Education Branch campuses are in the Arabian Gulf States with a total of 50 such institutions. The same study indicated the level of institutional difference experienced between the home organisation and the transnational campus, with the Arabian Gulf being categorised as high, and a related caution that:

the rules and norms in a host country can be very different to those in a home country, and managers might often not feel confident that their organisations could adjust successfully in a different environment. In developing countries, institutions are often less well developed, and they can often be evolving at a rapid pace, which can result in a high degree of institutional ambiguity, and therefore a higher level of uncertainty for organisations. Higher levels of uncertainty represent higher levels of risk for HEIs considering establishing an international branch campus. (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012, p. 8)

Australia has been identified as one of the “Big Three” (Olcott, 2012, p. 1) deliverers of cross-border academic programs, along with the USA and UK. As a consequence, within transnational education programs, “English is dominant and ubiquitously promotes Western ideas, practices and cultural norms in these major global markets” (Olcott, 2012, p. 1). There are significant ramifications for the host countries. The ‘big three’ are all established democracies where political leaders are freely and openly elected by an independent voting process. In sharp contrast, especially within the Arabian Gulf, there are traditional ruling families and although parliaments exist and elections are held, ultimate control rests with the ancestral Head of State. There is also a strong patriarchal social system with all MENA political heads being male, although women were granted the right to vote in Kuwait in 2005, and in Saudi Arabia, in 2015. As a further step towards equal rights, women were permitted to drive in Saudi Arabia from 2018 (compared to Kuwait from 1979).

Institutional segregation continues for all government schools in Kuwait, although co-education is available within the private system. Officially, segregation is required within higher education in Kuwait; however, the founding President of the American University of Kuwait (AUK), Professor Shafeeq Ghabra, has commented that:

In Kuwait, jobs require men and women to work together; the coffee shops next to every university are public spaces where students meet to study together. Strict gender segregation in universities would create estrangement among students and lead them to seek out space outside the university environment. Creating a student-centred environment means listening to students. This can be done through student government and meeting with them in open, town hall style meetings where they can air their opinions, ideas, and concerns. (Ghabra, 2012, p. 1)

These practices of dialogue with students and public discussions are not at all new within the cultures of the ‘big three’ transnational educational source countries. However, they are nervously viewed by leadership within the Gulf States. Officially, Article 44 of the 1962 Kuwait Constitution recognises:

- (1) Individuals have the right of private assembly without permission or prior notification, and the police may not attend such private meetings.
- (2) Public meetings, demonstrations, and gatherings are permitted in accordance with the conditions and manner specified by law, provided

that their purpose and means are peaceful and not contrary to morals.
(State of State of Kuwait, 1962)

Nonetheless, although the Kuwait Constitution allows for public meetings and demonstrations, the situation has become complicated as a result of the “Arab Spring” (Campante & Chor, 2012, p. 167). This began in Tunisia in 2010, following widespread resentment towards the country’s leadership and quickly spread to neighbouring Egypt and Libya in Africa, as well as Bahrain and Yemen in the Arabian Peninsula. In Bahrain, the root source of unrest was discontent by the 65% majority Shia population against the minority Sunni government. In Yemen, the spread of the population between the governing Sunni (53%) and minority Shia (45%) is much closer and the Civil War there is not only linked to internal factors but the wider tensions between Sunni dominated Saudi Arabia and Shia led Iran. The recent Civil conflict in Syria was even more complicated as a result of involvement by mega stakeholders and it was widely seen as a proxy war for strategic and economic purposes between the Syrian government backed by Russia and the opposition backed by the USA.

English language, Western influenced education in the MENA region is a double-edged sword. It expands the mind and thereby lays the multicultural foundations for personal and community development; however, in so doing, young students become increasingly exposed to ideologies differing from their roots. This, combined with growing access to, and use of social media, has provided the opportunity for instant, shared and mass communication of ideas and opinions that can result in spontaneous, open expressions such as the Egyptian public uprisings in 2011. In this regard, it has been noted that:

the revolution would have happened without social media because revolutions happened in the past when the internet didn’t exist; however, the revolution probably would not have happened as soon, and probably would not have sparked as quickly as it did. People were able to coordinate protests and bring out larger numbers because of Facebook and Twitter, and they were able to show what actually was happening, and counter government attempts to play down the situation because of YouTube. Social media also shaped the way the world viewed the protests. (Bhuiyan, 2011, p. 16)

Increased education must have productive purposes, both for the individual and the community. Impressionable youth have to be adequately prepared for it, and able to

benefit from it. Firstly, with regard to readiness for higher learning, the public schooling system within the Arabian Gulf has received broad criticism, specifically that government schools are “poorly run and produce graduates unprepared for either university or for a Knowledge Age economy. Graduates mostly lack critical thinking skills ...” (Walters et al., 2012, p. 1). As a result, one of the identified benefits of a western-style education within the Gulf States is to:

help produce a qualitative shift in the learning styles of the students — to steer them away from rote memory as the sole tool of learning and to encourage them to become self-reliant, independent thinkers. The goal is to provide students with the analytical skills they need to make their own decisions, enabling them to become lifelong learners who are capable of contributing to their societies and communities. (G-Mrabet, 2012, p. 1)

Although the content of western style education is widely accepted locally as progressive and beneficial for personal and community development within an increasingly globalised setting, a local attitudinal catch up is also needed. In this regard, a significant challenge is a lingering expectation of entitlement that has been allowed to develop within the “current culture” (Ghabra, 2012, p. 1), where many students:

expect to earn a university degree with only limited effort ... They will attempt to use personal contacts to obtain special benefits or consideration; they expect arbitrary enforcement of admission standards to work in their favor and to bargain for grades or benefit from grade inflation. (p. 1)

This is a long-established cultural legacy from the local ‘wasta’ or family influence approach to dealings at professional and personal levels and therefore will not change overnight.

Although there are identified benefits from student exposure to English medium western style education, the transition process must be sensitive and appropriately paced. In any event, the content and delivery methods of western-style tertiary education should always be respectful of the different core cultural roots within the Middle East. Globalisation should involve the sharing, not sacrificing, of cultural diversity. This requires quality and dedicated expatriate teaching staff. Unfortunately, regional instability has negatively impacted such recruitment (Ghabra, 2012), and the

experience of the candidate from his 16 years in Kuwait was that many of the most capable and dedicated western expatriate teachers did not stay for more than short periods for family and personal reasons. This was usually not due to any local issues but rather the simple realities of being distant from wider family, as well as desiring a home-based cultural setting during the schooling years of their own children.

Family life in Kuwait, and especially for children, is different for most westerners since, from April to October each year, the weather is oppressive and although air-conditioning is everywhere, children are largely confined inside for months on end. As a result, local educational institutions do not always attract and retain the cream of western teaching staff. Many intentionally come for short periods and, consequently, students are often being taught by faculty who may be technically competent but culturally inexperienced. This has led to concerns that the presence of western style education should not be viewed as “synonymous with relinquishing the history, culture and religion of the region” (Olcott, 2012, p. 1). There is no simple solution and, in the meantime, the rapid growth in western influenced educational institutions requires proportionate increases in the numbers of expatriate teaching staff. The consequences for local community harmony are significant, with apprehensions having been expressed that:

The sudden introduction of foreign concepts and practices has disrupted society, and interaction between Arabs and Westerners has resulted in conflicts in some cases. It has also led to a division within society between those who feel that change is necessary for progress and those who feel that change is an assault of Western morals and values on their societies. (G-Mrabet, 2012, p. 1)

Local political and community leaders have to not only consider the effects of exposure by students to Western-style thinking within the education system, but also at any time through social media. In addition, there are rightful expectations from students that higher level qualifications will lead to better career opportunities; however, the market is tight, such that “Youth unemployment rates in the Middle East are the highest among developing regions and the wait for a first job is measured in years rather than months” (Salehi-Isfahani, 2013, p. 5). Especially in recent years, the candidate observed many highly qualified graduates from ACK who were unemployed for extended periods or who accepted positions considerably below their capability and salary expectations. The situation is even more difficult for non-Kuwaiti graduates

as, rightfully, preference in recruitment must be given to nationals in line with the government Kuwaitisation policy, whereby steadily increasing percentages of employees in private companies must be local citizens. Although such a policy is entirely reasonable, since most young Kuwaitis have grown up in an environment where expatriates are seen to undertake lower skilled activities, “citizen-students expect to begin at the top and stay there” (Walters et al., 2012, p. 1). The young people themselves can hardly be blamed for this mentality, as they have been raised in communities where:

Life subsidies (free education and health care, subsidies per child, no-interest loans for home purchase, wedding grants, and artificially low utility rates, among others) are not uncommon. Such largess dulls motivation. Often, instead of adopting the risk-taking inherent in entrepreneurship, Arabian Gulf citizenry feels more comfortable practicing risk aversion; in turn, risk aversion leads to secure and safe government jobs or silent partnerships with the hardworking expat population. (Walters et al., 2012, p. 1)

Relating the above to this research project concerning frameworks to nurture the lifewide development of local young people for their future benefit and that of their communities, there are major issues facing Gulf State governments, societies and parents including:

- Review of existing government school curriculums so that students are at the required level to meet the expectations of higher education and living enriched lives in a rapidly changing world;
- Close scrutiny of educational content to ensure it is empowering students at school and at higher levels to be confident and capable contributors within globalised marketplaces, but at the same time preserving core cultural values;
- Recruitment and retention strategies to attract and retain the highest quality expatriate teaching staff at all levels, at the same time as accelerating strategies to train local teachers with international best practices to complement their innate local cultural sensitivity; and
- Nurturing an economic and cultural environment where effort is valued and rewarded, where entrepreneurship is actively facilitated, and where ground floor career positions are viewed by young nationals as an important step to

gain experience in soft skills that will be valuable later in supervisory and management roles.

There is much at stake. The new generations of MENA school and university leavers are more educated and, through social media, increasingly aware of, and are being influenced by, external trends. If they do not see opportunities for a better, more open, and financially independent future, unrest is inevitable. Improved and higher education per se, are not the complete panacea. There must be a post-education economic and community environment within which graduates are able to contribute their qualifications for personal and social betterment. From a lifewide learning perspective, the years of formal education should result in a graduate who is not only capable academically (Learning to Know) and with relevant technical skills (Learning to Do). These are not sufficient for broader and longer-term personal and community enrichment. To achieve this, the fledging community member must have a wider sense of self-purpose (Learning to Be) and social engagement (Learning to Live Together).

The four pillars of learning for rounded education identified by the UNESCO International Commission for Education in the 21st Century (Delors, 1996), may be likened to the four tyres on a car. It will not move smoothly in the desired direction unless all four are operational, connected and balanced at the required level.

4.5 The Kuwait private higher education sector

Prior to the establishment of the public and segregated Kuwait University (KU) in 1966, the government provided scholarships for outstanding nationals to study outside the country. (Indeed, the founding Chairman of the Australian College of Kuwait, Mr. Abdullah Al Sharhan, was the recipient of one such scholarship to study geology in the USA). In 1982, the Kuwait Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) was also established, as a Diploma level government educational provider of technical qualifications.

Along with the previously noted MENA trend in the late 20th Century towards privately owned universities with transnational links, in 2000, the Kuwait Cabinet issued the Private Universities Law Number 84, which allowed for the establishment of privately-owned tertiary education institutions. The first application to be approved was in 2002 for the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), followed

later the same year by the Arab Open University (AOU), and in 2003, by Kuwait-Maastricht Business School (KMBS), the American University of Kuwait (AUK) and the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), which commenced operations in 2004.

Since that time, at least six other private universities or tertiary colleges have been approved within the country, including (female student only) Box Hill College, which has an auspicing agreement with its namesake in Australia.

At present, there is a general reluctance by Arabian Peninsula governments to approve and recognise purely online qualifications due to “low public esteem for online learning” (Mirza & Al-Abdulkareem, 2011, p. 87). Certainly, in Kuwait, currently no official recognition is given to online qualifications and this is significant for citizens as their social allowances are affected by the level of government-approved qualifications. There is, however, tentative acceptance of “hybrid models” (Mirza & Al-Abdulkareem, 2011, p. 87), such as the Arab Open University, Kuwait, where students are officially required to attend classes but where possible they can choose week by week which particular class timings are most suited to their work/other commitments. Unlike the pure Open University system, there is no official approval by the Kuwait government allowing students to miss classes, and all examinations are in person, on campus. With growing use and acceptance of digital technologies, and the wide adoption of online programs in many counties (Palvia et al., 2018), a change in official attitude may be forthcoming. Significantly, even before COVID-19, a survey of university students in the UAE and Oman in 2016 (Al-Emran et al., 2016), observed that:

81.5% of the students indicated that they were using their mobile devices in their study while only 18.5% do not do so. Accordingly, this could give a strong indicator that students are highly motivated towards the use of their mobile technology (smartphones/tablets) into their future study since they already use them in their current study. (p. 101)

For the moment, in line with government requirements, ACK only offers on campus programs of study. However, as a temporary arrangement during the pandemic in 2020/2021, the Kuwait government approved for all educational institutions to use online technology for learning and assessment. It is yet to be determined whether this may precipitate a more permanent change in the post-pandemic era.

With regard to international ranking of MENA universities, according to the QS 2024 World University Rankings, the highest ranking is 143 held by King Abdulaziz University Saudi Arabia, then 180 by King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, also in Saudi Arabia. For other Arabian Gulf Countries, Qatar University is at 173, and the Khalifa University of Science and Technology, United Arab Emirates at 230. No Kuwait higher education institution is currently ranked in the top 300. The comparatively low world rankings are perhaps to be expected since higher education is still relatively in its infancy in the Arabian Peninsula; however, with enormous amounts of government investment, it is anticipated that rankings will steadily increase. For example, the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia opened in 2009, following a US\$10b endowment from King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (England, 2009).

4.6 The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK)

During the period of this research project, the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) was granted approval for a change of name to the Australian University, Kuwait. However, all participating students in the research case study are graduates from the then ACK and, accordingly, to avoid confusion, the candidate has continued to refer to the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), and the associated ACK Award throughout this thesis.

The then ACK commenced offering Diplomas in Engineering and Business on 2 October 2004, together with a Foundation English Language Program for those students who did not gain a sufficient score in the English entry test. A total of 228 students formed the original cohorts. At that time, auspicing arrangements for the English Program and various Business Diplomas were established with the Institute of TAFE Tasmania (Australia), and for the Engineering Diplomas with the Central Institute of TAFE, Western Australia. ACK is co-educational; however, classes are segregated wherever possible, in line with government requirements.

In 2006, as the first Diploma cohorts approached graduation, large numbers of students and parents approached the college to offer continuing pathways up to Bachelor Degree level. An application was successfully made to the Kuwait Private Universities

Council (PUC) and accordingly, the first ACK Bachelor Degree students commenced their studies in the Spring semester of 2007.

As at 2020 when the candidate departed from ACK, there were three Schools within the college. The School of Engineering is by far the largest and offers both Diploma and Bachelor Degree level programs in Civil, Mechanical, Petroleum and Electrical Engineering. The School of Business offers similar levels of qualifications in Management and Marketing, as well as a Diploma program in Human Resources. The School of Aviation offers a range of courses up to Diploma level in Aircraft Maintenance.

According to the 10th anniversary publication (Australian College of Kuwait, 2015, p.15), which included statistics on student numbers, there was exponential growth from less than 300 in 2004 to 2730 in 2014. By 2020, the numbers had continued to expand to around 3000 students.

In 2006, one morning, calls were received from concerned neighbours that a plane had forcibly landed on the campus grounds during the previous evening. In fact, the decommissioned and disassembled Boeing B737-200 had been transported overnight to the site of the intended Aviation Hangar, which was subsequently constructed around the aircraft.

From 2007, various Aviation related programs were available from the college, which are accredited locally by the Department of Civil Aviation (DGCA), as well as internationally by the European Aviation Safety Association (EASA), and the United Arab Emirates General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA-UAE).

In 2009, the ACK Maritime Training Facility commenced providing accredited courses in specialised fields including Navigation and Ship Handling, Tanker Operations, Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), and Vessel Traffic Services (VTS).

In addition to international academic recognition of ACK Bachelor Degree programs through a strategic partnership with Central Queensland University (CQU) in Australia, graduates are also assured of industry standard recognition through Engineers Australia (EA), for all engineering programs, and the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), covering all business programs.

At an individual program level, the college uses an experiential learning approach so that students not only gain requisite academic knowledge but also applied skills and a workplace attitude in their endeavours. The CDIO (Conceive, Design, Implement and Operate) model (CDIO, 2019) is utilised across the Engineering School so that students are trained to firstly research information and potential solutions to a particular challenge (Conceive), then develop (Design) a system, process or product to address the challenge, followed by set up and organisation of the nominated solution (Implementation), before actual operating and testing of the model (Operate).

The CDIO umbrella model allows for a range of delivery methodologies including Project or Problem Based Learning (PBL), whereby students in both Engineering and Business are given a project or problem and, using their classroom theory, relate this to an industry/business setting to develop a workable solution. Representatives from local employers are invited to review student presentations for the dual purposes of providing direct industry feedback and creating the opportunity for students to demonstrate their employability potential.

In both the Engineering and Business Schools, students are able to undertake an internship within a local workplace to gain a first-hand understanding of what to expect upon graduation. This is especially important within Kuwait where the vast majority of ACK students join the college directly from school and part-time work is not a common practice as such positions are predominantly undertaken by lower paid expatriate workers. A further opportunity is available for cross-border internships through ACK membership of the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE).

All Bachelor Degree level students are required to complete a Graduation Project as a summative demonstration of their ability to synthesise and crystallise the various elements of learning undertaken throughout their studies. Again, industry representatives are invited to inspect the student displays and judge the outstanding projects. This is an especially timely occasion for graduating students to network with prospective employers.

As one of the original private tertiary educational institutions in Kuwait, ACK has been instrumental in collaborations with other local and regional providers in stimulating discussions regarding approaches to further enrich the learning experience

for students. In this regard, in 2019, ACK held a Teaching and Learning Excellence Forum under the Patronage of His Excellency, Dr. Habib Abul, Secretary General of the Kuwait governing Private Universities Council (PUC), and attended by representatives from other educational institutions, research organisations and consultants. The recommendations and outcomes from this Forum included:

- Internship and Job Shadows: More structure seemed necessary for the internship programs, which call for more collaboration between the universities and the industry;
 - Career Centers to be supported and funded to perform their job effectively for the best benefit of students, universities' reputation, employers and the economy at large;
 - Research collaboration between universities and industry;
 - Professors shall be encouraged to work as part timers in industry, as this will allow gaining practical experience that will definitely reflect on the teaching inside the class;
 - Implement strict supervisory role on schools with more emphasis on English and Mathematics, critical thinking rather than memorization as this will enhance the quality of education at the university level; and
 - Improving the education system by enhancing efficiency of public education, curriculum, developing skills of teachers, linkage with job market required skills, improving teachers' evaluation process...
- (Australian College of Kuwait, 2019b)

Accordingly, ACK and other tertiary education institutions in Kuwait are actively collaborating with the governing PUC towards further educational reform. From a lifewide learning perspective, the forum also proposed “More extracurricular activities, participation in social events, specialised guest speakers and field trips, and national and regional competitions in different fields” (Australian College of Kuwait, 2019b, p. 5). This general awareness of the important role of higher education in the lifewide development of students had previously been raised by the founding President of AUK, Professor Shafeeq Ghabra, who asserted that the role of universities includes “developing students intellectually, socially, psychologically, and educationally” (Ghabra, 2012, p. 1).

With reference to lifewide development outside the classroom at ACK, all students are encouraged to join one of the many sporting teams or club activities such as music, art, drama, photography and cooking. Representative teams are selected to compete at local and international university events.

A special English Village was established in 2018 as an on-campus venue for faculty and the students themselves to organise learning and fun activities where all communication must be in English. In this regard, although English is the official means of academic and administrative communications within the college, almost all students are Arabs and, accordingly, general chat outside the classroom is often in their mother tongue.

With regard to demographics, approximately 85% of ACK students are Kuwaiti and almost all the remainder are from MENA countries as a result of their parents being in Kuwait for work purposes. Unlike Australia, no student visas are currently available for international students to study in Kuwait. They are only able to study inside the country if at least one of their parents has a work visa. Expatriates are unable to apply for Kuwaiti citizenship regardless of length of stay in the country.

The Kuwait government provides scholarships to Kuwait students who either enter the college with a minimum GPA of 3.00/4.00 from High School or subsequently achieve at least a GPA of 2.50/4.00 during the first year of their Diploma or Bachelor Degree studies. All other students are self-funded, although a limited number of ACK academic scholarships are available for outstanding students and also a dedicated allocation of bursaries is made annually for financial assistance with fees in particular circumstances.

There is a rich diversity of cultural backgrounds among the ACK teaching and administrative staff, with more than forty nationalities represented on campus. Each year, a special ACK Cultural Day is held during which both students and staff are invited to have awareness displays and activities regarding their homelands.

4.7 The ACK Award

The ACK Award is a voluntary program of self-development established in 2013, through ACK Policy/Procedure ACK.PLR.VPAC.26 (copy at Appendix C). According to the policy, “The ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) are frameworks to encourage and recognise student personal goal setting and subsequent achievement” (Appendix C).

Participation in the ACK Award is voluntary and there are incremental levels of certification to encourage ongoing involvement. To complete the requirements for the first (Bronze) level of the ACK Award, it is necessary for a student to:

- Nominate or be allocated a staff mentor who will work with the student to provide encouragement and support in the determination of initial goals and then subsequent progress towards completion.
- Document a set of lifewide goals at the beginning of a semester, using the Goals Action Plan (GAP) template. A completed example of this form (ACK.FO.VPAC.26.03) is at Appendix A and is available through the ACK Student Portal for participant use. The template enables the setting of a personal goal for each of the four separate areas (pillars) of learning identified by UNESCO as necessary for rounded education in the 21st Century (Section 3.3.2) (Delors, 1996). Accordingly, students nominate semester goals for:
 - Overall academic achievement (UNESCO Pillar of Learning to Know), through a targeted semester Grade Point Average (GPA);
 - Employability enhancement objective outside the curriculum (Learning to Do), such as participation in optional field trips to work sites;
 - Community/Environmental development participation (Learning to Live Together), by voluntary involvement in projects for the benefit of society or nature; and
 - Personal edification (Learning to Be), through commitment to pursue an activity or interest for self-enrichment such as learning to play the guitar, participate in stage productions, or joining any ACK Club.
- On a monthly basis, use the GAP form to record progress towards each of the nominated goals, and have the achievement entries initialled by the mentor.
- At the end of the semester, prepare a reflection on accomplishments during the period and have this initialled by the mentor.

Successful completion of the above planning and review process for two semesters entitles the participating student to the first (Bronze) level of the ACK Award. Further involvement entitles the student to Silver (after a total of 4 semesters), Gold (after 6 semesters), and Platinum (after 8 semesters) levels of the Award.

For each level of the Award, participants receive a corresponding certificate signed by the College President as well as an associated lapel pin. A flow chart illustrating the process to be followed by students to gain the various levels of the ACK Award is included as Appendix B.

The following Table 4.1 summarises the number of students who have completed various levels of certification since commencement of the ACK Award in 2013, (as at 2020 when the candidate departed ACK):

Table 4.1: Cumulative Summary of ACK Award Recipients: 2013 to 2020

Level of ACK Award completed	Number of Recipients
Bronze	75
Silver	34
Gold	18
Platinum	8

As at 2020, there were 72 current students participating in the ACK Award program.

4.8 Cross-mapping of literature review to ACK Award program

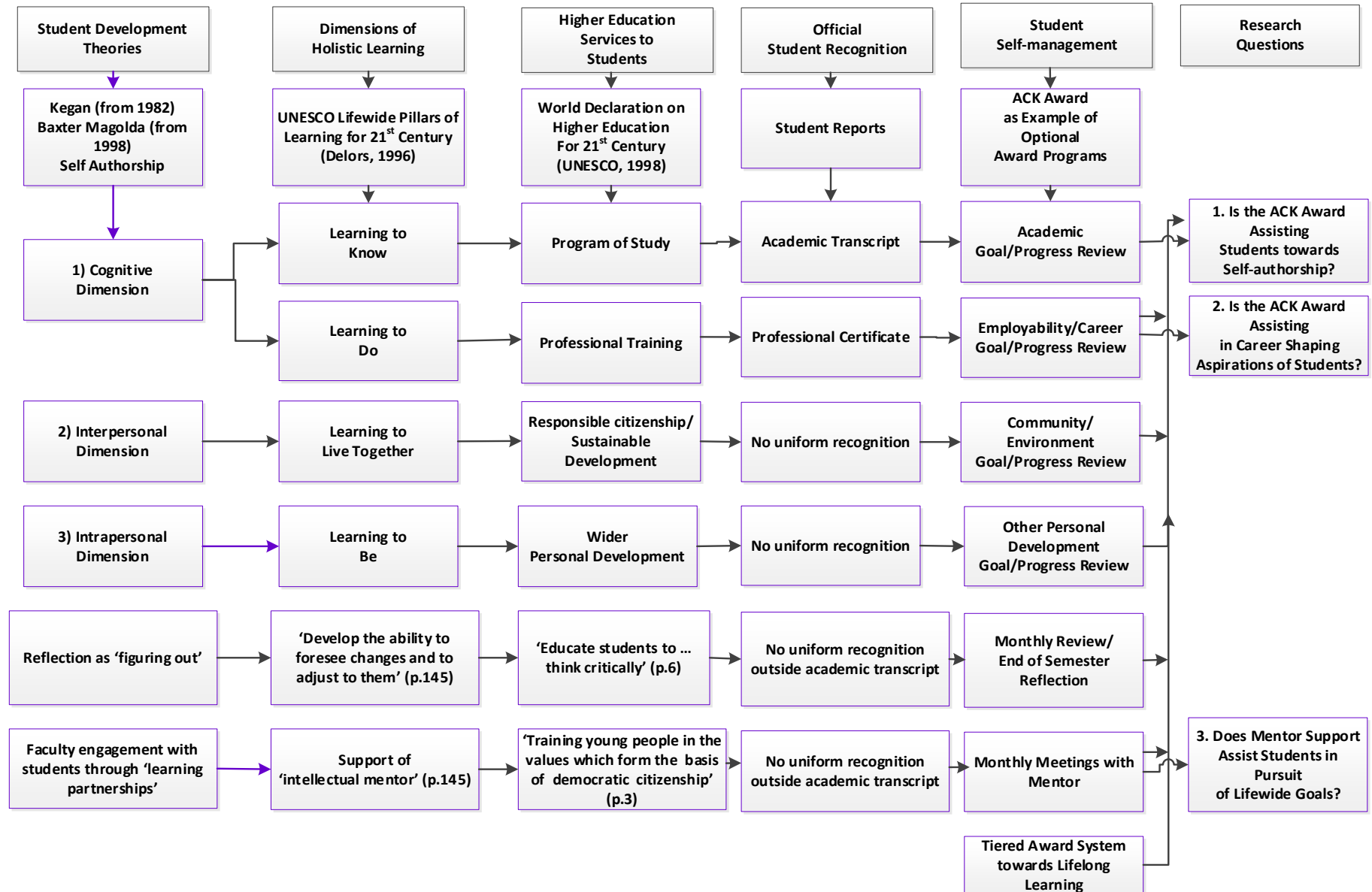
With the above background to the ACK Award, in the second last column of Figure 4.1 below, the various elements of the ACK Award are cross-mapped against the foundational theories on student development (in conjunction with Figure 3.1 from Section 3.2.6), the interpretation of these theories by governments/educators (Section 3.3), and institutional recognition of student achievements (Section 3.4).

From Section 3.2.6, Figure 3.1 highlighted the linkages between elements of various theories and models associated with student development. Then, in Section 3.3.21, Figure 3.2 (in conjunction with Figure 3.1 from Section 3.2.6), focused on the interpretation and application of these theories by governments and educational researchers/institutions. In Section 3.4.3, Figure 3.3 cross-mapped the various means of recognition by tertiary institutions concerning student achievements. Figure 4.1 below, (in conjunction with Figure 3.1 from Section 3.2.6), includes the ACK Award

and how its elements are linked to foundational theories and the interpretation, application and recognition of student development.

Figure 4.1: Cross-mapping of ACK Award to Student Development Theories:

Figure 4.1: Cross-mapping of ACK Award against Student Development Theories



The ACK Award was, indeed, deliberately structured to encourage student development across all four UNESCO pillars of learning (Section 3.3.2), and hence these strong linkages were not surprising. However, at the time of developing the ACK Award in 2013, the candidate had not undertaken a study of foundational theories on student development and it is therefore a benefit from this research project to identify that the elements of the ACK Award positively correlate to the key elements of the Kegan's (1982) and Baxter Magolda's (1998) theories on self-authorship, as shown in Figure 4.1. Previously, Figure 3.1 in Section 3.2.6 also highlighted linkages with Kuh's Student Engagement (1993) with regard to holistic learning. (Appendix D provides a consolidation of Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 4.12 highlighting the elements of ACK Award against all the above theories and models).

The essential core of all the above theories and models aligns with the framework of the ACK Award program and its purpose of providing a template and process through which participating students can develop the skills and habit of self-managing their lifewide goal setting, followed by periodic review and reflection on progress. In this later regard, significantly, Figure 4.1 above and Figure 3.1 (from Section 3.2.6) also identify that Baxter Magolda and Kuh both refer to the importance of reflection in developmental progress as well as mentoring or advising support, similar to that required by the ACK Award. However, educators and communities are entering uncharted waters and therefore theories as well as practice must reflect, if not anticipate, ongoing change.

Ultimately, student development theories and practice are not about statistics but young people. The above theories/models all have one common element; they emphasise personal and societal growth or, as expressed by Chickering (2008), "the capacity to deal with the complexities of life with integrity for oneself and others lies at the core of every developmental theory" (p. 90). The tangible outcomes from the educational system are evidenced by the maturation level of graduates and therefore the stakes are high, both for the students themselves and the community. Registering at an institution of higher education should not just be about obtaining an academic qualification but "a life-changing experience" (Kuh et al., 2007, p. 118).

If the overarching role of tertiary institutions is to nurture the holistic development of students, then educators must stimulate both the scholastic and wider growth of

students. The persistent emphasis on the academic transcript as the primary measure of student achievement continues to discount the importance of other development needed for a balanced life. In the Literature Review Chapter 3, it was noted that the United Kingdom Higher Education Achievement Report (Burgess, 2012) is one national strategy to recognise lifewide student growth within the one comprehensive graduation report.

In various other countries, separate achievement (Green & Parnell, 2017) or supplementary reports (European Commission, 2019) are presented along with the academic transcript to reflect student accomplishments outside the classroom. However, the Literature Review (Chapter 3) also highlighted the practical difficulties facing educational institutions in the formal recognition of student achievements outside the curriculum. In particular, mechanisms to verify such participation as well as quantifying the scope and scale of such activity have led to institutions using less formal means of recognition such as optional award programs. In this later regard, for its part, the ACK Award is an official encouragement and recognition at the Australian College of Kuwait of student participation towards self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1998).

For the moment, university students as well as their parents, teachers and prospective employers will naturally continue to focus on the academic transcript as the prized measure of student achievement. Yet, does this one narrow report reflect the overall readiness of the holder to step out from the cloistered surrounds of their alma mater to self-manage their future life/career within the current let alone unpredictable future economic, work and social landscapes?

It can only be imagined what effect artificial intelligence, robotics, virtual reality and other technologies will have on lifestyles, work and hopefully learning environments even within the relatively short term. Comparatively few students currently about to enter higher education had access to smart phone technology when they commenced their schooling just twelve years ago, yet the following generation take this for granted. What will be held in the hand or worn on the head in twelve years' time when students now entering school will exit into their university years? What are universities doing now to prepare for this? The report card for many higher education institutions is less than impressive. Whilst espousing "transformational learning" (Baxter Magolda,

2014, p. 26) as needed for citizenship in a globalised world, persistent use of a “modular curriculum, organised a century ago and still largely intact, has become increasingly dysfunctional” (American Association Colleges and Universities, 2009, p. 19).

More efforts are needed towards a multi-disciplinary approach to education so that students are engaged, challenged and prepared for a world that will be radically different to that encountered by their faculty when they were themselves students. Indeed, the pressures on educators are immense and “the high proportion of faculty members still find themselves addressing questions of purpose and meaning” (Chickering, 2011, p. 31). If their teachers, as educated and mature adults, are struggling to maintain balance in their own lives, how much more difficult is it for students in their developmental years to fit all the pieces together? It should be no surprise then that longitudinal studies have shown “few traditional-age graduating students have developed self-authorship during college” (Baxter Magolda, 2012, p. 34).

Although it is understandable that faculty are themselves having to constantly adjust their personal lifestyles, work and learning approaches to disruptive change, students sitting in their classes are reliant upon them for guidance. Therefore, educators and educational institutions must be leading, not lagging behind, their students. Yet, students receive “very little preparation either as citizens or as professionals for the international challenges that are likely to confront them” (Bok, 2006, p. 233).

Until such time as governments, communities, employers and students themselves truly value and formally recognise lifewide development and not just scholastic/vocational achievement associated with higher education, optional programs such as the ACK Award are left to fill the gap. In this context, the third purpose of this present research is to review the ACK Award program as one formal structure that enables tertiary students to self-manage their lifewide and lifelong goal setting and progress reflection, with the support of a mentor.

As an initial step towards this review, the Literature Review in Chapter 3 enabled the candidate to research foundational theories as well as the interpretation, application and recognition of student development. Having cross-mapped the ACK Award to relevant theories and institutional application in Figure 4.1, the candidate is now able

to address the specific research questions (Section 1.8) associated with this Professional Study:

- 1) Did the ACK Award program achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how and to what degree?
- 2) Has the ACK Award assisted in meeting the career-shaping aspirations of participants and, if so, how?
- 3) To what extent, if at all, did the presence and encouragement of a staff mentor assist participating students in clarifying and pursuing lifewide goals and, if so, how?

In the right-hand column of Figure 4.1, the above research questions are added to show their relationship to the various elements of the ACK Award as well as foundational theories and application/recognition of student development.

The research questions are addressed in the following chapters.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter commenced with a cultural background to the context of this research project on frameworks to encourage and recognise the lifewide development of students. In this regard, the research was undertaken within a Middle East, Arabic, Islamic higher education institution which has a different cultural environment to the previous experiences of the candidate as an Australian vocational teacher with a Caucasian family background.

With this background, the candidate described the ACK Award and, in Section 4.8, a cross-mapping was undertaken to highlight linkages between the elements of the Award with the foundational theories and application/recognition of student development presented in the Literature Review Chapter 3. Importantly, in the final column of Figure 4.1, the three research questions have been included to highlight their relationship to the ACK Award as well as foundational theories.

Having completed the above, the next chapter will present the methodology associated with this research project, followed by a summary of the ACK Award case study findings, analysis and conclusions.

CHAPTER 5 : METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 described the cultural background for the setting of the research within a Middle East, Arabic, Islamic HEI. Having presented the above, this chapter addresses the methodology associated with the study. In determining an appropriate methodology, the candidate was mindful that although all recipients of the ACK Award have met the structured requirements, they each have their own unique stories of particular goals that were special to them and how they pursued those targets. This research project was intended to capture the individual experiences of former participants for the purposes of improving the framework so that future participants are able to gain more from their involvement. Accordingly, within this chapter the candidate presents an interpretative paradigm as the most appropriate viewpoint for the study. It therefore follows that a qualitative rather than quantitative methodology is fitting as the candidate is not seeking to present any statistical justification but rather explore and interpret the personal insights from each participant. With this in mind, a case study design was selected using a semi-structured interview method. This enabled the candidate to include key topics within each interview but at the same time have the flexibility to allow the discussion to drift into other areas significant to the individual participants. The chapter then includes a summary of the data collection method, selection of participants and approach to data analysis. The subsequent chapter presents the findings from the interviews as well as analysis and conclusions.

5.2 Relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology

To assist the candidate in crystallising the paradigm or worldview (MacKenzie & Knipe, 2006) most suited to this study on student holistic learning, Chapter 3 presented the literature review which provided valuable insights as to research undertaken by others. The diagrammatic mapping exercise included in the conceptual framework (Section 3.2) summarises linkages between the key elements of holistic learning identified in the literature review against relevant theories and then, in Section 4.8, also against the framework of the ACK Award program. In this latter regard, although the self-authorship theory developed by Kegan (1982, 1994) and Baxter Magolda (1998, 2014), resonated with the candidate and directly link to purposes of the ACK

Award, an increasing reality is that learning, living and workplace settings are all experiencing rapid and unprecedented change. Therefore, the surrounding environment within which self-authorship and well-being are being nurtured is far from static. As a result, the students themselves as well as their parents, educators and communities are all navigating uncharted waters amidst “growing chaos” (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000, p. 120). In particular, the ubiquitous capabilities and escalating usage of portable smart devices have in barely a decade radically changed the behaviour of the subject group, higher education students. For instance, physical classrooms, library research and general face to face communications have been significantly replaced by online learning and social media messages.

Whereas in the past, young people in their developmental years learned to interpret various nuances associated with the body language accompanying spoken words, to what extent has this skill been diminished through increasing substitution of online communications with the associated use of digital emoticons (or emojis) in lieu of face to face expressions? There has been little time for any related longitudinal studies (Marengo et al., 2017) or review of student developmental theories and, in the meantime, uptake of ever-changing digital technologies continues to accelerate. The recent prolonged disruption to most aspects of work, life and learning during COVID-19 will, on its own, require a further rethink of educational theories, policies and practice for the ‘new normal’.

With the above understandings, from an ontological perspective, a study of the ACK Award relates to student holistic learning, which is not a stable phenomenon that can be analysed with any realistic expectation of, or desire for, widespread and continuing uniformity or universal law. On the contrary, especially in the current environment of disruptive change, a relativist ontology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) is appropriate that respects and affirms dissimilarities. Although there are standardised requirements to gain the ACK Award, as clarified in Section 4.7, each participant sets their own goals with regard to the four developmental areas in order to reflect their own life direction. Accordingly, there is no attempt to identify any one absolute reality but rather a desire to study the differences and similarities associated with the individual realities that participants construct and co-construct in relation to their holistic development, based on such variables as personal and collective experiences, beliefs and traditions. It follows then that the epistemology must be subjectivist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005),

allowing for and respecting individuality. People are not objects and evolving personalities cannot be studied from a clinical objectivist approach; rather, the purpose of this study is to gain knowledge regarding individual differences as well as commonalities in lifewide development.

5.3 Interpretivist paradigm

Taking the above into account, the candidate presents an interpretivist paradigm as the most appropriate viewpoint for the study (Schwandt, 2000). In this regard, the deterministic knowledge claims associated with positivist and post-positivist paradigms are more suited for the ‘hard’ sciences but do not take into account individual diversity with regard to student holistic development (Cresswell, 2003). Indeed, it is broadly argued that positivism is unable to capture ‘reality’ as associated with the ‘soft’ sciences including education and learning. Even the grounded theory dialogic stance of advocating a preferred approach by “generating theory from data” (Gibson & Hartman, 2014, p.4) that “explains a process or scheme associated with a phenomenon” (Birks & Mills, 2015, p.13) is fundamentally unable to explain the innate freedom of selection by each self-managed lifewide learner of their unique path towards a personally fulfilling and socially connected lifestyle. The study does not attempt to align the ACK Award program to any one existing theory on lifewide learning in relation to student development or indeed to lay the foundations for any new theory. Nor does the candidate have a transformational agenda but rather a desire to interpret feedback from graduate participants towards a deeper understanding of the ACK Award and its usefulness as a framework in nurturing holistic and lifelong learning.

An interpretivist paradigm allows for the “priority of the real world of first-person, subjectivist experience” (Schwandt, 1998, p. 223) and therefore co-existence of “multiple realities” (Krauss, 2005, p. 760). Further, being part of ‘multiple realities’ associated with anthropological studies, the researcher has his/her own starting viewpoint and accordingly “interpretive researchers see the research world and the researcher as entwined” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 79). Accordingly, interpretive research:

for the conceptual and contextual realm within which a target audience is positioned to receive the answer we generate. It constitutes a

methodological direction that generates questions from applied disciplinary grounding, pushes one into the “field” in a logical, systematic, and defensible manner, and creates the context in which engagement with the data extends the interpretive mind beyond the self-evident—including both accumulated knowledge (such as clinical wisdom) and what has already been established (such as through empirical means)—to see what else might be there. As such, it offers the potential to deconstruct the angle of vision upon which prior understandings have been erected and to generate new insights that not only shape new inquiries but also translate them into practice”. (Thorne, 2016, p. 40)

As highlighted in the above reference, interpretivism accommodates the embeddedness of the researcher but requires a step back approach to ‘deconstruct the angle of vision’ as needed and an associated openness to ‘generate new insights’. During this process:

the initial understandings—the researcher’s provisional sense-making—will be ‘tested’ in the field or archives, not literally, as in the case of significance tests in statistics, but by bringing them together with field realities, even to the point where those realities might take analytic primacy. Initial understandings are likely to be reformulated in light of new insights, new understandings, new knowledge acquired, and those reformulations will be subjected again to further inquiry, in that iterative, spiral-circular recursiveness of abductive reasoning. (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 56)

The interpretivist researcher does not conduct clinical tests to prove or disprove anything but rather drills for deeper understanding and uses abductive reasoning in the interpretation of collected data and subsequent presentation of conclusions. In the process, from a disclosure perspective, with interpretivism, researchers are not at arm’s length and therefore “seek to be as transparent as possible about how they generated their evidence and the knowledge claims based on that, including the ways in which their own personal characteristics and background have contributed to that data generation” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 81).

Interpretivist paradigm and ACK Award program

For interpretivists, the epistemology is subjectivist, allowing for individual variations as well as commonalities. Accordingly, in relating interpretivism to self-managed holistic learning, the candidate respects the freedom of each individual to determine

and direct their own lifewide learning by any means that has usefulness to them. At the same time, the candidate also recognises that any goals set by individuals may change as a result of external influences and personal maturation.

Further, it is acknowledged that the candidate is not detached but rather interactively linked to the research process. Significantly, the candidate is not in pursuit of one preferred extant theory or the development of a grounded theory or taxonomy in relation to self-managed lifewide learning but rather the exploration of existing theories and practices with a view to enriching the ACK Award program for benefit to participants in their holistic development as well as to the organisation itself in the form of further improvement and refinement of the model as part of the commitment by the college to promoting all four pillars of learning (Delors, 1996).

Since the candidate was immersed within the ACK Award program from its beginnings in 2013 until his departure in 2020, the study has been approached specifically from an interpretivist perspective as the candidate not only seeks to better understand how the ACK Award may have assisted participants to construct meaning in their lives but also to interpret this new knowledge for any future refinement of the program. Indeed, it has been presented that at least to some extent “all social research is interpretive because all such research is guided by the researcher’s desire to understand (and therefore interpret) social reality” (Given, 2008, p. 464).

A limitation of the study is that the ACK Award and the participants do not operate within a vacuum but rather a rapidly changing environment. Theoretical and applied frameworks associated with self-managed lifewide learning continue to evolve and for this study there are both fluid emic (perspectives of the ACK Award participants) and etic (perspective of the candidate from observing the participants) influences. In this regard, the higher education level participants in the ACK Award are generally in the early adult stages of their life and as such their understanding and approach to holistic learning will develop as a result of external and internal factors. The ACK Award program itself is also in its relative infancy and is therefore in an ongoing process of refinement.

5.4 Qualitative methodology

Following the above, the nature of the research project is more exploratory and inductive rather than descriptive or explanatory since the purpose of the candidate is to “generate meaning from the data collected” (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 9). The candidate is attempting to respect the fluidity regarding freedoms of individual beginning and end points in students’ lifewide developmental journeys as these in turn head in a forward moving, lifelong direction. The intended result of the research project is not the recommendation of any one unique framework for students to plan and review holistic development but rather to provide an insight into the ACK Award as one vehicle for nurturing lifewide learning and thereby contribute towards the existing body of knowledge regarding structures for self-authorship from a holistic perspective.

The interpretative nature of the research suggests a qualitative methodology (Cresswell, 2003) to explore rather than describe the subjective individual participant feedback concerning self-managed lifewide learning. The candidate has therefore not sought to collect and analyse statistics associated with a quantitative approach or even partial inclusion through mixed methods but rather approached the research study with the desire to search for the unique experiences of each participant associated with their involvement within the ACK Award.

Since the candidate has an ongoing association with the ACK Award program and past participants, symbolic interactionism (Schwandt, 1998) was considered an important element of the research process. In this regard, as the term suggests, symbolic interactionists are focused on symbols and interaction. A symbol is a representation and with respect to this research study, the ACK Award Certificate is a symbol of demonstrated student voluntary commitment to holistic development. Interaction refers to the way in which people transmit and respond to the meaning of symbols. Again, in relation to the ACK Award, participating students interact with other students and staff mentors as part of their involvement in the program. Accordingly, symbolic interactionism enables the candidate to examine the effects of the various

- symbols associated with the ACK Award (the certificate itself plus separate certificates either from ACK or external organisations for involvement in

particular activities; for example, from a local school thanking ACK volunteer students for taking part in a smoking awareness presentation), and

- interactions (impact from listening to and working with other participating students, staff mentors and other stakeholders on such activities as community and environmental projects) of different participants.

The term symbolic interaction was coined by Blumer (1969) who explained that “Symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products formed through activities of people interacting” (p. 5). According to Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism is based on three premises:

1. People behave towards other people or objects according to previously determined meanings;
2. Meanings are derived as a result of social interactions; and
3. Meanings are founded and altered on the basis of interactions.

Relating symbolic interactionism to a study of the ACK Award program, by way of specific example, at the point of joining the program, a student may have a narrow understanding of, and perhaps little experience in, environmental care programs. However, as part of the essential requirements to gain the Award, and with mentor guidance, the student becomes involved in various community/environmental support programs. Year by year, in order to gain higher levels of the Award (symbols), the student is required to increase participation in related community/environmental care activities. With symbolic interactionism, the researcher explores the extent to which the student’s understanding and behaviour regarding environmental care has been influenced by their active involvement with other students and their mentor (interaction).

Further, with social interactionism, the researcher is not a disengaged observer but rather purposefully enters the worlds of people being studied to “see the situation as it is seen by the actor, observing what the actor takes into account, observing how he interprets what is taken into account” (Schwandt, 1998, p. 234). Relating this to the present study of the ACK Award program, the candidate is an engaged observer who

wishes to gain a deeper understanding of the usefulness of the framework in supporting students to set, and progress towards, their lifewide goals.

Social interactionists have a twofold agenda with their research: “exploration, where the researcher examines and observes specific situations and events, followed by inspection wherein the researcher uses data (systematically collected) to refine concepts, and then to use these in general statements describing human life and behaviour” (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 19). With regard to this research project, it is the intention of the candidate to explore, analyse and interpret the functioning of the ACK Award program and to use this to consider how the framework can be further developed to assist students in self-managing their lifewide and lifelong learning.

5.5 Research design: Case study

Taking the above into consideration, the candidate determined that the most appropriate research design would be a case study. In this regard, Yin (2018) describes a case study as “an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context ... (and) relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion” (Yin, 2018, p. 15).

Kyburz-Graber (2004) provides further insight into the purpose and procedure for case studies:

They follow the research philosophy of analysing an existing, real-life situation in all its complexity, exploring it as close to the people concerned as possible, describing the situation in as much detail as possible, and finally explaining the findings in a clear and comprehensible way. (p. 54)

Certainly, with the current study, the candidate is seeking to not simply describe but to fully explore and interpret all aspects of the ACK Award program with the intention of identifying any improvements that may lead to further enrichment of the framework, both for participants and the host institution. Accordingly, the research project is classified as an exploratory case study as it “goes beyond description and tried to provide an understanding of the case against the backdrop of its context, which demands a hermeneutic process” (Kyburz-Graber, 2004, p. 54).

Yin (2018), distinguishes between four types of case study, ranging from single holistic, single embedded, multiple holistic to multiple embedded. The classification is dependent upon:

- context, or the setting, circumstances and relationships. For this case study, the context is Middle Eastern, Arabic, Islamic higher education using the Australian College of Kuwait as the specific setting;
- number of constituent cases, being the particular people, programs, families, groups, organisations, or events to be investigated. The type of case(s) selected is/are directly related to the research questions associated with the study. For this project, all research questions specifically relate to the one program, the ACK Award, and hence it is not a multiple case. Therefore, the third and fourth types of case study do not apply; and
- number of embedded units of analysis, if there is a sub layer of the case(s) for analysis. For this project, the candidate seeks to explore below the layer of the ACK Award program itself to gain feedback from former participants and therefore it is these graduates who represent the embedded units of analysis.

From the above, it is clear that this case study falls within Yin's Type 2 or single embedded classification with a unique context, single case and multiple embedded units of analysis.

5.6 Research method: Semi-structured interviews

Regarding the data collection for the case study, Yin (2018) describes six methods and from these it was considered that semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate for this research project. In this regard, an interview is "targeted- can focus directly on case study topics (and) insightful- provides explanations as well as personal views (e.g., perceptions, attitudes, and meanings)" (Yin, 2018, p. 114). As to the style of interview, Yin (2018) advocates "guided conversations rather than structured questions. Although you will be pursuing a consistent line of inquiry, your actual stream of questions in a case study interview is likely to be fluid rather than rigid" (p. 118).

Accordingly, a semi-structured style interview facilitates an initial atmosphere of comfort for the participants as they answer introductory questions and opens the door

for more probing dialogue but in the process also allowing for meandering rather than linear sequencing of topics.

Number of embedded units of analysis (former ACK Award participants)

As at October 2020 when the candidate ceased employment at ACK, a total of 61 graduates had completed at least one level of the ACK Award during their studies at the College. Accordingly, in discussion with his doctoral supervisor, it was agreed that a representative sample of twenty former participants of the program would be sufficient to draw meaningful conclusions. This sample would ideally include a mix of Kuwaiti and expatriate students, males and females, and from the various ACK Award tiers of Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum levels.

Selection of participants

For the future growth of the ACK Award, the candidate was keen to interview as many Kuwaitis as possible as they represent 85% of the ACK student population. However, only around 20% of participants in the ACK Award program are nationals. Hence, all former students who are Kuwaiti were approached to take part in the interviews and eight accepted, including five males and three females.

Having secured the participation of eight Kuwaitis, the candidate then randomly selected the remaining 12 participants by attempting to obtain around two males and two females from each of the four tier levels. In this regard, 55% of ACK Award members since the start of the program were female and 45% male.

The final distribution of participants is summarised in the following Table 5.1:

Table 5.1: Bio-data of Participants interviewed as part of Case Study

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Nationality	Birthplace	Program ACK	Graduated	GPA	ACK Award	Current Employment
P1	M	27	Kuwaiti	Kuwait	D. Bus. Management	2020	2.00	Bronze	Kuwait Gov. Ministry
P2	M	26	Kuwaiti	Kuwait	B. Bus. Management	2018	2.67	Platinum	Seeking employment
P3	M	24	Kuwaiti	Kuwait	B. Petroleum Eng.	2017	2.23	Platinum	Engineer Kuwait Gov
P4	M	25	Kuwaiti	Kuwait	D. Aviation Mtce	2020	3.24	Bronze	Part-time contract Kuwait Private Co.
P5	F	26	Kuwaiti	Kuwait	B. Bus. Marketing	2015	3.30	Silver	HR Officer Kuwait Private Bank
P6	F	>30	Kuwaiti	Kuwait	B. Bus. Marketing	2017	3.25	Silver	Chef Kuwait restaurant
P7	M	26	Kuwaiti	Kuwait	D. Bus. Management	2018	2.40	Gold	Photographer with Kuwait Youth Org.
P8	F	21	Kuwaiti	Kuwait	B. Bus. Management	2020	2.04	Bronze	Continuing study
P9	M	24	Palestinian	Kuwait	B. Mechanical Eng.	2019	2.67	Silver	Engineer with Kuwait Private Coy
P10	F	23	Indian	Kuwait	B. Bus. Marketing	2019	3.98	Silver	Continuing study
P11	M	26	Syrian	Kuwait	B. Civil Eng.	2020	3.20	Bronze	Site Engineer with Kuwait Private Coy.
P12	F	23	Pakistani	Kuwait	B. Bus. Management	2017	3.45	Platinum	Accountant with Kuwait Private Coy.
P13	M	26	Pakistani	Kuwait	B. Bus. Management	2019	3.62	Gold	HR with Kuwait Private University
P14	F	25	Pakistani	Kuwait	B. Electrical Eng.	2020	3.76	Gold	Seeking employment
P15	F	23	Iranian	Kuwait	B. Bus. Marketing	2019	4.00	Gold	Project Officer with Kuwait Private Uni.
P16	F	23	Sri Lankan	Sri Lanka	B. Petroleum Eng.	2020	3.97	Gold	Seeking employment
P17	F	24	Chinese	Saudi Arabia	B. Petroleum Eng.	2019	3.90	Platinum	Development Officer Youth Program
P18	M	23	Armenian	Kuwait	B. Civil Eng.	2019	4.00	Platinum	Site Engineer with Kuwait Private Co.
P19	F	25	Armenian	Kuwait	B. Civil Eng.	2018	3.86	Platinum	Project Coordinator Kuwait Private Co.
P20	M	31	Syrian	Kuwait	D. Bus. Marketing	2016	3.75	Bronze	Manager of 3D Kuwait Printing Co.

For confidentiality reasons, and as per Ethics Approval, the participants are referred to in the Case Study as P1 to P20.

Initial communication with prospective participants

Initial contact with prospective participants was by phone. Graduates who expressed at least some degree of interest in the research were then sent an information sheet that included details regarding the purpose and process of the research and seeking their consent. The information sheet formed part of the submission documentation for Ethics Approval.

Consent to participate in the research was implied by the participant confirming an interview time and subsequent participation in the interview.

Interview questions

In discussion with the principal supervisor, it was agreed that the semi-structured interviews needed to include a key set of bio-data questions covering age, nationality, country of birth (as most expatriate students at the college were actually born in Kuwait and not their home country), program of study at ACK, year of graduation and GPA, level achieved in the ACK Award program, and whether currently employed/seeking employment/continuing with further study.

Also in communication with the principal supervisor, a list of discussion prompts was developed to facilitate the interviews and to ensure that the three case study research questions were addressed. However, in keeping with the semi-structured approach, the actual discussion would be allowed to flow in any direction provided that key questions were raised at some stage. These key questions included:

- Before you joined the ACK Award program, did you ever write down your future goals or did you just keep them in your mind?
- Did the ACK Award program help you to plan your goals each semester and then review your progress during and at the end of each semester?
- Do you remember any key goals from the ACK Award program?
- Why did you continue to be a member of the ACK Award?

- How do you think the ACK Award helped you most?
- Now that you have graduated from the college, do you continue to set personal goals?
- As a graduate, do you write down any of your future goals now or just have them in your mind?
- Do you have any general comments about the ACK Award program?
- When you were in the ACK Award, there was not a section for documenting a career goal. Do you think that would have been useful for you?

5.7 Data collection

Sections 4.6 and 4.7 contextualised the setting for the case study and the associated semi-structured interviews. The timing of each interview was arranged in advance and participants were requested to allow up to an hour. Interviews were held and finalised during the course of July and August 2021.

An obvious benefit of face-to-face interviews is that they enable the candidate to observe any nuances associated with body language that may not be detected in paper or online surveys. However, for health purposes due to COVID-19 restrictions in Kuwait, online video sessions were more appropriate to minimise risks both to the participants and the candidate. Unfortunately, due to Wi-Fi connection difficulties, after the first video interview, the candidate had no choice but to conduct remaining interviews via audio digital conversations. As a result, during the interviews, the candidate was particularly alert to pauses, hesitations and changes in tone, and adjusted the flow and depth of discussion accordingly.

All interviews were voice recorded so that the candidate was able to focus on the discussion rather than potentially become distracted by taking notes. Following each interview, the candidate transcribed the discussion and emailed the draft to the participant for review. However, content relating to preliminary chat and side conversations that were not relevant to the research project were omitted. Further, since English is not the first language for any of the participants, minor language adjustments were made by the candidate during the transcription stage. The participant

then had the opportunity to review the transcript and nominate any changes or additions. Once these were made by the candidate, the revised transcript was returned to each participant for final approval.

Participating graduates individually confirmed that the final transcript from their interview was correct and approved for inclusion in the research report.

With regard to the actual conduct of each interview, the candidate had maintained contact with all participants in the ACK Award during his leadership of the program from 2013 to 2020 and therefore especially during the early part of the phone call, discussions related to family topics.

Being well known to the participants was a double-edged sword with regard to feedback from their experiences with the ACK Award program. In Section 4.2, it was noted that within the Arabic culture, negative comments are avoided wherever possible and therefore real potential existed for skewed results. However, such an outcome was likely regardless of whether the interviews were led by the candidate or an independent person. On balance, the candidate considers that because he is so familiar with the personal situations of each participant, he was able to use this to advantage by making the interviews relaxed and they became more like a friendly chat than a formal process. Indeed, from the transcription data extracts that will be analysed in detail in Chapter 6, it is clear that one participant was forthright regarding her experience with the program. When asked about how she felt the ACK Award helped her most, her response was “It was really not for me. I was very busy with my study and in my spare time I painted” (P10, Code C158).

Generally around 15 minutes were spent at the beginning of each interview in personal exchange of information regarding family matters and particularly concerning the impact of COVID-19 on health and wellbeing. Tragically, one of the participating students had lost his father to the pandemic and this was already known by the candidate. Despite his loss, the participant was comfortable to talk openly with the candidate about the tragedy and his new role, being the eldest son, of becoming the family patriarch. In this regard, within the Arab culture, the eldest son has responsibility for the widowed mother and guidance for younger siblings.

All participants had individual stories to tell regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their family and personal life. Some spoke about having their salary reduced, one expressed concern with regard to cash flow for his business and three participants (one Kuwaiti and two non-Kuwaitis) were unemployed. The candidate therefore spent as much time as appropriate to allow participants to express their emotions before proceeding to the topic of the ACK Award.

The focused part of each interview was generally concluded within the allocated hour, followed again by personal exchanges prior to closure. Since the candidate is well known to each of the participants and indeed often described as 'like a father' to many of them, the interviews had a deeply emotional impact on the candidate as much as the contributors. In this regard, as a parent and as a grandparent, the candidate empathises with situations facing the participants during these uncertain times. It was therefore essential to allow adequate time prior to finishing each session for the candidate to feel assured that the participant was in a positive mindset.

The candidate was especially aware that one of the questions asked to each participant concerned their future plans and, particularly for the non-Kuwaitis, this is a sensitive topic due to the open government policy of 'Kuwaitisation' mentioned previously in Section 4.4. Of course, it is appropriate for any government to require priority of employment for nationals. However, the vast majority of the non-Kuwaiti participants were actually born in Kuwait and know no other 'home'. Indeed, for many there is no other home as their parents were also born in Kuwait. However, citizenship is only available to persons with a Kuwaiti father, with rare exception.

As a result, large numbers of young non-Kuwaitis are now finding themselves in the situation where the job pool locally is fast drying up but there is no home base outside Kuwait as a location for an alternative start. This is especially the case for females who remain highly protected by their parents within the Arab culture and therefore it is not an option to consider leaving Kuwait as a single person and living independently.

Of the 12 non-Kuwaitis interviewed for this research project, only two were born outside Kuwait. Accordingly, it was not surprising that almost all the non-Kuwaiti participants were uncertain as to future plans. Nonetheless, it is important to note that a deep personal faith was evident with all the participants and, as part of this, there was a comforting acceptance of God's will. In this regard, the word 'Inshallah' was

used throughout the interviews by Muslim participants to confirm their total trust that Allah's will is best. Even for the non-Muslim participants, there was open mention of a belief that God will open a door in time. As a result, the candidate concluded each interview with a self-assurance that each participant had found the session an opportunity to reflect positively regarding their personal circumstances regardless of prevailing uncertainties.

Due to the nature of the thesis topic on self-managed lifewide learning, it was inevitable that raw emotions would be exposed during the interviews. It is simply not possible to have a comprehensive discussion regarding personal goals and achievements without deep and at times intimate revelations. In this regard, again because the candidate is well known to, and trusted by the participants, he was able to guide them into insightful reflections, perhaps that would not have been revealed otherwise. It was evident to the candidate that all participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to spend time with a known and safe person outside their inner circle and talk about their deepest personal feelings. This provided welcome reassurance to the candidate that the ACK Award program itself had opened such a door for support to young people on their journey of self-authorship.

The actual amount of time spent during each interview on personal sharing was considerable. Nonetheless, the peripheral chat was most useful and perhaps essential to set the scene for focused and purposeful comments regarding their involvement with the ACK Award program as a student and their subsequent experiences in self-management of their life/careers as a graduate.

To ensure that a consistent set of key bio-data was obtained from each participant, the candidate pre-prepared a template to record relevant details from each interview. For each participant, the below bio-data were collected:

- Gender;
- Age;
- Nationality;
- Country of birth;
- Highest program of study completed at ACK;
- Year of graduation;

- Graduation GPA;
- Level achieved in ACK Award program (Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum); and
- Current employment or other status (such as continuing study or seeking work).

As mentioned earlier in this Section, since the candidate is well known to each interviewee, the information from each participant was received without any sense of hesitation. Details of gender were added by the candidate and only include male or female. This is because in Kuwait, as a conservative Muslim country, there is no official recognition of alternative gender classifications.

5.8 Participants

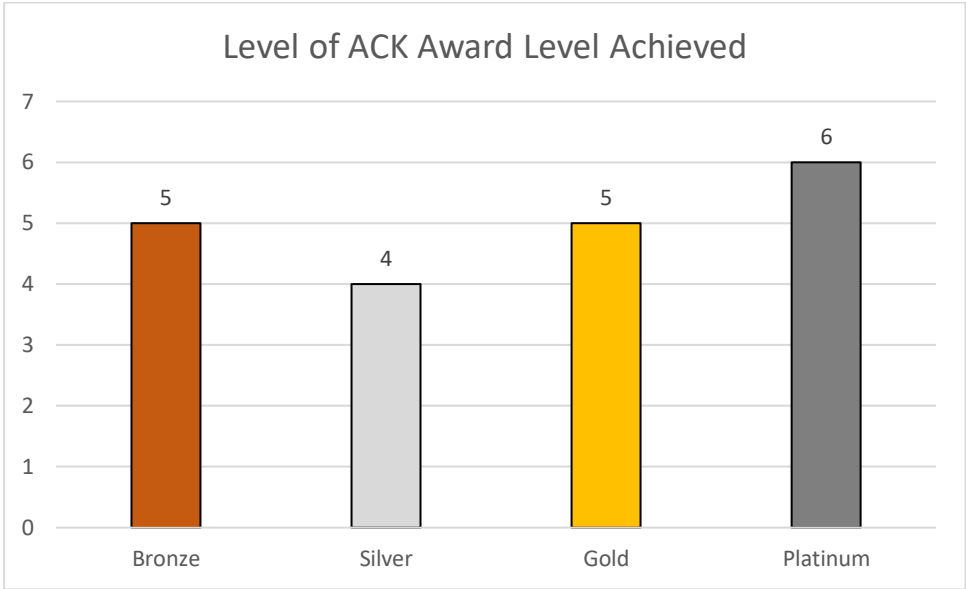
In the Research Design Section 5.4, it was noted that in discussion with his principal supervisor, the candidate determined to interview 20 former participants of the ACK Award for this research project. In Section 5.5, the candidate described the process to select these participants. Detailed bio-data of the participants was presented in Table 5.1 (in Section 5.6) , with a statistical summary in the following Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Bio-data of Graduates interviewed during Case Study

Bio-data Headings	Summary from 20 Interview Participants
Gender	10 males; 10 females
Age	Average age from 19 participants was 23.5 years (the candidate elected not to ask the age of one female participant who was a mature age student at ACK, with adult children. This information was not essential for the research project and the candidate preferred to respect the privacy of the participant. Inclusion of this age would also have significantly skewed the average).
Nationality	8 Kuwaitis; 12 non-Kuwaitis (3 Pakistanis; 2 Syrians; 2 Armenians; 1 Palestinian; 1 Iranian; 1 Indian; 1 Sri Lankan; 1 Chinese)
Birthplace	18 Kuwait; 2 other countries (1 Saudi Arabia; 1 Sri Lanka)
Program ACK	11 School of Business; 9 School of Engineering (including Aviation)
Graduated	Average 2.5 years since graduation
Graduation GPA	Average 3.28/4.00
ACK Award Level	5 Bronze Level; 4 Silver Level; 5 Gold Level; 6 Platinum Level
Current employment or other	15 employed; 2 further study; 3 seeking employment

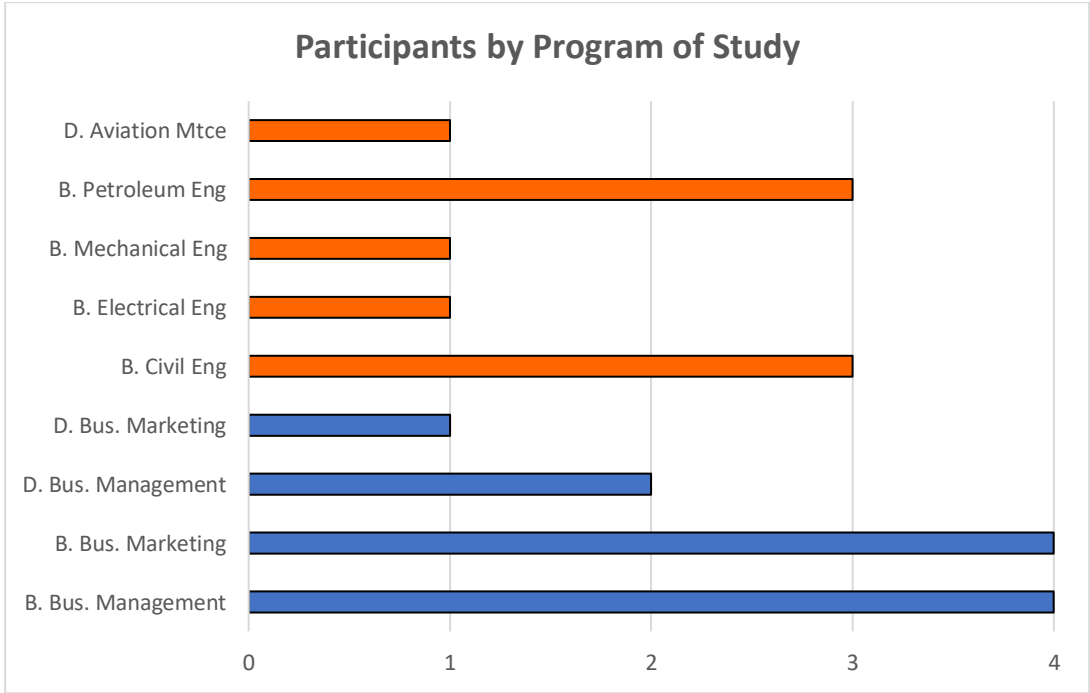
In selecting graduates to take part in the interviews, the candidate attempted as far as possible to obtain a spectrum of viewpoints. Accordingly, as evident from the above Table 5.2, ten males and ten females were interviewed and almost an even split of levels achieved within the ACK Award program (five bronze, four silver, five gold and six platinum) as presented in Figure 5.1 below:

Figure 5.1: Level of ACK Award Achieved by Participants



A total of 11 participants graduated from the School of Business and nine from the School of Engineering. Participation from the various programs of study is reflected in Figure 5.2 below:

Figure 5.2: Highest Program of Study undertaken at ACK by Participants

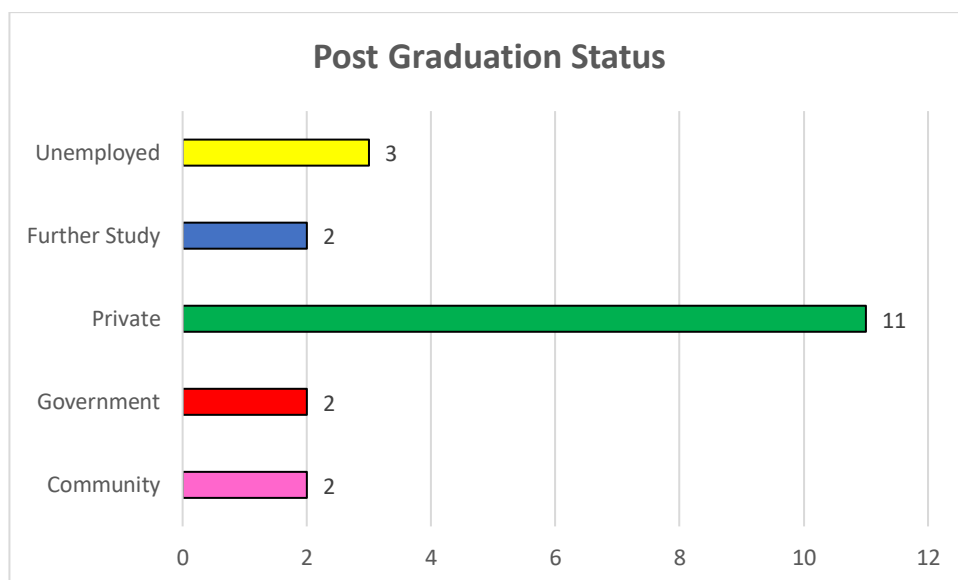


With reference to Figure 5.2 above, ‘D’ represents completion of a two-year Diploma level qualification and ‘B’ for four-year Bachelor degree. From the figure, it is evident that all four engineering programs were represented in the case study interviews plus

the aviation diploma which feeds into the engineering degree. The two major programs (Marketing and Management) within the School of Business were also represented and only the smallest fulltime program at the college (Diploma of Human Resources) did not have a representative participant.

Since the ACK Award only commenced in the 2013/2014 academic year, the earliest graduation of any participant was in 2014/2015 and this participant only had the opportunity to complete the silver level whilst at the college. The average number of years since graduation for the participants was 2.5 and, subsequent to leaving the college, fifteen had gained employment, two are continuing with further study, and three are seeking employment. The present employment related activity of the participants is reflected in Figure 5.3 below:

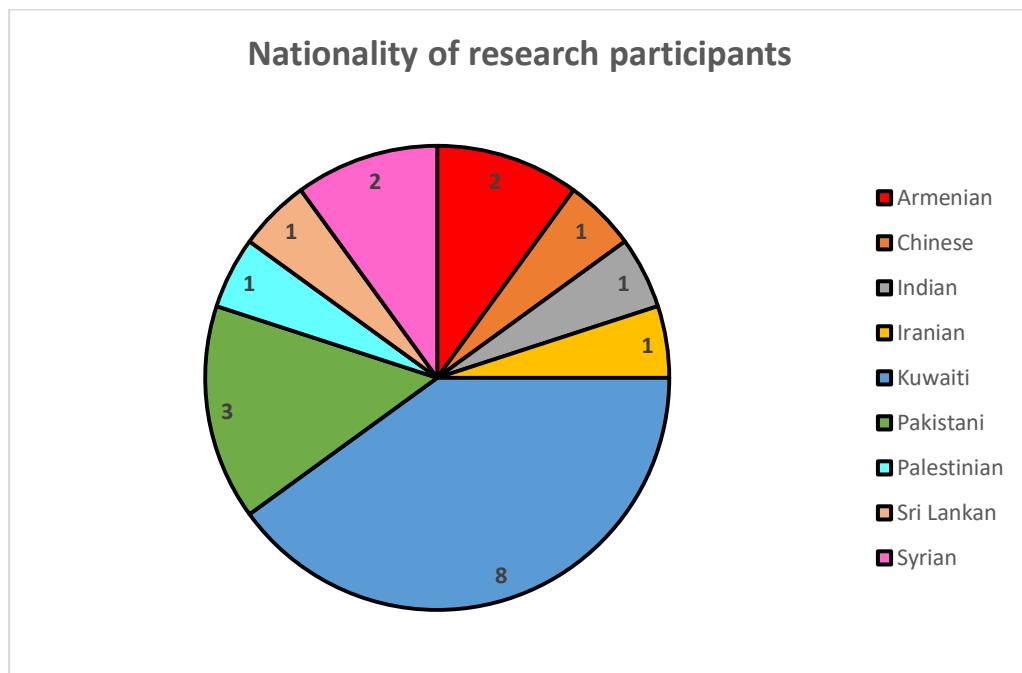
Figure 5.3: Current Employment Related Status of Participants



Of the three participants who were unemployed, two were non-Kuwaiti and one Kuwaiti. The two non-Kuwaitis only graduated in 2020 and, at the time of the interviews in 2021, COVID-19 had not helped in their job searching. The Kuwaiti seeking employment graduated in 2018 but has a significant physical disability. Accordingly, this had been a barrier in his job hunting and he was therefore exploring avenues towards further study.

Regarding nationality, eight of the participants were Kuwaiti and twelve non-Kuwaiti with the details reflected in Figure 5.4 below:

Figure 5.4: Nationality of Case Study Participants



The candidate sought an even split of participants between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis. However, the reality is that the vast majority of ACK Award participants since inception in 2013 have been non-nationals. This is contrary to original expectations since around 85% of students at the college are Kuwaiti. Significantly, the first staff member appointed to promote the ACK Award was a Kuwaiti and his feedback to the candidate at the time, in 2013, was that he felt nationals would not see any value in participation as he considered there was no tangible return other than a certificate.

With respect to the above, although every attempt was made to encourage all students, regardless of nationality, to take part in the ACK Award, the candidate observed that generally there was a continuing lack of interest by nationals; however, there were also some outstanding Kuwaiti participants. One of these was instrumental, during her own ACK student years, in using her personal contacts to arrange numerous workplace tours and meetings with local business leaders for groups of ACK Award participants. The purpose of such meetings was to fulfil their requirement of involvement in an employability activity outside the curriculum. Another national was extremely generous in making himself available in a voluntary capacity to take professional photographs and video of numerous ACK Award related events for promotional and archive purposes.

Perhaps one of the reasons for general lack of involvement by Kuwaitis with the ACK Award is their priority appointment in the recruitment process. Accordingly, there is no perceived benefit of adding this certificate to resumes whereas non-Kuwaitis are experiencing increasing difficulty in obtaining graduate employment due to the tightening market and the government policy of ‘Kuwaitisation’.

Of the 12 non-Kuwaitis who took part in the research interviews, three were Pakistani, two Syrian, two Armenian and one each from Palestine, Iran, India, Sri Lanka and China. Significantly, the non-Kuwaiti participants generally achieved a higher level of the Award than the nationals. Of the eight Kuwaiti participants, only three reached either the Gold or Platinum status of the ACK Award compared to eight out of the 12 non-Kuwaitis.

As noted previously, of the 12 non-Kuwaiti participants, ten were born in Kuwait and it has been their lifetime home, however, it is a cause of growing unrest across the country. Non-nationals are increasingly coming to the realisation that even though family members have lived in Kuwait for generations and lost contact with their homelands, future opportunities locally are rapidly disappearing with all the associated lifechanging consequences. In this regard, it is no longer possible for a non-Kuwaiti graduate to remain in the country unless employed or married to an employed person. Accordingly, they have until the time of their next residency renewal (usually one or two years) to secure employment and this realisation is placing immense pressure on the graduates and their families.

5.9 Data analysis

The transcripts from the 20 interviews generated a considerable volume of research data. To draw out meaning from these data, the candidate adopted a Thematic Analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”.

Braun and Clarke (2006) present a six step approach for data analysis, incorporating:

1. Transcription

Initial “transcription of the verbal data” (p. 87), representing the complete data set.

2. Coding

Division of the aggregate data set into “data extracts” (p. 89), with each being allocated a code to “identify interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data set” (p. 89). Once all the relevant data is coded, a mapping exercise is undertaken so that related data extracts are “collated together within each code” (p. 89).

3. Searching for themes

Having grouped potentially useful data extracts into various codes, the next phase involves “sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. Essentially, you are starting to analyse your codes and consider how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme” (p. 89).

4. Reviewing themes

Theme headings are refined to the point where “Data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (p. 91). Before progressing further, Braun and Clarke (2006) propose a review to ensure it is apparent “what your different themes are, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data” (p. 92).

5. Defining and naming themes

The next step is to “define and further refine the themes you will present for your analysis, and analyse the data within them” (p. 92).

6. Write-up and review

When the above have been completed, the final task is the write-up:

to tell the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis. It is important that the analysis (the write-up of it, including data extracts) provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell, within and across themes. Your write-up must provide sufficient evidence of the themes within the data, i.e., enough data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of the theme (p. 93).

In the process, “your analytic narrative needs to go beyond description of the data, and make an argument in relation to your research question” (p. 93). Finally, Braun and Clarke (2006), emphasise that in the report writing, a

continuous review should be undertaken to address such questions as “‘What does this theme mean?’ ‘What are the implications of this theme?’ ... ‘Why do people talk about this thing in this way (as opposed to other ways)?’ and ‘What is the overall story the different themes reveal about the topic?’ These sorts of questions should guide the analysis once you have a clear sense of your thematic map” (p. 94).

In using the Braun and Clarke (2006) approach, the candidate initially used the software program NVivo to store the participant approved transcripts from the interviews and to facilitate analysis. Then, to simplify the coding process, the candidate used the NVivo search function to collate participant responses to the various interview questions. These responses were printed out and codes then used to “identify interesting aspects” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). Some data extracts were given more than one code to recognise that the student comment had more than one ‘interesting aspect’. For example, in answering the interview question regarding any personal goal-setting prior to joining the ACK Award, Participant P5 responded “No. I had a lot of ideas but no motivation to push myself. I needed someone to follow up with me and that is why I really enjoyed the ACK Award program. My mentor, Ms.--- was really great and kept pushing me to achieve my goals” (Participant P5). Accordingly, this data extract was allocated a code C23 in relation to pre-ACK Award goal setting and also C24 for mentor reference regarding goal setting. This is consistent with Braun and Clarke (2006) who comment that “an extract may be uncoded, coded once, or coded many times, as relevant” (p. 89).

In the process of allocating codes to participant responses, key words associated with each data extract were highlighted. For instance, using the above example from Participant P5, the word “mentor” was highlighted for Code C24, and a circle placed around the word “no” with the notation ‘Pre-Award goal setting’ for context purposes and the code allocation of C23.

All the NVivo printouts of participant responses were examined and in total 337 codes were identified and allocated, and numbered accordingly from C1 to C337. By highlighting key words used, or adding notations where needed to explain the content of extracts, it was then a relatively simple task for the candidate to organise these 337 codes into relevant Code Groupings. Eventually, through a process of finetuning, a

total of 25 such groupings were finalised, each with their own heading such as CG1 for “Pre-ACK Award Goal Setting”, CG21 for “Mentor Motivation”, CG9 for “Individual Activities”, and CG10 for “Team Activities”. The list of Code Groupings CG1 to CG25 is included in Appendix E.

5.9.1 Identification of themes

The next step was to identify potential themes and it is in this stage of analysis that new meaning became apparent in relation to the value of academically supervised research. In this regard, although the candidate approached the case study with an open mind, he did not anticipate particular themes that became evident from the interview data. For instance, in response to the interview question regarding most useful aspect of the ACK Award, many students made no reference to the structured approach to goal setting but, rather, being part of team activities and/or helping the community. The candidate had expected typical responses such as that from Participant P12 “Really, it was just the structure of forcing me to write down my goals”, which was coded as C131 (for structured goal setting). However, unexpectedly, the coding process highlighted that many students made no reference to the value to them of a structured approach to pursuing goals but rather such benefits as “It gave me the opportunity to be involved in team activities” (P14), coded as C135, for team activities, or “being able to help with different volunteer programs” (P18), coded as C142, for charity activities. Even the response by Participant P12 above regarding the benefit of goal-setting was then expanded to include mentor reference “to talk about my achievements. It made me accountable which was good for me”, and accordingly this data extract was coded both to C131 (for structured goal setting) and C132 (for mentor reference regarding goal setting).

Once the 337 codes were grouped into 25 Code Groupings, the candidate then considered each of these headings and the constituent data with a view to linking groupings together for the purposes of identifying potential themes. For example, the headings CG19 for ‘Mentor Goal Setting Support’, CG20 for ‘Mentor Progress Review Support’, CG21 for ‘Mentor Motivation Support’ and CG22 for ‘Mentor Other Reference’ all had the common thread of ‘Mentor’. This overarching theme of Mentorship became self-evident. However, with so many different codes and 21 remaining groupings, the process of determining the other themes necessitated

reflection and repeated analysis. During this stage, the candidate was mindful of the comment by Braun and Clarke (2006) that “Data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91).

Eventually a tentative set of six separate themes emerged:

1. Structure of Goal Setting;
2. Value of Goal Setting;
3. Prioritisation of Lifewide Goals;
4. Engagement with ACK Award;
5. Approach to Career preparation; and
6. Mentorship.

However, before making a final decision, the candidate undertook two further steps:

1. Firstly, in light of the above major themes, and as prompted by Braun and Clarke (2006), the candidate reread the entire data set of original transcripts “firstto ascertain whether the themes ‘work’ in relation to the data set. The second is to code any additional data within themes that has been missed in earlier coding stages” (p. 91). Some of the data was coded to more than just one code; however, the candidate was satisfied that none of the original relevant data had been omitted. In this later regard, since the interviews were semi-structured, some of the transcript content was not relevant to the research project and therefore remained “uncoded” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89).
2. Secondly, the candidate reflected on whether the themes had “validity” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91) in encapsulating the entire data set and whether each theme “clearly linked back to the overall research question, but each is distinct” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93).

As a final step before deciding upon the themes, the candidate prepared a spreadsheet to reflect on:

- the original NVivo codes (used for initial data extraction from the interview transcripts), shown in the first column below in Table 5.3;
- examples of individual data extracts from the NVivo coding and the allocation of research codes (in total 337 such codes);
- The 25 Group headings given to related codes;
- Potential themes; and
- Relevance of themes to the three Research Questions.

An abridged version of this spreadsheet is included in Table 5.3:

Table 5.3: Theme Development from NVivo Transcriptions and Case Study Codes

Examples of NVivo Code classifications used with transcriptions	Examples from the xxx Case Study Codes representing data extracts from NVivo transcript summaries	Examples from the Group Headings associated with Case Study Codes	Themes (Total of six)	Case Study Research Questions
<p>Pre-ACK Award goal setting</p> <p>Value of ACK Award in goal setting</p> <p>Most remembered ACK Award goal</p> <p>Other significant ACK Award goals</p> <p>How ACK Award helped most</p> <p>Why remained in ACK Award</p> <p>General feedback regarding ACK Award</p> <p>Continuation of goal-setting post ACK Award participation</p> <p>Usefulness of career goal in ACK Award</p> <p>Mentor reference</p>	<p>"No. I had a lot of ideas but no motivation to push myself. I needed someone to follow up with me and that is why I really enjoyed the ACK Award program. My <u>mentor</u>, Ms. xxxx was really great and kept pushing me to achieve my goals" (P5), Codes C23 and C24</p> <p>"Having organized activities that I could help with. And introduced me to students from different seniority level in other departments. It has also added to my confidence when I see my achievement. And I see it got <u>recognized</u>" (P17), Codes C139, C140 and C141</p> <p>"Yes. The big thing for me was <u>that it made me stick to different productive tasks</u>. I get distracted easily and can waste a lot of time playing video games and watching TV. So, it was good for me that I knew I had to <u>meet the weekly requirements</u> before I talked through what I've accomplished with my <u>mentor at the end of every week</u>." (P16), Codes C42, C43 and C44</p>	<p>Pre-Award Goal Setting</p> <p>Structure of ACK Award</p> <p>Academic related Goal</p> <p>Employability related Goal</p> <p>Community/Environment goal</p> <p>Personal Goal</p> <p>Individual activities</p> <p>Team based activities</p> <p>Health, wellbeing</p> <p>Tiered levels</p> <p>Award Recognition</p> <p>Employment now</p> <p>Future career goal</p> <p>Mentor Goal Setting Support</p> <p>Mentor Progress Support</p> <p>Mentor Guidance Support</p>	<p>Structure of Goal Setting</p> <p>Value of Goal Setting</p> <p>Prioritisation of Lifewide Goals</p> <p>Engagement with ACK Award</p> <p>Approach to Career preparation</p> <p>Mentorship</p>	<p>1. Is the ACK Award program achieving its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how?</p> <p>2. Has the ACK Award assisted in the career shaping aspirations of participants and, if so, how?</p> <p>3. To what extent, if at all, do the presence and encouragement of a staff mentor assist participating students in clarifying and pursuing lifewide goals and, if so, how?</p>

From Table 5.3, it is noted from the second last column that the first four themes relate to Research Question 1, the fifth theme relates to Research Question 2 and the sixth theme relates to Research Question 3.

In the following Chapter 6, the candidate presents the thematic analysis from the case study interviews including detailed consideration of the results against the research questions.

5.10 Reliability and validity

For any research project to have value it must be trustworthy. To this end, “the commonly accepted positivist standards include ‘validity’, ‘reliability’, ‘replicability,’ ‘objectivity’, and ‘falsifiability’” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 92). For instance, validity requires that the data collected by the researcher actually “measures what it is supposed to measure” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 92) and reliability indicates whether the same research “can produce the same result” (p. 93) if undertaken by another researcher.

Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2011) argue that for interpretive science, the above indicators “are not useful for assessing its trustworthiness” (p. 92). In this regard, they suggest:

The purpose of interpretive research is not model testing, but the understanding of human meaning-making in context; the goal is not to erase ambiguities, but to understand their sources. For this approach, with its emphasis on immersion in human meaning-making in the field and in archives and its iterative sense-making processes, the question pursues a different reasoning. Asked from an interpretive perspective, it seeks to inquire into the logic and explanatory coherence of the analysis, rather than the “goodness” of the model: How would you know if there were something else afoot in this situation that might be a better explanation of the puzzle you are seeking to explain?

Framed in this way, the issue is the adequacy of explanation and analysis—the explanatory coherence of the argument. To address this question, an interpretive researcher will point to (1) the consistency of evidence from different sources (the intertextuality of the analysis), (2) the ways in which conflicting interpretations have been engaged, and (3) the logic with which the argument has been developed. (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, pp. 108-109)

Relating the above trustworthiness tests to the present research project:

- Consistency of evidence was addressed by using the same core questions during the semi-structured interviews with each participant;
- Engaging conflicting or contradictory interpretations required a continual awareness by the candidate of his own embeddedness within the ACK Award and recognising this during the process of data analysis and interpretation; and
- Logic with which the argument has been developed required the candidate to reflect on whether the research outcomes would not only make sense to him but to others and, in particular, to future participants of the ACK Award itself.

In this latter regard of making sense:

Because interpretive researchers do not seek to mirror the world, their primary concern in checking their own meaning-making is not focused on “getting the facts right,” as if there were only one version of that social reality. Rather, they are looking to articulate various experiences or viewpoints on the topic under investigation, in order to be able to understand its nuances more fully. Because they expect to learn about these over time, their task in checking their own sense-making concerns finding ways to suspend judgment or to avoid a “rush to diagnosis,” that is, to prevent themselves from settling too quickly on a pattern, answer or interpretation. (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 105)

Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2011) present various tools towards trustworthiness including “Member-checking” (p. 106) which involves “the practice of sending or bringing written material involving the people studied back to them The intention is to see whether the researcher has ‘got it right’” (p. 106). With regard to this research project, as noted in Section 5.5, following each interview, the candidate transcribed the content and returned this to each participant for the purposes of any additions, deletions and corrections. This iterative process was continued as needed until final sign off by the respective participants.

Having undertaken the ‘member-checking’, the remaining hurdle for the candidate involved the trustworthiness of the meaning making associated with the research project. To this end Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2011) refer to “reflexivity” (p. 100), being “a researcher’s active consideration of and engagement with the ways in which his own sense-making and the circumstances that might have affected it, throughout

all phases of the research process, related to the knowledge claims he ultimately advances in written form” (p. 100).

The findings from this research project always needed to make sense to the candidate himself, if to no one else. However, the candidate was never in pursuit of proving or disproving the usefulness of the ACK Award program. There was no threat to the continuation of the program as a result of the research project but rather a focus on whether it could be improved for the benefit of future participants. Accordingly, the candidate never felt in any defensive position which may have influenced his approach to the research or interpretation of research. In this regard:

Interpretive scientists are as committed to honest practices as any other kind of scientist; deceitful practices know no methodological borders. Moreover, acknowledging issues in knowledge generation, interpretive researchers continue to strive for transparency in their sense-making, including through reflexive checks on those processes. (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011, p. 112)

The findings, analysis and conclusions from this research study are presented in the following chapters and, throughout the process, the candidate adopted an ongoing reflective approach. However, ultimately the trustworthiness of this research is not capable of fully objective measurement but rather the considered opinion of critical readers as to whether the candidate was able to make sense to them as well as to himself.

5.11 Ethics approval and risk assessment

Since the research project involved interviews with former students, ethics approval was required and this was completed through UniSQ Ethics Submission number 20005506. As all participants in the research interviews were over the age of 21 years, parental consent was not relevant.

During the course of obtaining ethics approval, the candidate approached the President of the Australian College of Kuwait for permission to interview participants in the ACK Award program for the purpose of his doctoral research. On 10 October 2020, such permission was received by email to interview graduate participants and, accordingly, the submission for ethics approval was forwarded to UniSQ later that month.

Ethics approval for the applied research was received on 28 June 2021.

Risk assessment

As part of the ethics approval process, the candidate took into consideration possible risks associated with the applied research. These were described in Section 7.2 of Ethics Submission with the major identified risk being related to feelings of disappointment by some participants when reflecting on unachieved goals. To minimise such risks, the candidate determined to focus interview discussions on achieved goals but if any participants expressed disappointment at uncompleted goals then the candidate had already forwarded an information sheet to all participants with contact numbers for counselling support from the ACK Student and Alumni Centres.

Since all prospective participants were above 21 years and individually known to the candidate, it was considered that minimal risks were associated with the physical conduct of the interviews. Participants were able to take part by audio conversation from the comfort and safety of their own homes and there was no physical contact due to COVID-19 related safety concerns.

5.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology associated with the research project. Since the purpose of the ACK Award is to nurture students towards their individual, unique self-authorship, a relativist ontology respects and affirms dissimilarities associated with each participant, and the epistemology is subjectivist allowing for and respecting individuality. Further, the use of an interpretivist paradigm respects the co-existence of multiple realities rather than pursuit of any one preferred extant theory or the development of a grounded theory or taxonomy in relation to self-managed lifewide learning.

Taking the above into account, the candidate adopted a qualitative methodology, with the associated research design being a case study with the Australian College of Kuwait as the setting, the ACK Award as the case, and 20 former participants as the embedded units of analysis. The method of data collection was by semi-structured interviews and, due to COVID-19 restrictions, these were undertaken by telephone.

The participants included a mix of nationalities, genders, enrolment program and level within the college, and across the four tiers of the Award.

The interviews were transcribed and then uploaded onto NVivo. Extracts were made according to the interview questions and from these, a total of 337 codes were allocated for the data extracts. The data extracts were subsequently collated to reflect code groupings and from these groupings the six resultant themes emerged. A check was then made to ensure that the themes were sufficient to address the three research questions.

The following chapter presents the results of thematic analysis covering the six themes and discussion of results against the research questions.

CHAPTER 6 : RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the candidate presented the methodology associated with this research project, and in view of the relativist ontology and interpretivist paradigm, the selection of a case study as the research design. This chapter will now present the results of the thematic analysis of the data extracts from the semi-structured interviews, including discussion with reference to the three research questions:

1. Did the ACK Award program achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how and to what degree?
2. Has the ACK Award assisted in meeting the career-shaping aspirations of participants and, if so, how?
3. To what extent, if at all, did the presence and encouragement of a staff mentor assist participating students in clarifying and pursuing lifewide goals and, if so, how?

To address the above research questions, in Section 5.7, it was noted that in considering the data from the case study semi-structured interviews, Themes 1-4 related to Research Question 1, Theme 5 related to Research Question 2 and Theme 6 related to Research Question 3, as reflected in the following Table 6.1:

Table 6.1: Relationship of Thematic Analysis to Research Questions

Theme	Research Question
1. Structure of Goal Setting	1. Did the ACK Award program achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how and to what degree?
2. Value of Goal Setting	
3. Prioritisation of Lifewide Goals	
4. Engagement with ACK Award	
5. Approach to Career Preparation	2. Has the ACK Award assisted in meeting the career-shaping aspirations of participants and, if so, how?
6. Mentorship	3. To what extent, if at all, did the presence and encouragement of a staff mentor assist participating students in clarifying and pursuing lifewide goals and, if so, how?

In presenting the associated analysis and results, the candidate recognises the multiplicity of variables associated with self-managed lifewide learning, including:

- Cultural, social, religious, economic and other external variables; and
- Age, mental and physical capacity, attitude, spirituality and other internal variables.

Further, the candidate acknowledges that this present case study is restricted to just one higher education institution and at a particular moment within the continuing operations of the ACK Award program.

In the following Sections, P (followed by a number up to 20) refers to the participants in the Case Study interviews; C (followed by a number up to 337) refers to the code allocated to a data extract from the various interview transcripts, and CG (followed by a number up to 25) refers to the various Code Groupings of data extracts for the purpose of determining themes. A summary of the Code Groupings is at Appendix E.

6.2 Results and discussion of Theme 1: Structure of goal setting

All participants in the ACK Award are required to use the Goals Action Plan template (example at Appendix A) to set and review progress towards goals across the four pillars of lifewide learning (Code Groupings CG5 to CG8). The theme of structured goal setting emerged from a number of code groupings in addition to the above, including any mentioned goal-setting prior to joining the ACK Award program (Code Grouping CG1), and/or any goal-setting after graduation and post-ACK Award participation (Code groupings CG15 to CG17).

Although each of the above code groupings relates to the one over-arching theme of structured goal-setting, for analysis purposes, the candidate wished to identify any continuity of habits. In this regard, the following Table 6.2, extracted from the above Code Groupings, provides a useful statistical background:

Table 6.2: Structured Goal Setting by Participants

Number of Participants	Pre-ACK Award Structured Goal Setting	ACK Award Structured Goal Setting	Post-ACK Award Structured Goal Setting
Use of documented format	1	20	0
Unstructured goal setting (in mind)	19	0	20
No specific goal setting structure	0	0	0
Total Participants	20	20	20

From Table 6.2, it is evident that only one participant had undertaken any form of structured goal setting prior to joining the ACK Award. This participant commented “When I was at the ---- School for four years, we all had to do the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) program from the United Kingdom which includes many different life skills. Each year, it was at a different level” (P2, C16). Significantly, this participant did not continue to use any form of documented goal setting beyond graduation and therefore it can be interpreted that the only reason for his structured approach prior to joining the ACK Award was due to a school requirement.

Prior to joining the ACK Award program, from Code Grouping CG1, it was noted that all other participants essentially referred to having goals in their minds, with varying degrees of clarity. For instance, one participant commented, “Before I joined the ACK Award, I had lots of hopes rather than specific plans. There were many ideas in my mind but no strategies to achieve them” (P15, C10), and another, “I had lot of ideas but no motivation to push myself. I needed someone to follow up with me and that is why I really enjoyed the ACK Award program” (P5, C23). This additional comment by P5 that he benefited from the structured approach to goal setting within the ACK Award was mirrored by other participants. For instance, P16 commented “It (structured goal setting) forced me to achieve my goals because I knew I had to sit with my mentor and talk about what I had been doing since our last meeting” (P16, C138), and P12 “it was just the structure of forcing me to write down my goals and

then have to talk about my achievements. It made me accountable which was good for me” (P12, C132).

Although the above comments by P16 and P12 refer to the benefit of the structured approach of documenting lifewide goals, both also highlighted the added requirement of being accountable to their mentor. Throughout the coding process, the candidate noted regular mention of the important contribution made by mentors and this is considered separately as part of Theme 6 in Section 6.8.

With such positive comments regarding the usefulness of the ACK Award program as a structured means to help in goal setting and progress review, it was therefore significant that from Code Groupings CG15 to CG17, as reflected in Table 6.2 above, not one of the 20 participants had continued to use either the Goals Action Plan (GAP) form or other template to document goals beyond graduation. The absence of any continuation to record goals per se was not of any concern to the participants with comments such as “Just in my mind but I know what I want” (P6, C288). However, some participants added insightful remarks such as “I am just letting things happen. COVID has stopped us all from planning too far in advance” (P5, C286), and “Only in my mind as everything is flexible (depending on what happens with her father and where the family lives). I want to work and also finish my masters but it is very hard to plan” (P14, C271).

The above two comments warrant further consideration. Firstly, as noted in Section 5.5, the interviews were conducted during the prolonged COVID-19 crisis and many of the participants were either directly affected in person or indirectly through their family. Accordingly, life/career planning in these circumstances was far from normal. Secondly, as noted in Section 4.4, there is a government policy of Kuwaitisation in force that (rightly) requires priority of employment to nationals. Although this is understandable, it directly impacts on the immediate futures of adult expatriates who are now required to depart the country upon residency expiration unless they are in employment or married to someone who is employed. In this regard, Participant P14 above is the unmarried daughter of a retirement age expatriate who was likely to be forced into retirement soon and therefore required to leave the country. Since 12 of the 20 participants are expatriates, the issue of Kuwaitisation was raised by many of them in different contexts during the interviews. Indeed, as noted in Section 5.6, of the 12

expatriates, ten were born in Kuwait and know no other country as home. Therefore, repatriation upon cancellation of residency is far from a simple option as there is either no other home or it is located in a country where there is instability or where the standard of living is considerably lower.

Taking the above significant factors into consideration, the candidate is reluctant to interpret the final column of Table 6.2 above as a failure of the ACK Award program to nurture ongoing structured self-management of goal setting beyond graduation. Indeed, no mechanism had been put into place by ACK to facilitate continuation of structured goal setting by alumni.

Discussion of Theme 1 and Research Question 1

Theme 1 covered the Structure of Goal Setting and a comparison can now be undertaken against Research Question 1: ‘Did the ACK Award achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how?’

In Section 3.2.5, Baxter Magolda (2008) defined self-authorship as “the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity and social relations” (p. 269). This does not necessarily require documentation and although the ACK Award itself stipulates the use of a template for goal setting and progress review, it was noted during the above analysis of Theme 1 that all participants had continued to undertake goal setting beyond graduation but not using a documented process. None of the participants expressed a feeling of loss by not recording their goals and progress beyond graduation.

Especially in view of the nervousness associated with the COVID-19 pandemic as well as uncertainty regarding the effect of Kuwaitisation on expatriates, and taking into account the positive comments by many participants regarding the support and guidance from their mentors within the ACK Award program, there is justification in considering continuation of the ACK Award program, or similar, at least during the transitional years beyond graduation. In this regard, self-authorship does not finish with the testamur from ACK and therefore the supported framework of the ACK Award towards self-authorship need not be terminated simply because the student has become a member of the college alumni. Indeed, ACK has an active Alumni and Career Advisory Centre and, perhaps through this Centre, graduates can be invited to

remain within the ACK Award program indefinitely and, as part of this, retain the valued support of their mentor. In this latter regard, current well-being (Sen, 2005; Reich, 2013; Wornast, 2018; Blackman, 2020) was a concern expressed by many of the participants during the course of their interviews and to offer the tangible support of continued mentorship especially during transitional years from college is an ongoing means by which ACK could improve alumni personal capabilities.

Case Study Finding 1

One participant had documented goals (as part of a school requirement) prior to joining the ACK Award. Despite the requirement to use the Goals Action Plan template (Appendix A) throughout their participation in the ACK Award as students, no participant continued to document lifewide goals beyond graduation and departure from the ACK Award. Recognising the uncertainties facing many graduates regarding their futures, and that self-authorship does not cease at the point of graduation, the potential exists to facilitate continued participation by alumni within the ACK Award, or similar program, with ongoing mentor support, particularly during the transitional years. In this latter regard, two participants specifically mentioned the usefulness of their mentor in the goal setting process.

It was noted in Sections 5.7 and 6.1 that three other themes are also directly relevant to Research Question 1 and, accordingly, a more detailed comparison will be undertaken following the analysis of those themes.

6.3 Results and discussion of Theme 2: Value of goal setting

Theme 1 focused on the Structure of Goal Setting. Theme 2 is related but considers the Value of Goal Setting. This theme identified the areas in which participants saw any usefulness in the purpose of goal setting as distinct from the associated structure. A number of Code Groupings (CG2 for structure of ACK Award, CG3 for health and wellbeing, CG4 for general benefits associated with goal setting, CG15 relating to study related future goals, CG16 for employability related future goals and CG17 for other future goals) provided data extracts relevant to this Theme. These were all collated for the purposes of analysis and interpretation.

Whilst analysing the above data extracts, the candidate noticed that the word ‘value’ was not used at any time by participants during the interviews. However, related words such as ‘useful’, ‘helpful’, ‘important’ and ‘liked’ were mentioned by participants a total of 27 times during the interviews in relation to goal setting, and in the following contexts:

Table 6.3: Mention of Words such as ‘useful’, ‘helpful’. ‘important’ and ‘liked’ in relation to Goal Setting by Participants

Context of Word Usage	Number Responses	Examples of Responses
Structured goal setting generally	11	“The ACK Award gave structure to my thinking. I liked that” (P12, C37)
Structured goal setting for specific goals	10	“I always wanted to paint and so I set myself a goal of painting patterns on shoes” (P14, C39)
Structured goal setting with mentor	6	“My mentor really helped me. It was good to have someone to talk to about my future and help me with my plans” (P20, C177)
Total	27	

Table 6.3 will be considered in more detail in the following paragraphs. However, by way of introduction, it is significant that 18 of the 20 participants used the word ‘helped’, ‘enjoyed’, ‘important’ or ‘liked’ at least once during their interview in reference to goal setting within the ACK Award. The candidate therefore reviewed the data extracts for the two remaining participants to search for reasons as to why these words were missing.

One of the participants (P10) generally did not have many positive comments with regard to goal setting within the Award program. Her feedback included “I don’t find it useful to set too many goals. My elder sister was in the ACK Award and so I decided to join because of her” (P10, C34). This participant was at the top end of the academic scale and, prior to joining the ACK Award, was already passionately involved in art as a result of growing up watching her mother paint as a hobby. Accordingly, it is

understandable that for such a person, major goals in her life were already clearly set and therefore she found no personal value in the requirements of the ACK Award to document lifewide goals and having to sit with a college mentor on a monthly basis. This participant only joined because of her elder sister. However, it is significant that although this participant did not use words such as ‘helpful’ in relation to the structured aspect of the ACK Award, she spoke positively with regard to other dimensions, including “I actually stopped after I got the silver level as I was too busy with my study. I did not have time to go to the events although I did enjoy helping with the smoking awareness program when we visited schools” (P10, C192). The recognition by this participant that although she did not gain any personal benefit from the goal-setting aspect of the ACK Award but did ‘enjoy’ being part of team voluntary activities is considered in more detail in Theme 4 (Section 6.5) relating to engagement with the program.

The other participant (P6) who did not use words such as ‘helpful’ in relation to goal setting was a mature age student at ACK with teenage children of her own and therefore had previously experienced much along the path of her lifelong learning journey. Hence, her comment, “Well, actually I already had my plans but I enjoyed mixing with the other students and doing things with them as they were not much older than my own children. So, I was learning from them and observing them but I also hope I was encouraging them” (P6, C57). As with Participant P10, it is significant that although Participant P6 did not consider the goal setting aspect of the ACK Award of personal value to her, nonetheless, she ‘enjoyed’ team activities and this is considered further in Theme 4 (Section 6.5).

Apart from the two participants mentioned above, the remaining 18 participants spoke positively regarding the usefulness of the ACK Award directly to them in personal goal setting. As summarised in Table 6.3 above, the words ‘helpful’, ‘liked’, ‘important’ and ‘enjoyed’ were used 27 times and in the following contexts with regard to goal setting:

- Structured approach to goal setting generally

In total, 11 positive references to goal setting related to the structured approach of the ACK Award. Comments from participants included “It helped me a lot to plan and achieve. I was very happy with the program” (P1, C32), and “I have big smiles

for the ACK Award program. It helped me a lot to set goals for myself” (P2, C51). The structure of goal setting was considered in Theme 1; however, in the context of the value of goal setting, as distinct from mere use of the structure, it is highlighted that participants actually valued the structured approach. In this regard, further affirmative words used by participants included “The big thing for me was that it made me stick to different productive tasks. I get distracted easily and can waste a lot of time playing video games and watching TV” (P16, C43), “The ACK Award made me more committed and also keep track on my goals” (P15, C41), “I also found that knowing I had to write down my progress made me more committed to achieving my goals” (P19, C49), and “Writing down my goals made them real for me. There were things I wanted to do in my life but before I wrote them down on my GAP form they just seemed to stay in my thoughts” (P4, C54).

- Achievement of specific goals

In addition to the above positive comments with regard to goal setting generally, there were ten uses of words such as ‘helped’ in reference to specific goals. Comments included “I always wanted to study photography and this was my first goal with the ACK Award” (P7, C96), “I have always liked sport and decided to learn karate” (P5, C91), and “It really helped me a lot. I was not happy with my weight and writing down my goal each semester to lose weight was very good for me” (P3, C178).

From the above comments regarding the achievement of goals, it is evident that the ACK Award was valued by students not only towards self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1998), but also well-being (Sen, 1993; Reich, 2013; Wornast, 2018; Blackman, 2020).

With respect to the categorisation of the specific goals where participants used words such as ‘helped’, seven related to personal goals (including smoking, weight loss, photography, painting and music) and three related to future career (business start-up, organisational skills and aviation training). Goal setting across various lifewide dimensions will be considered further in Section 6.4 relating to Theme 3, Prioritisation of Goal Setting.

- Goal setting with mentor

When using words such as ‘helped’ in relation to goal setting, there were six instances where this was in specific reference to the mentor. Comments included, “My academic advisor (also mentor) helped me to think about my future” (P14, C303), “I felt good being able to chat with my mentor. It helped me to focus on what I wanted to achieve” (P19, C207), and “My mentor, Mrs. ---- really helped me. She used to sit with me and help me to decide important goals” (P9, C62). Discussion with regard to mentorship within the ACK Award generally will be covered in Theme 6; however, with regard to this present theme relating to the value of goal setting, the candidate wishes to highlight that many students made specific reference to the importance of mentorship to them while they considered their lifewide goals.

Discussion of Theme 2 and Research Question 1

Theme 2 covered the Value of Goal Setting and a comparison can now be undertaken against Research Question 1: ‘Did the ACK Award achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how?’

The extensive use of the words ‘helped’, ‘liked’, ‘useful’ and ‘important’ by participants throughout the interviews is in itself confirmation of the value of goal setting and there were many explicit comments that indicated ACK Award goal setting contributed positively towards both self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1998) and well-being (Sen, 1993; Reich, 2013; Wornast, 2018; Blackman, 2020). Specific elements of the goal setting process that were valued by participants included the structure of the ACK Award (considered in Theme 1), career planning (more fully considered in Theme 5), mentorship (considered in Theme 6), social contact (considered in Theme 4) and desire to achieve personal goals. In this latter regard, without discounting the significance of the other areas where goal setting was valued by participants that are considered more fully in other themes, this present discussion will focus on the value of personal goal setting towards self-authorship.

Baxter Magolda and King (2012), summarise the path towards self-authorship under three broad headings of “External” (p. 18) sources for decision making, through a “Crossroads” (p. 18) phase to “Internal” (p. 18) or a self-authorship point where the

learner is confident of their own “internal voice” (p. 19). The structure of the ACK Award goal setting program provides a mechanism for participants to explore their ‘inner voice’ and it was therefore significant that many positive comments were received during the interviews not only in relation to the structure but more significantly the personal value of goal setting.

Further, it is also noteworthy that Barber, King and Baxter Magolda (2013) highlight the “important role of reflection in promoting learning and development; building this into learning provides a vehicle for students to engage in “figuring out” (e.g., personally weighing interpretations or knowledge claims, wrestling with dissonance)” (Barber et al., 2013, p. 891). Concerning reflection as a key part of progress towards self-authorship, the value of reflection within the ACK Award goal setting process was confirmed by participants during the interviews, not only through their personal reflection, with comments such as “I was able to reflect on my works” (P17, C203), and “It was good to reflect on important things in my life” (P6, C151), but also in meetings with their mentor, with comments such as “My mentor, Mrs. ---- really helped me. She used to sit with me and help me to decide important goals. Then, when I met her during the semester, she encouraged me keep active” (P9, C63), and “I felt good being able to chat with my mentor. It helped me to focus on what I wanted to achieve” (P19, C207).

In total, the process of reflection associated with goal setting was referred to by ten participants, with seven being at an individual level (P1, P6, P8, P12, P15, P17 and P20) and three (P9, P14 and P19) with their mentor. Barber, King and Baxter Magolda (2013) highlight the importance of reflection in the process towards self-authorship as a useful stage in “figuring out” (p. 891). To this end, the ACK Award requires participants to record progress against each goal on a monthly basis and to undertake a documented reflection on all achievements against goals at the end of each semester. It is therefore significant that the data extracts showed that 10 of the 20 participants referred to reflection during their interviews.

Regarding mentorship, Baxter Magolda (2009) proposed the development of “Learning Partnerships” (p. 251), between teachers and students “thereby engaging in mutual learning encouraging them to develop personal authority by listening to their own voices in determining how to live their lives” (p. 251). Mentorship is a key

element of the ACK Award program and will be considered more fully in Theme 6. However, in the context of this present theme of value in goal setting, it is significant that six participants made specific reference to the value of their mentor in this process.

Although Baxter Magolda placed importance on self-authorship, she was part of a review in 2014 which showed that “most college students do not evidence self-authorship by the time they graduate” (Barber et al., 2013, p. 870). It is therefore pleasing that this case study has provided evidence that personal goal setting is valued by students. Accordingly, in comparing Theme 2 on the Value of Goal Setting to the Research Question “Did the ACK Award achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how?”, the data extracts led the candidate to the following finding:

Case Study Finding 2

Two participants did not value the ACK Award with regard to goal setting but each of these valued the program for the opportunity to take part in team based and/or voluntary projects associated with the Award. Eighteen participants valued personal goal setting and, in doing so, referred to the usefulness of the structure itself, the role of mentors in the process, and the achievement of specific goals. In this latter regard, three participants noted that it was the process of goal setting within the ACK Award program that motivated them to achieve life goals that were important to them. Accordingly, goal setting was valued both towards self-authorship and also well-being. Ten of the participants referred to the benefit of reflection as part of their goal setting, with three of these specifically referring to the value of having the guidance and encouragement of their mentor in this area.

Having considered the structure and value of goal setting (Themes 1 and 2), the candidate will now explore the prioritisation of lifewide goals (Theme 3) in the following Section 6.4.

6.4 Results and discussion of Theme 3: Prioritisation of lifewide goals

In the above Section, the candidate explored the value of goal setting to participants. The research focus will now shift to the prioritisation of lifewide goals. In this regard, the initial codes allocated to data extracts were scanned for similarities and the

following groupings emerged in relation to lifewide goals: CG5 for ACK goal setting related to the pillar of Learning to Know, CG6 for ACK goal setting related to the pillar of Learning to Do, CG7 for ACK goal setting related to the pillar of Learning to Live Together, CG8 for ACK goal setting related to the pillar of Learning to Be, CG15 for post-ACK goal setting related to study (Learning to Know), CG16 for post-ACK goal setting related to employability (Learning to Do), and CG17 for other post-ACK goal setting. The data extracts relating to these Code Groupings were considered separately but also combined for overarching analysis and interpretation in relation to the broad theme of prioritising lifewide goals at a general level.

Before considering the data extracts with regard to prioritisation of goals, the candidate wishes to note that as part of the ACK Award requirements (refer Section 4.7), participants are required to nominate goals for each semester across all four pillars of learning (Delors, 1996). Accordingly, each semester, all participants had to record, on their Goals Action Plan, separate goals in relation to the pillars of Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together and Learning to Be. With this in mind, in considering the prioritisation of these various goals, the candidate wished to explore the specific goals mentioned by participants from the data extracts as these would reflect their relative importance to the individual participants.

The codes for data extracts in relation to specific goal-setting whilst at ACK are summarised in the following Table 6.4, in comparison to specific goal-setting after graduation, as summarised later in Table 6.5.

Table 6.4: Summary of Specific Goal Setting as ACK Students by Participants

Pillar of Learning	No. of Responses	Example of Goals
Learning to Know	0	
Learning to Do	3	“I always liked planning and organising things. I used to watch my dad always planning big events and so I suppose it was natural for me to do the same. I remember ---- asked me to help organise some workplace visits for the employability goal for the other students and I actually organised about six of these visits” (P5, C56).
Learning to Live Together	7	“Helping people. I went to Turkey and Africa with youth programs to help communities and refugees. It was a very special experience for me” (P17, C78).
Learning to Be	39	“I wanted to learn how to play the Tar (Iranian stringed instrument) and I have now been learning for three years” (P15, C76)
Total references	49	

From the above Table 6.4, it is evident that only three participants (P4, P5 and P8) gave any prioritisation to goal setting in relation to the Pillar of Learning to Do and none relating to Learning to Know. Most of the emphasis on priority of goal setting was in relation to the Pillars of Learning to Live Together and Learning to Be. However, further probing of the data extracts revealed the following:

- Follow-on goals

Although not expressly stated, some goals mentioned by participants had a flow on reference to employability and the associated Pillar of Learning to Do. For instance, Participant P13, mentioned “Volunteering for different college activities such as the health days, industry guest speaker sessions and smoking awareness program at schools. I felt this was very helpful with my job applications” (P13, C69). Similarly, Participant P7 commented “I always

wanted to study photography and this was my first goal with the ACK Award. My mentor mentioned to me that maybe I could join the magazine committee and I enjoyed taking photographs at the different events. Now it has become my job” (P7, C98).

It was encouraging to note that participants linked the benefit of gaining general life skills towards career opportunities.

- Unspoken dominance of Academic Transcript

At present, within the Kuwait recruitment environment, priority is given to the graduation GPA and this is well known to students. Accordingly, quite separate to the ACK Award (which attracts less than 2% of the student population), all students are aware of the relative importance of their graduation GPA in terms of career entry opportunities. Indeed, this prompted one participant to leave the ACK Award program, with the explanation “To be honest, it really didn’t help me that much. I felt my academic qualification was more important for my future” (P10, C128).

Although the semester GPA goal is included on the ACK Award Goals Action Plan as their target towards the Pillar of Learning to Know, it is the actual GPA appearing on the student transcript that has real value and is officially recognised as such by employers, future institutions of learning, and indeed by the students themselves.

Interpreting the above data, in view of the priority status given to the graduation GPA by employers for entry level positions within Kuwait, it is understandable that participants in the ACK Award regard this goal as a given and, therefore, within the ACK Award, they are more focused on non-academic pursuits, as reflected in Table 6.4 above.

- Lack of immediate employment goal setting relevance

Typical of the wider student population at ACK, only 2 of the 20 participants were employed during their studies. This is common because, with rare exceptions, only fulltime enrolment is available at the college and only limited suitable positions in industry are available for unqualified candidates. In this regard, unlike countries such as Australia where it is common for a higher education student to have a part-time position within such industries as hospitality or retail, in Kuwait these roles are undertaken by unqualified

expatriates of a lower socio-economic status and are generally not seen as appropriate for students within higher education. Accordingly, whilst at the college, the vast majority of students would not have an immediate priority associated with any employability related goal since their focus is on their academic studies, together with any other personal/family/social aspirations. This lack of priority relating to employability related goals is reflected in the inclusion of just three targets associated with the Pillar of Learning to Do in Table 6.4 above.

In contrast to the above priorities of goal-setting as ACK students, the following Table 6.5 is a summary of data extracts from the Code Groupings related to goals mentioned by participants in their present situation as graduates. The Table summarises the areas of goal setting by participants across the four pillars of learning. Before interpreting the Table, it is important to note that at the time of the 20 interviews, two participants were enrolled in further full-time study, 15 were employed and three were unemployed and not undertaking study. In contrast, it was previously noted that during their studies at ACK, only two participants were employed and, accordingly, 13 of the 18 participants who were not working during their studies had successfully gained employment upon graduation. With this background, the priority of goals now for the participants as graduates is reflected in the following Table 6.5:

Table 6.5: Summary of Specific Goal Setting Post-ACK by Participants

Pillar of Learning	No. of Responses	Specific Goals
Learning to Know	16	“Last year, I got married and moved to Canada so at the moment, I am concentrating on continuing my studies” (P10, C224).
Learning to Do	15	“For the moment, I am happy to get the skills I need in Civil Engineering and also to get a reputation for my work” (P19, C245).
Learning to Live Together	9	“I would also like to establish a speech club where sick people can share their problems and the difficulties that they are facing in their daily lives and raise these with government ministries and other relevant agencies” (P2, C247).
Learning to Be	6	“I also want to lose some weight and I want to start riding a bike” (P3, C252).
Total references	46	

As highlighted in Table 6.5, of the 46 future related goals specifically mentioned by participants in their current situation as early graduates, 31 or 67% related to additional study or gaining further work-related experience. Only six future goals related to personal targets, in contrast to 38 out of a total of 49 mentioned goals as students (from Table 6.4). This is a steep decline from 80% to just 13% of goals related to the Pillar of Learning to Be.

The above change in priorities regarding goal setting is perhaps unsurprising. Some key factors include:

- Tightening of Kuwait Job Market

Historically, one of the largest employment sectors in Kuwait was the oil industry. However, in recent years, due to technology and increased global competition, the oil and associated sectors have substantially lowered their demand for graduates to the point where the Kuwait government has reduced scholarships for related engineering studies. Therefore, graduates are well

aware that to maintain employability, higher level and more diversified studies are needed. Hence, participants made comments such as “I studied petroleum engineering but at the moment there are not many jobs in that field. So, I am working as a mechanical/service engineer” (P3, C324), “At the moment, I am very busy. I am continuing my studies to become qualified as a mechanical engineer and later I want to do my masters in bio-mechanics. I am not sure which career to follow” (P4, C254), and “I want to continue my studies outside Kuwait in either communication or multimedia. But at the moment I am happy getting experience ” (P5, C257).

- Policy of Kuwaitisation

Twelve of the twenty participants are expatriates and, as noted in Section 4.4, the Kuwait government is (justifiably) pursuing a tight policy of Kuwaitisation to reduce reliance on expatriate workers and to encourage more nationals into the private sector. As a result, employment opportunities for non-nationals are becoming harder and this has led to added pressure on expatriates, including the participants in this demographic, to place immediate priority on higher qualifications and increased skills. Related comments included “I am hoping to do my PhD in Australia. I have brothers there and so I am hoping that in the next five years I will be able to join them” (P12, C231), and “I want to continue helping my family. I would like to do my MBA. I would like to do it in Australia but maybe I will do it online. I would like to live and work somewhere else like the United Kingdom, Pakistan or Australia” (P13, C233).

- Negative Impact of COVID-19

As noted in Section 5.5, the case study interviews were undertaken during the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic with associated instability regarding graduate employment. Accordingly, the already tightening job market became even more uncertain, with associated comments such as “At the moment, I have just graduated and so I am focused on getting a job. It is hard because with COVID things slowed down and the oil and gas sector is not employing non-Kuwaitis. So, I will have to try and find a job outside Kuwait. It is hard but I am looking out” (P16, C238), and “COVID has stopped us all from planning too far in advance” (P5, C286).

- Positive Impact of COVID-19

Interestingly, although COVID-19 had devastating effects on many families and economies, it bonded communities together and this was directly reflected by one participant in her future community goal, “I want to leave a foot print to help the next generation. The COVID quarantine time gave me a lot of time to think and it took me out of my comfort zone. I like to help people and especially to develop kids’ minds about engineering” (P17, C241). Significantly, there were seven specific community related goals mentioned by participants from their time as students (Table 6.4) compared to nine presently as graduates (Table 6.5). In this regard, perhaps the increased number was a consequence COVID-19 and the higher importance of community spirit now within the lifewide goal setting of these graduates.

As noted from Table 6.5, participants only mentioned six future goals related to the Pillar of Learning to Be in their present situation as graduates, in sharp contrast to 39 related goals from their time as students (from Table 6.4). The relative breakdown of these goals is summarised in the following Table 6.6:

Table 6.6: Goals related to ‘Learning to Be’ by Participants as Students and as Graduates

Goals in relation to ‘Learning to Be’	From Time at ACK as Student	Future Goals as Graduates
Fitness	13	0
Sport	2	
Diet	9	
Health	4	1
Music	3	
Hobbies	7	3
Other	1	2
Total references	39	6

From the above Table 6.6, as students, the participants listed a total of 15 specific goals related to Fitness/Sport such as walking, cycling or going to the gym. As graduates,

not one such goal was mentioned. Further, as students, the participants listed a total of 13 specific goals related to diet/health but only one such goal as graduates. Similarly, as students, the participants listed a total of 10 goals related to music/hobbies and yet only three as graduates. This is alarming in terms of well-being (Sen, 1993; Reich, 2013; Wornast, 2018; Blackman, 2020), especially in view of the pressures facing the graduates with regard to the tight job market and the associated priority to undertake further study and/or gain increased experience. In this regard, the candidate noted comments from students among the data extracts, including “I don’t have time for regular exercise but I try to eat carefully” (P11, C229) and “I hope to go to Germany to do my masters in computer engineering. But, I have to learn German first. It is hard because I work 6 days a week and I am tired after work” (P18, C243).

Discussion of Theme 3 and Research Question 1

Theme 3 covered the Prioritisation of Goal Setting and a comparison can now be undertaken against Research Question 1: ‘Did the ACK Award achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how?’

Baxter Magolda (2014) emphasised that students should develop skills towards self-authorship as needed preparation “to thrive in the ambiguity that characterizes contemporary adult life” (p. 26). The data extracts associated with prioritisation of goal setting, as reflected in the above analysis, indicate that participants were underprepared for the uncertain realities of life as graduates. In this regard, of the 49 specific goals mentioned by participants from their time as students, only 3, or just 6%, directly related to the development of knowledge or skills in sharp comparison to 31 such goals out 46, representing 67% as graduates. It was evident from the associated data extracts that, as graduates, participants felt under pressure to gain further qualifications and increase their experience as priorities for their future. Accordingly, although an important objective of the ACK Award program was to nurture self-authorship, students remained underprepared for the life changing transition from the cloistered surrounds of the college and family support to independent self-management as graduates. In this regard, external factors such as decreased employment opportunities in the oil sector, together with the government policy of Kuwaitisation and the general uncertainties associated with COVID-19, all

impacted significantly on the environment within which participants now need to map out purposeful pathways.

As a further challenge in the meaningful process towards self-authorship, students generally in Kuwait are faced with a current reality that graduation GPA is the priority focus of employers with recruitment and therefore any non-academic goals are of secondary significance. Further, since almost all higher education students in Kuwait are fulltime with no present or past work experience, little opportunity is available to develop work related skills prior to graduation and there is no associated opportunity to experience financial independence. As a result, students are largely cocooned from the realities associated with self-managed lives until graduation.

The immediate and drastic consequence for the participants upon graduation was an instant and radical change in lifewide priorities from general wellbeing to career establishment and continuation. Accordingly, although participants nominated 39 goals from their time as students that related to the Pillar of Learning to Be (out of a total of 49), upon graduation this collapsed to just six (out of 46).

Sen (1993) noted that well-being is not comparative and depends both on the individual circumstances of the person and also their immediate environment. Accordingly, participants who enjoyed a relatively comfortable level of well-being as students clearly struggled once their environment shifted from the security of their college and family support to accelerated independence, particularly for expatriates faced with declining job opportunities and, even worse, the real threat of having to leave Kuwait at the time of their next residency if they are not in employment (refer Section 5.6).

Self-authorship, even for adults, is not a product but rather an ongoing process and therefore Baxter Magolda (2012) exhorted educators that “the college experience must help them (students) togo beyond depending on authority to becoming the authors of their own lives” (p. 33). With this new understanding, the clear message for the candidate is that the ACK Award, and perhaps higher education institutions generally in Kuwait and beyond, needs to put greater emphasis on preparing students for the radical change in life priorities upon graduation. Fortunately, as has already been noted from Themes 1 and 2, participants valued the support they received from their staff mentors and in view of this, further emphasis is needed to guide students in preparing

holistically for their independent futures. Self-authorship must be seen as an ongoing process but with as clear an understanding as possible with regard to unfolding realities concerning such critical external factors as employment prospects. Further, as already included in Case Study Finding 1, mentorship can be extended to graduates as a means of continued support towards self-authorship especially during the transitional years to independent living.

In terms of well-being (Sen, 1993; Reich, 2013; Wornast, 2018; Blackman, 2020), it was evident from the data extracts that most participants faced the immediate pressure to somehow continue with further study and gain experience at the expense of activities related to health and relaxation.

On a positive note, it was significant to note that the number of community related goals mentioned by participants increased from seven out of 49 or 14% from their time as students to nine out of 46 or 20% in their current situation as graduates. The COVID-19 crisis therefore clearly had the effect of bringing people closer together.

Case Study Finding 3

In relation to their time as students, of the 49 specific goals mentioned by participants, 39 related to the Pillar of Learning to Be, seven to the Pillar of Learning to Live Together and the remaining three to the Pillar of Learning to Do. None directly related to the Pillar of Learning to Know. However, upon graduation, there was a radical change of priorities with 31 specific goals relating to the Pillars of Learning to Know or Learning to Do out of a total of 46 and only 6 goals relating to Learning to Be. Contributing external factors include tightening job markets and the policy of Kuwaitisation as well as the immediate uncertainties associated with COVID-19. Further, during their student years, participants were generally limited in developing self-authorship because of the priority focus on the academic transcript as the most valued product from the education system for graduate recruitment as well as limited opportunities to gain paid employment prior to graduation due to cultural expectations. In terms of well-being, the dramatic decline in priority of goals relating to the Pillar of Learning to Be upon graduation has impacted negatively on the self-authorship of expatriate participants as they face immediate realities, especially with regard to the real risk of losing Kuwait residency if they are not in employment. Accordingly, greater emphasis within the ACK Award goal setting and progress

review is needed with regard to preparing students for their career entry and progression upon graduation, as critical elements in balanced self-authorship. To this end, the valued role of staff mentors can be used to nurture students in this priority shift, not only during their time at ACK but also during their transitional years.

Having considered the themes of structure, value and prioritisation of goal setting, the next Section will consider Theme 4 relating to Engagement with the ACK Award.

6.5 Results and discussion of Theme 4: Engagement with the ACK Award

Themes 1, 2 and 3 focused on the goal setting or planning aspects of the ACK Award. This fourth theme considers the achievement of goals by participants, either individually or in team projects, as part of their association with the ACK Award. In this regard, during the coding process, the candidate identified various groupings of data extracts associated with the types of achievements connected to the ACK Award. The related Code Groupings included CG9 for individual activities (such as going to the gym for fitness as part of Learning to Be), CG10 for comments regarding team activities (such as field trip to a workplace as part of Learning to Know and Learning to Do), CG11 for involvement in voluntary activities (such as the ACK Health Day as part of Learning to Live Together), CG12 for any meetings with their mentor, CG13 for comments regarding tiered levels within the ACK Award, CG14 any general comments regarding recognition associated with ACK Award activities, CG23 for general positive comments regarding ACK Award and CG24 for general negative comments regarding ACK Award.

Table 6.7 below summarises the context within which participants mentioned their activities associated with the ACK Award:

Table 6.7: Type of Activities mentioned by Participants as part of ACK Award

Type of ACK Award Activity	Times mentioned	Example
Individual	49	“I decided to quit smoking and have not smoked for a long time now. I felt I should stop because I wanted to be fit and I like going to the gym. I also try and be healthy with my diet” (P5, C121).
Team	24	“My friend, ---- was involved in the ACK Photography Club and so I decided to join. I really enjoyed it and after a while I was offered a part-time job with the Marketing Department” (P4, C89).
Voluntary	22	“I liked to do voluntary work and because I was in the ACK Award, I was always asked to help out at college events” (P1, C126).
Total	95	
Separate meetings with Mentor	15	“I liked talking with my mentor. He gave me more confidence in myself” (P20, C209).

From the above Table 6.7, it is noted that of the 95 activities mentioned by participants during their involvement with the ACK Award, 49 or 52% related to their own personal achievements and, from the associated data extracts, all but one of these related to the Pillar of Learning to Be. The only other individual achievement not related to this pillar was associated with the Pillar of Learning to Know, with the comment “It (the ACK Award) helped me to work harder with my study to get better results” (P11, C130). All the other 48 references related to individual activities were associated with the Pillar of Learning to Be and usually with a positive comment towards improved well-being, such as “It gave me the opportunity to practice my photography and videography. After each event, I looked at my work and did research as to how I could make it better” (P7, C153), “I wanted to stop smoking and I set this as my big goal. I am very proud that I have not smoked for two years” (P11, C36), and “I set myself a health goal to do more physiotherapy to help myself (participant has physical disability), and I am still doing this now (after being away from ACK for two years)” (P2, C84). However, as noted in Theme 3, goal setting priorities changed for most participants after their graduation and hence comments such as “I joined a gym

but unfortunately now I am too busy to go. But, I do walk and jog when I can” (P20, C86), and “I started to learn the viola but at the moment I am too busy with work” (P3, C118).

In Section 6.3, the value of goal setting was considered as part of Theme 2 and from the above comments it is evident that participants also valued their achievement of those goals. In this regard, Table 6.2, within Section 6.3, summarised the number of times that positive words such as ‘liked’, ‘enjoyed’, ‘helpful’, and ‘important’ were used by participants regarding their goal setting. These words were used a total of 27 times by participants specifically in relation to goal setting. The following Table 6.8, summarises the number of times that such positive words were used in relation to achievement of goals by participants.

Table 6.8: Frequency of Positive Words used by Participants in relation to ACK Award Activities

Word used	Relating to Individual Activities	Relating to Team-based Activities	Relating to Voluntary Activities	Total	Separate relating to Mentor Meetings
Enjoyed	2	14	1	17	3
Help/helping/helped	6	2	8	16	2
Liked	8	2	2	12	2
Other positive words	5	3	2	10	5
Total	21	21	13	55	12

From Table 6.8, it is noted that participants used positive words a total of 55 times in relation to their ACK Award achievements. Of this total, 21 usages related to individual activities such as going to the gym to fulfil a fitness goal. However, participants used positive words the same number of times in relation to team-based activities, such as participation in ACK Award Leadership Days, and a further 13 times in relation to voluntary activities, such as the ACK Smoking Awareness Campaign within local schools. Separate to the above usages in relation to activities, participants

also used positive words a further 12 times in relation to their meetings with their mentors and this context will be considered further as part of Theme 6. For the moment, in this Section, the analysis and discussion are focused on the specific comments by participants in relation to their activities connected to the ACK Award, and, in particular, their level of engagement.

Individual achievements are important and it is significant that participants used positive words such as ‘enjoyed’ and ‘liked’ a total of 21 times in commenting about their solo activities within the ACK Award. However, in reading the data extracts associated with ACK Award activities, there was greater use of positive words in relation to team based or voluntary activities. These are considered further below.

Team-based activities

Participants used positive words the same number of times (21) in relation to their team-based activities as with their individual activities. Comments included: “Keeping fit, working out and jogging. I have continued with this and found an online exercise group that is actually based in Australia. It is really good. We have online chats and there are people from all ages and different parts of the world. We encourage each other” (P16, C77), and “I liked the ACK Award. It was fun and it helped me to meet other students and do new things” (P14, C166).

In addition to speaking positively of their involvement in team-based activities, participants also added comments as to how such participation had more than just social benefits. Such comments included: “I enjoyed going to all the college events and taking photographs. I got to meet many people. I came up with a design for an ACK cap and the Chairman thanked me for this” (P7, C218), “(The ACK Award) introduced me to students from different seniority levels in other departments (through the Leadership Days). It has also added to my confidence when I see my achievement. And I see it got recognised (through Certificates of Attendance at Leadership Days)” (P17, C141), and “I liked being invited to all the different college events and being able to take photographs. I became a member of the college magazine committee and was invited to be a member of the ACK Student Council. All of this came from being part of the ACK Award” (P4, C213). In this later regard, as a tangible incentive by ACK for students to take part in the ACK Award program, more than half the positions

on the ACK Student Council were reserved for ACK Award participants who had achieved at least the Silver Level (completion of two years active participation).

Voluntary activities

Participants also used positive words 13 times when referring to their participation in volunteer projects through the ACK Award. Comments included “I love to help people and I did a lot of voluntary work. I knew the admissions and registration process and I could see that new students were finding it hard. So, I decided to help as a volunteer in helping the new students” (P11, C104); “I liked to do voluntary work and because I was in the ACK Award, I was always asked to help out at college events” (P1, C126), and “I was happy to help new students in setting their goals and give them tips about how to be successful academically and socially” (P17, C79).

One student made the simple comment “It was great. I was so happy to do things that helped other people” (P18, C171). This comment reminded the candidate of an experience at one of the ACK Health Days. These were organised by volunteer students each semester to promote a health theme such as fire prevention, diabetes, and food from different cultures. ACK Award students were involved in the general management of the day as well as organising displays and activities. The Health Days were open to the families and friends of all students and staff. At the end of one event, a female student approached the candidate and, with a smile, commented ‘I am so happy today. This is the first time that I have done anything to help people outside my family’.

In reflecting on reasons why participants spoke so positively regarding their team based and voluntary activities associated with the ACK Award, the candidate was reminded of the above experience and the reality that, particularly for females from conservative families in Kuwait, there are cultural limitations on their attendance at any non-academic related events outside the home. Accordingly, the opportunity to be part of organised activities associated with the ACK Award provided a structured and respected means for attendance and participation. Nonetheless, it was usual for female participants to be dropped off at the security gate and met at the same gate by a family member for any ACK Award activities.

As with involvement in general team-based activities, there were tangible benefits associated with participation in voluntary activities and these were acknowledged by participants in their comments, including “Volunteering for different college activities such as the health days, industry guest speaker sessions and smoking awareness program at schools. I felt this was very helpful with my job applications” (P13, C70), and “It was good for me. I met so many people and had the opportunity to help with college events. I was very proud to be on the Student Council and to advocate on behalf of people with a disability. For instance, I remember at one meeting I suggested that students with special needs be able to register early and this was accepted by the college” (P2, C176). This student has a physical disability and his membership of the ACK Student Council was as a result an appointment by the President in view of his ACK Award participation.

Recognition associated with participation in ACK Award

When commenting on their activities with the ACK Award program, participants used words associated with recognition on eleven occasions, as summarised in the following Table 6.9.

Table 6.9: Reference to Recognition associated with ACK Award Participation

Context of Reference to Recognition	Frequency	Example
Specific reference ACK Award	8	“I was so happy to be a member of the Student Council. I knew I had to be in the ACK Award to be selected and so that is why I stayed in the ACK Award. It was very important for me to be on the Student Council as this is a great honour” (P9, C155)
Recognition reference other	3	“I did voluntary work for a lot of different areas including the Alumni Centre, School of Business, Health and Safety Committee, Marketing Department and Admissions and Registration. So, I could show in my (job) application that I had experience is many different areas of a private university” (P13, C72)
Total	11	

The eight participants who directly referred to the recognition value of the ACK Award certificate itself, all contextualised this as facilitating their appointment as a member of the ACK Student Council (since the majority of such positions were reserved for direct appointment by the President from ACK Award participants who held at least a Silver Level Certificate. However, only a limited number of such appointments are made each semester). The other three references to recognition associated with participation in the ACK Award were in relation to enhanced employability, with related comments such as “the reward of the certificate for my resume” (P9, C220).

From the data extracts related to engagement with the ACK Award, there was only one direct reference by participants regarding the ACK Award tiered system of four levels, with the comment, “I actually stopped after I got the silver level as I was too busy with my study” (P10, C191). Further study of the data extracts confirmed that no participant made any direct reference to pursuing all four tiered levels of the ACK Award and there were also no references to the associated lifelong learning.

Discussion of Theme 4 and Research Question 1

Theme 4 considered Student Engagement with the ACK Award program and a comparison can now be undertaken against Research Question 1: ‘Did the ACK Award achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how?’

There is the possibility for at least some students to simply go through the motions to complete a task such as obtaining a participation certificate. However, in this regard, it was never the intention of the candidate, when establishing the ACK Award, or indeed the college itself, that students merely view their participation in the program as a means of obtaining a certificate. It was always the intention that students become engaged in the program and that it assists them at a personal level in setting and reviewing lifewide goals towards self-authorship.

To the above ends, it is significant that from the data extracts relating to activities within the ACK Award, there was no direct reference to remaining within the program mainly to obtain the participation certificate itself. However, there were a total of eleven references to the benefits from having the Award. Eight of these references related to the Award opening the door for possible direct appointment by the college

President to the ACK Student Council (as the majority of such positions required at least Silver Tier of the ACK Award). The other three references to recognition from participation were associated with employability enhancement, through inclusion of the certificate on their resume.

In considering the extent to which students were engaged with the ACK Award, the candidate firstly considered the types of activity that participants mentioned from their time within the program. Significantly, from Table 6.7, of the 95 references to ACK Award related activities, 49 related to individual pursuits such as diet or fitness, compared to 24 team-based activities organised through the program and a further 22 references to voluntary activities. Accordingly, the engagement of participants in the ACK Award was not only associated with the pursuit of personal goals but also for socialisation and altruistic purposes. This was especially evident in the use of positive words such as ‘enjoyed’ and ‘liked’ in relation to ACK Award activities. In this regard, participants used such words on 21 occasions in relation to individual activities, compared to the same number for team activities and 13 for voluntary activities. Therefore, the majority of positive experiences for participants in relation to the ACK Award came from team and voluntary activities rather than from personal achievements.

Barber and King, Baxter Magolda (2013), identified three dimensions of self-authorship, including Cognitive, or “how one makes meaning of knowledge” (p. 869), Intrapersonal, or “how one views one’s identity” ” (p. 869), and Interpersonal, or “how one constructs one’s relations with others” (p. 870). In this regard, referring to Table 6.7, of the 95 ACK Award activities mentioned by participants, 49 related to individual activities and only one of these directly related to the Cognitive Dimension, with the comment “It (the ACK Award) helped me to work harder with my study to get better results” (P11, C130). The 48 other individual activities related to pursuit of individual goals in the Pillar of Learning to Be (such as fitness or diet) and these would be included in the self-authorship Intrapersonal dimension.

A further 22 activities related to volunteer projects and these participations are associated with altruism within the Intrapersonal dimension of self-authorship and also social development within the Interpersonal dimension. The remaining 24 ACK Award activities mentioned by participants related to team-based pursuits and would

be largely associated with the self-authorship Interpersonal dimension. Accordingly, in terms of contributing towards self-authorship, the activities associated with the ACK Award were predominantly directed towards the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal dimensions.

Further, from Table 6.8, it is evident from the positive comments with regard to activities that participants valued their involvement within the ACK Award. Therefore, in relation to Research Question 1, it is clear that from the perspective of Theme 4 relating to Engagement with the ACK Award, the program has achieved its objective to assist students towards self-authorship; however, predominantly in the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal dimensions. The associated lack of contribution in the self-authorship Cognitive dimension was also highlighted in Theme 3, causing anxiety to participants upon graduation. Accordingly, although Theme 4 confirmed the usefulness of the ACK Award towards self-authorship, for the future well-being of participants, greater emphasis is needed for balanced attention to all four lifewide pillars of learning since the focus of participants as students was largely in the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal dimensions related to Learning to Live Together and Learning to Be. More attention is needed to the critical Cognitive Dimension of self-authorship.

To address the above imbalance, it is noted from Table 6.8 that participants used positive comments 12 times in relation to their meetings with staff mentors within the ACK Award. Accordingly, mentors are in a position to guide participants to more fully consider goals and achievements across all dimensions of self-authorship, and especially the Cognitive Dimension as they approach transition to self-managed lives upon graduation.

Case Study Finding 4

With regard to activities associated with the ACK Award, participants made 95 direct references, with 49 related to individual pursuits, 24 to team-based activities and 22 to voluntary projects. Of the 49 individual pursuits, only one related to the self-authorship cognitive dimension. The remaining 48 individual pursuits all related the self-authorship intrapersonal dimension. The 24 team based and 22 voluntary activities spanned the self-authorship intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions.

Therefore, greater emphasis is needed in future to promote growth in the self-authorship cognitive dimension.

Concerning the extent of engagement by participants with the ACK Award, out of 55 positive comments associated with program activities, 21 related to individual pursuits, 21 to team-based activities and 13 to volunteer projects. Accordingly, participants placed greater emphasis on satisfaction from shared activities rather than individual pursuits. This may be partly as a consequence of the culture within Kuwait whereby females from conservative families have limited opportunities to mix socially outside the family and this is an area for further study.

A total of 11 comments were made by participants in relation to recognition associated with the ACK Award. Eight of these references related to the benefit of gaining the Award towards membership of the ACK Student Council as the majority of these positions are by Presidential appointment from those students who have obtained at least Silver Level of the ACK Award. The other three references concerned the employability value of adding the ACK Award certificate to the student resume.

From the data extracts related to activities within the ACK Award, there were 12 positive comments regarding meetings with mentors and therefore this support can readily be offered beyond graduation. The important role of mentors is further considered as part of Theme 6.

With regard to engagement with the ACK Award, participants were more enthusiastic with regard to participation in team and community activities than in pursuit of individual goals. Accordingly, promotion of the ACK Award should emphasise the opportunities to take part in team/community activities within the program. Eleven positive comments were made with regard to recognition associated with the ACK Award for such purposes as resume enhancement and eligibility for direct appointment to the Student Council. Accordingly, this can also be used for promotional purposes.

Having considered the four themes associated with the structure of goal setting, value of goal setting, prioritisation of goal setting and engagement with the ACK Award, the associated findings can now be explored collectively for the purposes of addressing Research Question 1.

6.6 Summary of results of Themes 1 - 4

The above Sections 6.2 to 6.5 considered the four themes associated with Research Question 1: “Did the ACK Award program achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how?” This Section will analyse the collective findings for the purposes of considering whether the ACK Award is achieving its objective in nurturing students towards self-authorship.

In Section 3.2.6, important elements associated with self-authorship were noted including:

- the three dimensions of self-authorship presented by Barber and King, Baxter Magolda (2013), including Cognitive, Intrapersonal, and Interpersonal;
- the ten positions on the path towards self-authorship, presented by Baxter Magolda and King (2012) from reliance on “External” (p. 18) sources for decision making, through a transition “Crossroads” (p. 18) phase, to an “Internal” (p. 18) or self-authorship point where the learner is confident of their own “internal voice” (p. 19);
- the importance of reflection, in the path towards self-authorship, also presented by Barber, King and Baxter Magolda (2013) to provide a “vehicle for students to engage in the kind of ‘figuring out’” (p. 891); and
- the critical mentoring role of teachers, proposed by Baxter Magolda (2009), by such means as Learning Partnerships, including “collaborating with them (students) to analyse their own problems, thereby engaging in mutual learning encouraging them to develop personal authority by listening to their own voices in determining how to live their lives” (p. 251).

The above elements of self-authorship will now be considered in light of the Case Study Findings related to Themes 1 to 4.

Dimensions of self-authorship

Progress towards self-authorship requires development across Cognitive, Intrapersonal and Interpersonal dimensions. Case Study Finding 3 highlighted that as students, the participants mentioned a total of 49 goals but only three of these related to the Cognitive Dimension, compared to 39 in the Intrapersonal Dimension and 7 in

the Interpersonal Dimension. This changed radically upon graduation, with the 46 mentioned post-ACK goals consisting of 31 in the Cognitive Dimension, just 6 in the Intrapersonal Dimension and 9 in the Interpersonal Dimension. Accordingly, it is clear that the relative priorities across the dimensions of self-authorship shifted dramatically once students graduated from ACK.

Data extracts from participants revealed reasons to explain the radical adjustments. Externalities included the tightening of the Kuwait job market, especially for engineering students, as well as the impact of the government policy of Kuwaitisation involving priority recruitment of nationals, and also the downturn associated with COVID-19. Nonetheless, from the perspective of assisting students towards self-authorship, it is clear from Case Study Finding 3 that at the point of graduation, students were underprepared in their Cognitive Dimension, as evidenced by 31 of the 46 mentioned post-ACK goals falling within this dimension compared to just 3 out of 49 during their time at the college.

Self-authorship is not an end goal but an ongoing process and, in this regard, in its present state, the ACK Award is only structured to assist students towards their self-authorship whilst they are at the college. The fact that upon graduation, participants needed to radically change priorities across the dimensions of their self-authorship indicates that the ACK Award needs to be adjusted to better prepare students for this life transition. To this end, Case Study Findings 1, 2, 3 and 4 all included reference to the positive comments by participants regarding the usefulness of their mentor in helping them to set and reflect upon lifewide goals.

On the basis of the above findings, it is evident that more emphasis is needed on academic and employability goals. Mentors should nurture students to spend more time in the consideration of their academic and employability related goals towards the self-authorship Cognitive Dimension, with emphasis on career opportunities and progression requirements. Also from the findings, continuation of the ACK Award or similar program would have benefits to participants beyond graduation.

Despite the present lack of emphasis on goals associated with the Cognitive Dimension of self-authorship, the data extracts did indicate positive developments in the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Dimensions. In this regard, Case Study Finding 4 included the mention of involvement by participants in 95 developmental activities

associated with their membership of the ACK Award, with 48 of these in the Intrapersonal Dimension, as well as 24 team and 22 volunteer activities across the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Dimensions. Only one activity related to the Cognitive Dimension. Nonetheless, the data extracts disclosed that a total of 55 positive comments were made by participants regarding their involvement in ACK Award related activities with 21 connected to individual pursuits, 21 to team-based activities and 13 to volunteer projects. This interest by participants in team/volunteer activities associated with their membership of the ACK Award is reflected in Case Study Finding 4.

Stages of self-authorship

Baxter Magolda and King (2012) identify ten stages on the path towards self-authorship, from an initial reliance upon ‘external’ sources, through a transitionary phase to eventual ‘internal’ capability where the learner is confident of their ‘inner voice’. In this regard, as a stepping stone from reliance on external sources to internal capability, Case Study Finding 2 noted that 18 of the 20 participants valued the process of goal setting and, of these, three mentioned that if it was not for the ACK Award program they would not have achieved life goals that were important to them (P5 and P11 to stop smoking and P3 to lose weight). However, despite the requirement to document goals whilst a member of the ACK Award program, the data extracts revealed that none of the 20 participants continued to document goals beyond graduation. Also, Case Study Finding 1 noted that prior to joining the ACK Award, only one participant had used a documented system for goal setting. Nonetheless, as graduates, all participants had future goals although six (P5, P9, P14, P16, P18 and P19), mentioned their goals in the Intrapersonal Dimension were being negatively impacted by more pressing goals in the Cognitive Dimension.

The overall positive comments by participants regarding their experiences with goal setting and achievement confirm the usefulness of the ACK Award in assisting students in the path towards self-authorship. However, as self-authorship is not a completed process at the time of graduation but rather a lifelong ongoing process, it was identified in the previous section on the dimensions of self-authorship that continuation in the ACK Award, or similar program, would further assist students

especially in their transitional years upon graduation to search for a balance in goals across their lifewide dimensions and towards lifelong learning.

Reflection on goals towards self-authorship

The ongoing path towards self-authorship requires regular reflection on goals and associated progress. In this regard, Case Study Finding 2 highlighted that, from the data extracts, ten participants made positive comments with regard to the usefulness of reflection on their goals and achievements as part of their involvement in the ACK Award and three of these specifically referred to the value of reflection with their mentor.

It is a requirement for participation in the ACK Award that students must document lifewide goals, record progress at monthly intervals and then undertake a comprehensive written reflection on all goals at the end of each semester.

Mentorship towards self-authorship

Mentorship in the ACK Award is part of a separate Theme (6) and Research Question (3). However, specifically in relation to Research Question 1 and the role of mentorship towards self-authorship, Case Study Finding 2 noted that of the 10 data extracts that mentioned reflection as valued in goal setting and review, three specifically referred to the value of undertaking this reflection with the mentor. Further, Case Study Finding 4 noted that 12 data extracts relating to student activities within the ACK Award included positive comments regarding the guidance, support and encouragement received during meetings with mentors.

All participants in the ACK Award are allocated a staff mentor when they join the program. This mentorship relationship with the one staff member usually continues throughout participation in the program by the student. Participants are required to meet with their mentor initially to discuss and document goals on the Goals Action Plan template (Appendix A) for the coming semester, then on a monthly basis to discuss and record progress, and finally at the end of the semester to reflect on and record achievements. Mentors are required to initial the Goals Action Plan at each meeting.

In view of the above Case Study Findings 1-4, and in answer to Research Question 1, analysis of the data extracts indicates that the ACK Award is achieving its objective to assist students towards self-authorship, and specifically with respect to each of the four elements of:

- Development across the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Dimensions; however, more attention is needed with the Cognitive Dimension;
- Progress along the pathway towards self-authorship from reliance on external sources to internal capability, although more support is needed during the early transition years from college to graduate careers;
- Reflection towards self-authorship; and
- Mentorship towards self-authorship.

Having considered the data extracts and themes relevant to Research Question 1, attention will now focus on Theme 5 covering Approach to Career Preparation and the associated Research Question 2.

6.7 Results and discussion of Theme 5: Approach to career preparation

As noted in Section 5.7, Theme 5 on the Approach to Career Preparation emerged from a number of relevant Code Groupings including CG5 for academic goals as a student; CG6 for employability goals as a student, CG15 for study related goals as a graduate, CG16 for employability related goals as a graduate, CG18 for current employment and CG25 for data extracts relating to the possibility of a career goal within the ACK Award that resulted from the related question at the end of each interview. In this latter regard, the candidate wishes to highlight that in its present format, the Goals Action Plan template (Appendix A) associated with the ACK Award does not include a specific goal related to career; however, the academic and employability goal areas are intended to nurture students to consider their future career as part of their overall life planning within the program. Nonetheless, to ensure the candidate obtained as much relevant data as possible from participants, at the end of each interview an additional question was added as to whether a ‘career’ goal rather than a general ‘employability’ goal would have been more useful during their time within the ACK Award.

The data extracts from Code Groupings CG5, CG6, CG15, CG16 and CG18 were collated and considered separately from the data extracts associated with Code Grouping CG25.

In Section 6.4, Table 6.4 summarised the various categories of goals mentioned by participants during the interviews from their time as students. Then, Table 6.5 summarised the categories of current goals mentioned by participants in their present life situation as relatively recent graduates. In this latter respect, from the summary of participant bio-data in Table 5.2 (Section 5.6), the average period of time since graduation from the college was 2.5 years. Tables 6.4 and 6.5 have been merged into the following Table 6.10:

Table 6.10: Goal Setting Categories of Participants as Students and as Graduates

Pillar of Learning	No. of Responses relating to Past Goals as ACK Student	No. of Responses relating to Present Goals as Graduates
Learning to Know	0	16
Learning to Do	3	15
Learning to Live Together	7	9
Learning to Be	39	6
Total references	49	46

With regard to the above Table 6.10, the radical change in the categories of goals mentioned by participants from their time as students compared to their present situation has already been discussed in Section 6.4, associated with Theme 3 regarding prioritisation of goals and the related Case Study Finding 3. This finding addressed the change in priorities and the underlying reasons. Specifically with regard to employability related goals, it is noted from Table 6.10 above that the data extracts did not include any mention of goals by participants during their time at ACK relating to the Pillar of Learning to Know and only three goals related to the Pillar of Learning to Do. These goals were:

- “I have always wanted to have my own business painting on canvass” (P8, C29).
- “I always liked planning and organising things. I used to watch my dad always planning big events and so I suppose it was natural for me to do the same. I remember ---- asked me to help organise some workplace visits for the employability goal for the other students and I actually organised about six of these visits” (P5, C56).
- “my own advisory business not only in Kuwait but beyond” (P6, C95).

Clearly, academic and employability goal setting were not relatively valued by participants as part of their involvement during with the ACK Award program during their time as students. The candidate then sought to determine whether their activities within the program, as distinct to their goals, reflected any relative priority for academic and employability related pursuits. In this regard, Table 6.7 in Section 6.5 summarised the categories of activities by participants during their time with the Program. It was noted that a total of 95 such activities were mentioned across the headings of individual, team-based and volunteering endeavours. The data extracts from the relevant Code Groupings CG9, CG10 and CG11 were revisited for the purpose of exploring how many from the 95 mentioned activities were related to future employment/career as distinct from other personal benefits (such as health) or for social/community purposes. Table 6.11 below summarises the purpose of the various activities:

Table 6.11: Purpose of Activities mentioned by Participants within ACK Award

Type of Activity	Individual	Team-based	Voluntary as part of Team	Total
Academic	1			1
Employment/ Career	2	3	2	7
Other Personal	44			44
Social		21		21
Voluntary	2		20	22
Total	49	24	22	95

From Table 6.11 above, of the 49 individual activities by participants, 44 related to ‘other’ personal pursuits (such as diet, health and hobbies), two related to voluntary activities, one to an academic study activity “to get better results” (P11, C130), and two related to employability pursuits, including:

- ACK Award industry field trips, with the comment “I enjoyed having the opportunity to improve my organisational skills by going to different businesses and organising the workplace visits for the other participants” (P5, C215).
- A home-based entrepreneurial activity stemming from a personal goal to develop cooking skills, with the participant proudly commenting “I have started a small business to teach people how to cook” (P6, C94).

This latter comment is specifically career related but interestingly the origin was from an initial personal goal rather than a specific employability goal. It is evident that in pursuing her personal goal to develop her love for cooking, P6 identified the opportunity to convert this passion into an income source

The above related to individual activities within the ACK Award. Concerning team-based activities, from Table 6.11 above, it is noted that three participants made reference to participation in an employability related endeavour, as follows:

- “My friend, ---- was involved in the ACK Photography Club and so I decided to join. I really enjoyed it and after a while I was offered a part-time job with the Marketing Department” (P4, C89).
- “I always wanted to study photography and this was my first goal with the ACK Award. My mentor mentioned to me that maybe I could join the magazine committee and I enjoyed taking photographs at the different events. Now it has become my job” (P7, C98).
- “I always loved basketball. I played at school and won ten gold medals. I was one of the best players. When I came to ACK, I joined the basketball team and became captain. I also coached the girls’ basketball team (paid role)” (P9, C102).

It is significant to note from the above data extracts that each of the employability related team activities mentioned by participants actually stemmed from an original

personal goal; two related to photography and one to sport. In all three instances, it was in pursuit of their personal goal that the opportunity arose to gain a source of income.

Referring again to Table 6.11, and to the 22 volunteer activities mentioned by participants, two referred to employability related aspects, as follows:

- “I did voluntary work for a lot of different areas including the Alumni Center, School of Business, Health and Safety Committee, Marketing Department and Admissions and Registration. So, I could show in my (job) application that I had experience in many different areas of a private university” (P13, C72).
- “I love to help people and I did a lot of voluntary work. I knew the admissions and registration process and I could see that new students were finding it hard. So, I decided to help as a volunteer in helping the new students and this helped me also (through my resume)” (P11, C104).

Both of the above comments refer to the employability benefit from voluntary work whereby it can be included on the resume. However, neither comment is directly relevant to the pursuit of a particular career.

In analysing the data extracts related to activities associated with the ACK Award from Table 6.7 (Section 6.5), the candidate was particularly keen to explore whether any were connected to any of the three employability related goals included in Table 6.4 (Section 6.4). The three such goals were to establish a painting on canvas business (P8), assistance with the ACK Award industry field trip program (P5), and to commence a business advisory enterprise (P6). Participant P8 only referred to activities for personal benefit, including diet and exercise and made no mention of any progress towards the desired painting on canvas business. Participant P6 made no mention of any progress towards the goal to establish a business advisory enterprise; however, as mentioned previously, this participant did refer to her activity to convert her personal goal of improving her cooking skills into a home-based enterprise. Participant 5 originally set an employability goal of assisting with the ACK Award industry field trip program and, as also noted previously, commented positively on her achievements with this goal (P5, C215).

Accordingly, with regard to the ACK Award assisting students to progress with employability related goals, and recognising that only three employability goals were mentioned by participants, one was accomplished, one was not completed but in place another related employability goal was achieved (a cooking business was established instead of a business advisory enterprise), and the outcome of one employability goal was not mentioned.

From the above analysis of career related goal setting and activities associated with the ACK Award, the following Case Study Findings are presented:

Case Study Finding 5

With regard to goal setting within the ACK Award, although members of the program are required to nominate an employability goal each semester, data extracts from the Case Study interviews identified only three employability related goals among a total of 49 goals mentioned by participants. Of these three employability related goals, related data extracts concerning achievements mentioned by participants from their membership of the ACK Award indicated that one of the goals was successfully completed, another was also completed but for a different business to the one originally nominated, and the remaining employability goal was not mentioned with regard to any subsequent progress.

Case Study Finding 6

With regard to activities associated with the ACK Award, as distinct from goals, of the 95 activities mentioned by participants, only one related to academic goals and seven to employability goals. From the data extracts, the academic goal was of a general nature concerning improved GPA. Of the seven employability related activities, two referred to enhancement of resume resulting from participation in volunteer projects, three referred to paid positions that resulted from pursuit of personal goals (basketball leading to paid coaching position, and two participants converting photography interest into paid positions), and two related to the successful completion of ACK employability related goals previously covered in Case Study Finding 5.

Overall, there was little focus on employability related goals and pursuits by participants during their time within the ACK Award Program. This is evidenced by

only 3 from a total of 49 mentioned goals within the program relating to employability and only 8 from a total of 95 mentioned activities.

It was noted at the beginning of this section that at present there is only a general employability goal on the Goals Action Plan template (Appendix A) associated with the ACK Award. Therefore, at the end of each interview, the candidate asked an additional question to participants as to whether they considered a section related to career goal rather than employability goal would be more useful in the ACK Award program. All twenty participants responded and their comments were included on the transcripts and loaded onto NVivo. However, in extracting data from NVivo, separate codes were used for answers to this question and the relevant data codes collated into Code Grouping 25. The data extracts are summarised in Table 6.12:

Table 6.12: Usefulness of a Specific Career Related Goal on Goals Action Plan

Response	No. of Responses	Examples of Comments
Positive response:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General support 	5	“Yes. It is always good to keep in mind what you want to achieve in your career and, by writing it down each semester, it would remind you of what you want to achieve” (P15, C306).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General support with specific reference to mentor help 	1	“It is something that every student thinks about so it would have been good to talk to my mentor about different ideas” (P12, C298).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General support but caution regarding few job prospects in field 	5	“Yes, but it is hard to get a job in the area you want. I studied petroleum engineering but at the moment there are not many jobs in that field. So, I am working as a mechanical/service engineer” (P3, C323).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Already had clear career goal 	6	“Yes. I have always wanted to have my own business, and something to do with art” (P8, C334).
Uncertain regarding value:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Already had career goal 	2	“Possibly but I already knew that I wanted to somehow use my love for painting as part of my career” (P10, C294).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned about having precise goal taking into account few jobs 	1	“I think so but it does not matter what you want to do if there are no jobs” (P16, C307).
Total	20	

As reflected in the above Table 6.12, of the 20 participants, data extracts showed that 17 responded positively to the inclusion of a career related goal on the Goals Action Plan and the remaining three were uncertain. Of those who were uncertain, two gave the reason that they were already focused on their career direction when they were at ACK and therefore a goal in this area was not needed. The remaining uncertain participant referred to the increasingly tight employment market, indicating that it is of little use having a focused career goal if there are no jobs. Indeed, of the seventeen respondents who supported the inclusion of a career goal, five added the caveat of

maintaining an open mind in view of tightening opportunities, especially for expatriates; as noted by one participant, “I wanted to be an engineer but because I am not a Kuwaiti, it is hard to find a job” (P9, C336).

Six of the respondents who supported a career goal commented that during their college studies, they already had a clear career goal, with comments such as “I already knew that I wanted a career in cooking but again, I think that for young people who are still deciding what they want for their future, it is important for them to think about it, talk about it with their mentor and write down their career goals” (P6, C330).

Case Study Finding 7

Concerning the usefulness of having a separate career goal on the Goals Action Plan (GAP) template, of the twenty responses, seventeen participants were in support and the remaining three were uncertain. Six participants gave full support to the proposal with one of these also referring to the value of having mentorship in the process. Five participants gave support but also indicated that the increasingly competitive graduate employment opportunities, especially for expatriates, require flexibility regarding career goals. Six other respondents expressed confidence that although they supported inclusion of a career goal, as a student they always had a clear target for their graduate career. Two students who were uncertain regarding the usefulness of a career goal gave their reason as already being clear regarding their future professional pathway and accordingly there was no value in documenting such a goal. One participant who was uncertain regarding the usefulness of a career goal gave the reason that it can be discouraging to have too specific a goal within a tight job market.

Having presented the above Case Study Findings 5-7 associated with Theme 5, Approach to Career Preparation, consideration can now be given to Research Question 2: “Has the ACK Award assisted in meeting the career shaping aspirations of participants and, if so, how?” To answer this question, the candidate revisited the data extracts to compare any information given by participants that linked original ACK Award goals to subsequent achievements within the program as students and then current career status as graduates. In this regard, from Table 6.10, it is noted that only three participants mentioned employability related goals. Further analysis of their data extracts revealed the following achievements in relation to those goals, both within the ACK Award itself and subsequently as graduates:

Table 6.13: Progress towards Achievement of Employability related Goals by Participants

Participant Number	Employability related Goal	Activity related to Employability Goal	Current Career Status
P8	Establish painting business	No mention	Continuing further study
P6	Establish advisory business	Established home cooking business	Restaurant chef and home business
P5	Event organisation	Event organisation	Human Resources

Referring to Table 6.13, although only three references were made by participants concerning employability related goals, it is noteworthy that one of the participants (P5) pursued the goal and is now in a related career field, one (P6) pursued a related career goal and is now employed in that field, and the remaining participant (P8) is continuing with further study. Accordingly, of the three participants who referred to their employability goal within the ACK Award, the two who are now employed are both working in a career field related to their employability goal and the remaining participant is continuing with further study.

In addition to the above references to employability related goals and subsequent progress, eight references were made by participants connected with employability related activities associated with their membership of the ACK Award. In Table 6.14 below, these activities are considered in relation to any mentioned goals from their time as students and also concerning their present career status:

Table 6.14: Relationship between Employability Related Activities with ACK Award Goals and Present Career Status

Participant Number	Employability related Goal mentioned	Activity mentioned relating to Employability Goal	Present Career Status
P11	Unrelated personal goals mentioned	Pursuit of improved GPA	Engineer
P11	Unrelated personal goals mentioned	Volunteer with ACK student inductions	
P13	Unrelated personal goals mentioned	Volunteer with ACK Open Days	Human Resources
P4	Personal goal of photography	Part time photography employment	Aviation
P7	Personal goal of photography	Part time employment as photographer	Photographer
P9	Personal goal of basketball	Basketball coach paid position	Engineer
P5	These participants referred to an employability related activity but also mentioned an employability related goal and were therefore considered in Table 6.13 above		
P6			

From the above Table 6.14, it is noted that although eight references were made concerning employability related activities, two were from the same participant (P11), and a further two references were by participants (P5 and P6) whose activities have already been considered because of their mention of a related goal in Table 6.13. Accordingly, apart from Participants P5 and P6 already considered above, a further five participants mentioned employability related activities and these can now be cross-mapped to any mentioned ACK Award goals from their time in the ACK Award and also to their present career status. Concerning these five participants, one (P7) mentioned a personal goal to improve photography which is directly related to his mentioned employability activity in this area, as a part-time photographer, and currently the participant is employed as a photographer. Another participant (P4) mentioned an employability related activity as a part time photographer and had a personal goal in the same area; however, his present career is in Aviation maintenance. Of the other three participants (P11, P13 and P9) who mentioned employability related

activities, none mentioned any connected goals and their present career status is also unrelated.

Taking all the above into account, of the eight participants who either mentioned an employability related goal and/or an employability related activity within the ACK Award, one (P5) mentioned an employability goal of event management as well as ACK Award activity in this field and also present career in a related HR area, one (P6) mentioned an employability goal of a business advisory enterprise as well as separate mention of activity as a student in establishing a home cooking business and also present career as a restaurant chef, and one (P7) mentioned a personal goal related to photography as well as an employment related activity of working as a paid part-time photographer and is presently in a career position as a photographer. One student (P8) mentioned an employability related goal but did not mention any associated activity within the ACK Award and is presently continuing further study. The remaining four students (P11, P13, P4 and P9) did not mention employability related goals and although they mentioned employability related activities, their present career status is in an unrelated field.

Career aspirations are directly linked to academic and employability goals within the ACK Award program as well as to the Cognitive and Intrapersonal Dimensions of Self-Authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008). These relationships have already been considered as part of the discussion in relation to Research Question 1. Specifically with regard to Research Question 2, concerning the means by which the ACK Award may have assisted in the career shaping aspirations of participants, Case Study Findings 5-6 identified that the majority of participants did not place emphasis on their career shaping aspirations within their ACK Award membership. Only three participants mentioned employability related goals out of a total of 49 mentioned ACK Award goals and only seven participants referred to employability related activities out of a total 95 mentioned ACK Award activities. However, on the basis of their post-graduation experiences, from Case Study Finding 7, there was strong support from participants for the inclusion of a specific career goal, rather than the present general employability goal, on the Goals Action Plan template (Appendix A). Nonetheless, participants also commented that students should be guided to critically consider career opportunities and not just career desires. In this regard, many participants referred to limited availability of graduate entry positions within careers and

accordingly, students should be flexible in their career aspirations. In view of the above, consideration should be given to changing the employability goal on the Goals Action Plan within the ACK Award to a more specific career goal and mentors be requested to place greater emphasis on this goal.

Having considered the data extracts and Theme 5 related to Research Question 2, attention will now focus on Theme 6 covering Mentorship and the associated Research Question 3.

6.8 Results and discussion of Theme 6: Mentorship

As noted in Section 5.7, Theme 6 on Mentorship emerged from a number of relevant Code Groupings including CG12 for meetings with mentors, CG19 for mentor support related to goal setting, CG20 for mentor support relating to progress review, CG21 in relation to mentor support of a motivational nature, and CG22 for other references to mentors.

Presently, it is a requirement of the ACK Award Program that a student meets with their approved mentor:

- Initially to consider and document goals for the semester; then
- On a monthly basis during the semester to discuss and record progress, and finally
- At the end of each semester, to review and write a reflection on achievements compared to initial goals.

The original purposes of requiring mentor contact were both as a source of professional guidance and equally as a means of support and encouragement. Before each meeting with their mentor, the student must complete the relevant section of their Goals Action Plan and then have the mentor initial the entry.

Prior to the case study interviews, the candidate had intended to ask a dedicated question to each participant regarding the usefulness of mentorship during their involvement in the ACK Award. However, the candidate was mindful of the common practice within the Arab culture, as mentioned in Section 4.2, of people preferring to speak positively regarding a situation out of respect, even when their opinion is otherwise. Therefore, for this question, the candidate decided not to include any

reference to mentor in the sessions but rather wait and analyse the data extracts from the interview transcripts to determine the extent to which participants spontaneously referred to their mentor and in what context.

Taking into account that the candidate did not instigate any mention of mentorship, the following Table 6.15 summarises the number of times that mentors were mentioned in the data extracts by participants and the related context:

Table 6.15: Participant Reference to ACK Award Mentor by Context

Participant	Goal Setting	Progress Review	General Support	Total
P2			1	1
P5	1	2	1	4
P6	1			1
P7	1			1
P9	1	1		2
P12	1			1
P16		2		2
P19	1	1		2
P20	2		1	3
Total	8	6	3	17

From the above Table 6.15, it is noted that, without any prompting, nine of the 20 participants referred to their mentor at least once during their interview. Eight of the comments related to goal setting, six to review of progress towards goals and three concerned general support. The context of these mentor references will now be considered further.

Reference to mentor in relation to goal setting

From the data extracts associated with Table 6.15 above, seven participants (P5, P6, P7, P9, P12, P19 and P20), referred to their mentor specifically in relation to assistance with goal setting. The comments were all positive and included: “I felt good being able to chat with my mentor. It helped me to focus on what I wanted to achieve” (P19, C207); “My mentor, ---- really helped me. She used to sit with me and help me to decide important goals. Then, when I met her during the semester, she encouraged me to keep active” (P9, C63), and “My mentor really helped me. It was good to have someone to talk to about my future and help me with my plans” (P20, C177).

It is clear from the above comments in relation to mentor support with goal setting that this availability was greatly appreciated by the participants.

Reference to mentor in relation to review of progress towards goals

From Table 6.15 above, it is noted that four participants (P5, P9, P16 and P19), referred to their mentor concerning support with review of progress towards goals. In this regard, from the data extracts, relevant comments included: “I had lot of ideas but no motivation to push myself. I needed someone to follow up with me and that is why I really enjoyed the ACK Award program. My mentor, Ms. ---- was really great and kept pushing me to achieve my goals” (P5, C24); “It forced me to achieve my goals because I knew I had to sit with my mentor and talk about what I had been doing since our last meeting” (P16, C138), and “I enjoyed talking with my mentor and seriously looking at my future goals. I also found that knowing I had to write down my progress made me more committed to achieving my goals” (P19, C81).

Significantly, all the above comments from participants mentioned the accountability dimension of the ACK Award which requires students to not only set goals but to then meet with their mentor on a monthly basis to discuss progress. None of the comments included any negative terms regarding such a requirement and, on the contrary, the participants considered this as a needed incentive to achieve their goals. Related comments included “forced me to achieve my goals” (P16, C138); “knowing I had to write down my progress made me more committed” (P19, C81), and “kept pushing me to achieve my goals” (P5, C24).

Reference to other mentor support not related to goal setting and review

Table 6.15 above also refers to three other contexts of reference to mentors from data extracts, not related to goal setting or progress review. The relevant comments from the three participants were, “I liked talking with my mentor. He gave me more confidence in myself” (P20, C209); “I was very happy with my mentor, Mrs. ----. She supported me a lot and always encouraged me” (P2, C208), and “I especially enjoyed sitting with my mentor and talking about my future” (P5, C183).

The following Case Study Finding is presented on the basis of the above analysis:

Case Study Finding 8

With regard to mentor support within the ACK Award, without any reference to mentors by the candidate, from the data extracts, nine of the twenty participants made at least one mention of their mentor. Areas of support received from mentors fell within the broad headings of goal setting, progress review and other (general) encouragement. One participant acknowledged mentor support in all three areas, three participants commented on mentor support in two separate areas and five participants referred to mentor support in one area. A total of seven participants commented on mentor support with goal setting, four with progress review and three concerning general encouragement.

Extent of support received from mentor

With regard to the extent of support received from mentors, the candidate explored the data extracts for key words such as ‘helped’, ‘supported’ and ‘encouraged’. Table 6.16 below includes such references and in relation to the three contexts included in Table 6.15 above.

Table 6.16: Context and Key Words from Reference to Mentors by Participants:

Context of Mentor-related Comment	No. of Participants with Comment	Key Words from Comments
Support and encouragement with goal setting	6	“especially enjoyed” (P5, C183) “important” (P6, C330) “really helped” (P9, C62) “good” (P12, C298) “enjoyed” (P19, C48) “really helped” (P20, C177)
External accountability and encouragement to achieve goals	4	“pushed me to actually do the things I wanted to” (P5, C150) “good for me that I knew I had to meet” (P16, C44) “encouraged me to keep active” (P9, C63) “helped me to focus” (P19, C207)
General support with program	3	“supported me a lot” (P2, C208) “felt really encouraged” (P5, C214) “liked talking with” (P20, C209)
Total	13	

In the above Table 6.16, the comments from participants are encouraging. Firstly, in relation to support in setting future goals, six participants independently acknowledged the important role played by their mentor, with comments such as “really helped” (P20, C177), and “especially enjoyed” (P5, C183).

Regarding mentor support towards the achievement of goals, from Table 6.16 above, four participants made positive comments, including “pushed me to actually do the things I wanted to” (P5, C150), and “encouraged me to keep active” (P9, C63).

Concerning general mentor support other than with goal setting and progress review, from Table 6.16 above, three participants made positive reference, including “supported me a lot” (P2, C208), and “liked talking with” (P20, C209).

In comparing the comments used by participants in Table 6.16 to the numbers of participant references in Table 6.15, it is noted that six from the seven participants who referred to mentor support (in Table 6.15) with goal setting used positive comments with regard to this assistance (in Table 6.16). The other participant (P7) only made a neutral reference to the mentor involvement with the comment “I always wanted to study photography and this was my first goal with the ACK Award. My mentor mentioned to me that maybe I could join the magazine committee and I enjoyed taking photographs at the different events. Now it has become my job” (P7, C98). Although the participant did not make an explicitly positive comment with regard to the mentor support, it is significant that the advice given by the mentor directly led to the participant gaining employment in the field of his interest.

Also referring to Tables 6.15 and 6.16, all four participants who commented on mentor support towards achievement of their goals (Table 6.15) included positive comments with regard to this assistance (Table 6.16). Likewise, all three participants who commented on mentor encouragement at a general level (Table 6.15) within the program included positive comments regarding this support (Table 6.16).

There were no negative comments from any of the data extracts regarding participant experiences with their mentor.

Accordingly, it is clear that all mentor assistance within the ACK Award was valued by the participants, with comments ranging from “I especially enjoyed sitting with my mentor and talking about my future” (P5, C183), to “He gave me more confidence in myself” (P20, C209).

Case Study Finding 9

Concerning the extent of mentor assistance to participants within the ACK Award, six of the seven participants who commented on mentor support with goal setting spoke positively of this assistance. The remaining participant made no direct positive comment but noted that it was the suggestion of the mentor to join a particular ACK Student Committee because of his personal interest in this area that led to the

participant gaining employment in this field after graduation. Of the four participants who commented on mentor support towards achievement of goals, all spoke positively of this assistance. Similarly, of the three participants who commented on other general support received from their mentor, all spoke positively of this support. No negative comments were made by students with regard to their association with their mentor.

The above Case Study Findings 8 and 9 in relation to Theme 6, Mentorship, can now be used in the consideration of Research Question 3: “To what extent, if at all, did the presence and encouragement of a staff mentor assist participating students in clarifying and pursuing lifewide goals and, if so, how?” In considering Research Question 3, it should be noted that, in addition to the above Case Study Findings 8 and 9, it was previously identified in discussions associated with Themes 1-5 that across all those themes there were significant references by participants to the support received by their mentor. In this regard:

- *Extract from Case Study Finding 1: “Recognising the uncertainties facing many graduates regarding their futures, and that self-authorship does not cease at the point of graduation, the potential exists to facilitate continued participation by alumni within the ACK Award, or similar program, with ongoing mentor support, particularly during the transitional year. In this latter regard, two participants specifically mentioned the usefulness of their mentor in the goal setting process”.*
- *Extract from Case Study Finding 2: “Eighteen participants valued personal goal setting and, in doing so, reference was made to the usefulness of the structure itself, the role of mentors in the process, and the achievement of specific goals”.*
- *Extract from Case Study Finding 3: “... greater emphasis within the ACK Award goal setting and progress review is needed with regard to preparing students for their career entry and progression upon graduation, as critical elements in balanced self-authorship. To this end, the valued role of staff mentors can be used to nurture students in this priority shift, not only during their time at ACK but also during their transitional years”.*
- *Extract from Case Study Finding 4: “To this end, from the data extracts related to activities within the ACK Award, there were 12 positive comments regarding*

meetings with mentors and therefore this support can readily be offered beyond graduation”.

- *Extract from Case Study Finding 7: “Concerning the usefulness of having a separate career goal on the Goals Action Plan (GAP) template, of the twenty responses, seventeen were in support and the remaining three were uncertain. Six participants gave full support to the proposal with one of these also referring to the value of having mentorship in the process”.*

In addition to the above Case Study Findings from Themes 1-5, specifically in relation to Theme 6, Case Study Finding 8 identified that, without any prompting, nine participants referred to mentor support and in the areas of goal setting, progress review and/or other general encouragement. One participant referred to support received in all three of these areas, three participants referred to support across two of the areas and five participants commented on support in one particular area. In total, seven participants referred to mentor support with goal setting, four with progress review and three with other general encouragement. Further, Case Study Finding 9 highlighted the extent of mentor support. In this regard, six of the seven participants who referred to mentor support with goal setting spoke positively of this assistance. Of the four participants who referred to mentor support with progress review, all used positive comments regarding this assistance. Similarly, of the three participants who referred to other general mentor support, all used positive comments. The data extracts relating to remarks by participants concerning mentors revealed no negative comments.

Taking all the above findings into consideration, and in answer to Research Question 3 concerning the role of mentors within the ACK Award, it is clear from the data extracts that participants valued the assistance they received from their mentor across the areas of goal setting, progress review and in general encouragement. In view of this respect and acknowledgement from participants, in order to further improve the usefulness of the ACK Award in promoting self-authorship, there are benefits in mentors using their trusted role to encourage participants to place greater emphasis on career planning in readiness for the step towards independent self-management at graduation, and as a further support in this transition, perhaps mentor support might continue, along with the ACK Award itself, to participants beyond graduation.

Having undertaken the above thematic analysis of the six themes to address the three research questions, the candidate will now bring together the separate findings in the following Section.

6.9 Conclusion

This Case Study was undertaken to address the three research questions:

1. Did the ACK Award program achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how?
2. Has the ACK Award assisted in meeting the career shaping aspirations of participants and, if so, how?
3. To what extent, if at all, did the presence and encouragement of a staff mentor assist participating students in clarifying and pursuing lifewide goals and, if so, how?

Research Question 1

This research question was considered as part of the results and discussion associated with Themes 1-4 in Sections 6.2 to 6.6. This particular research question and the associated thematic analysis related to self-authorship and, in this regard, self-authorship had been previously considered in Section 3.2.5 and 3.2.6. In Section 6.6, important elements associated with self-authorship were noted including:

- **The three dimensions of self-authorship: Cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal**

Case Study Finding 3 reported that during their time within the ACK Award, participants had focused more on goals related to non-career dimensions of their lives and, upon graduation, there was a radical shift. Therefore, to assist students in the transition towards independence, more encouragement is needed to critically prepare for career entry and to reflect this on the Goals Action Plan.

- **the ten positions on the path towards self-authorship from reliance on external sources for decision making, through a transition phase, to an internal or self-authorship point where the learner is confident of their own internal voice**

Case Study Findings 3 and 4 identified that the ACK Award is assisting students as they move along the self-authorship path from reliance on external sources to internal capabilities and referred to many positive comments regarding holistic student development. Case Study Finding 4 referred to student engagement and the greater enthusiasm of participants towards team and community activities than in pursuit of individual goals. Accordingly, promotion of the ACK Award should emphasise opportunities to take part in team/community activities within the program. Further, in view of positive comments by participants with regard to recognition associated with the ACK Award for such purposes as resume enhancement and eligibility for direct appointment to the Student Council, this benefit might also be used for promotional purposes. Case Study Finding 1 referred to the reality that self-authorship is not complete at the time of graduation, and since no participant continued to use any documented structure for goal planning after leaving the college, the ACK Award, or similar program, might be of value to further assist in self-authorship, particularly in the transitional years.

- **the importance of reflection**

Case Study Findings 1 and 2 indicated that participants valued reflection as part of the ACK Award as a useful process towards their goal setting and review and therefore their self-authorship.

- **critical mentoring role of teachers**

Mentorship was considered separately to address Research Question 3. However, in relation to Research Question 1 and the student journey towards self-authorship, Case Study Findings 2 and 4 confirmed that mentorship is valued by participants towards their goal setting and review and therefore their self-authorship.

Taking into account the four elements of self-authorship and Case Study Findings 1 - 4 above, as they relate to Research Question 1, the Case Study has shown that the ACK Award program is achieving its objective to assist students towards self-authorship in the following areas:

1. Development across the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Dimensions; however, more attention is needed with the Cognitive Dimension by placing greater emphasis on goals and progress review in the Goals Action Plan sections related

to academic and employability targets since participants clearly experienced major adjustments and stress during the transition from a supported lifestyle as students to self-management as a graduate;

2. Progress along the pathway towards self-authorship, from reliance on external sources to internal capability; however, since self-authorship is not complete upon graduation and in recognition of the anxiety being experienced by participants in their early years post-ACK, there are benefits in offering the ACK Award or similar program to graduates, especially in the transition period;
3. Reflection towards self-authorship; and
4. Mentorship towards self-authorship.

Research Question 2

This research question was addressed in Section 6.7 and considered whether the ACK Award has assisted in the career shaping aspirations of participants.

Case Study Finding 5 identified that the majority of participants did not place emphasis on their career shaping aspirations during their ACK Award membership. In this regard, only three participants included employability related goals from a total of 49 mentioned ACK Award goals. Further, Case Study Finding 6 revealed that only seven participants referred to employability related activities from a total 95 mentioned ACK Award activities.

It was noted in Section 6.7 that, at present, the Goals Action Plan associated with the ACK Award only has a general employability goal section and not a specific career related goal. In this regard, Case Study Finding 7, referred to strong support from participants for the inclusion of a specific career goal. However, participants also commented that students should be guided to critically consider career opportunities and not just career desires. Many participants referred to limited availability of graduate entry positions within careers and accordingly, students should be flexible in their career aspirations.

From Case Study Findings 5-7, as they relate to Research Question 2, the Case Study has shown that, in its present structure, the ACK Award program is of limited assistance in the career shaping aspirations of participants. There was strong support for the inclusion of a career-related rather than a general employability goal.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 was considered in Section 6.8 and related to the role of mentors in assisting students to clarify and pursue their lifewide goals.

Significantly, the data extracts associated with addressing Research Questions 1 and 2 included considerable and positive references by participants to the important role played by their mentor with regard to their association with the ACK Award. In this regard, Case Study Findings 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 from Themes 1-5 all included reference to mentor support.

Case Study Findings 8 and 9 referred to participant comments regarding the valued contribution of mentors in the areas of goal setting, progress review and in general encouragement associated with the ACK Award. In view of this respect and acknowledgement from participants, in order to further improve the usefulness of the ACK Award in promoting self-authorship, mentors are well positioned to use their trusted role to encourage participants to place greater emphasis on career planning in readiness for the step towards independent self-management at graduation, and as a further support in this transition, perhaps mentor support might continue, along with the ACK Award itself, to participants beyond graduation.

Accordingly, in relation to Research Question 3, staff mentors were highly valued by participants specifically with regard to support and guidance in relation to goal setting and progress review but also in general motivation and encouragement.

Research Purpose 3

Having addressed the three research questions, the Case Study Findings can now be considered in relation to the third research purpose:

- Review the ACK Award program as one formal structure that enables tertiary students to self-manage their lifewide and lifelong goal setting and progress reflection, with the support of a mentor.

From the Case Study Findings 1-4 in relation to Research Question 1, it was highlighted that although the ACK Award has supported students in their journey towards self-authorship, they remain underprepared for the transition from cloistered life as a student to self-management as a graduate. Accordingly, to further assist

students, greater emphasis is needed in goal setting and progress review in the Cognitive Dimension by more in-depth consideration of the academic and employability sections on the Goals Action Plan. In addition, in view of the stress being experienced by participants in their early graduation years, consideration should be given to offering continued participation in the ACK Award, or similar program, especially during the transitional period from college to career.

From the Case Study Findings 5-7 in relation to Research Question 2, it is evident that in its present format, the Goals Action Plan does not place sufficient emphasis on assisting students with career planning. This can be addressed by modifying the general employability section to a more specific career goal. Such an adjustment will assist students to more directly consider their future career planning. However, in the process, it was highlighted by participants that students should carefully research career opportunities to ensure that their professional desires are in areas of growing demand and not contraction.

From the Case Study Findings 8 and 9 in relation to Research Question 3, pleasingly there is valued recognition by participants with regard to the support and guidance received from their mentor. Accordingly, this trusted relationship can be used by mentors to encourage students to place greater emphasis on their career planning and to potentially continue their mentoring role to students, especially during their transitional years upon graduation.

Taking the above into consideration, with regard to the third research purpose of reviewing the ACK Award, the following summary is presented from the Case Study:

1. Participants enjoyed their experiences within the ACK Award but more so in relation to team and volunteer activities than pursuit of personal goals. This aspect can be used for future promotional purposes. However, for their future wellbeing, students should be guided to not only participate in activities that are enjoyable but also those that facilitate growth across all key dimensions of self-authorship. Accordingly, although intrapersonal and interpersonal activities are important, the cognitive dimension is critical in terms of future financial independence and therefore students should be guided to spend more time and emphasis on goals and activities related to career preparation, as covered in the academic and employability sections of the Goals Action Plan.

2. No direct significance was placed on the four-level tiered system of the Award except for its facilitation of Presidential appointment to the Student Council and/or for resume enhancement. Participants did not comment on the tiered system as a step towards lifelong learning and indeed no participant continued to use any documented process in goal setting beyond graduation. Accordingly, perhaps the ACK Award, or similar, might be offered to graduates to assist in both lifewide and lifelong planning and review particularly in the transitional years beyond their college years.
3. Further to point 1 above, the present format of the Goals Action Plan is of limited assistance to students in consideration of, and progress towards, their career aspirations. In this regard, the general employability goal should be modified to a more specific career goal to encourage students to more precisely consider their future professional direction. However, at the same time, in view of the tightening job market, students should be guided to not only consider their career desires but also potential opportunities in that field.
4. In view of the positive comments by participants in relation to guidance and support received from their mentor, and recognising the stress experienced by many during their transition from being a cloistered student to self-management as a graduate, mentors are in a trusted position to firstly guide participants during their student years to place more emphasis on their career preparation and then, beyond graduation, to continue support as needed and especially during the transitional years.

This chapter presented the results of the Case Study and associated discussion in relation to the six themes that emerged from the data extracts. The Case Study Findings were used to address the three research questions and, in turn, the third research purpose. The next chapter will bring together all the elements of this research project to present the conclusions.

CHAPTER 7 : CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

Having completed the thematic analysis and addressed the research questions in Chapter 6, this chapter will present the research conclusions with a forward focus. This chapter will highlight the limitations of the research and therefore areas for future research as well as policy, practical and research implications. In addition, this chapter will include reflections on personal learning objectives and the anticipated triple dividend to the researcher himself, the host organisation and academic research at a wider level.

7.2 Significance of the study

The title of this thesis, “The Australian College of Kuwait Award: A Work-Based Case Study of Student Self-management of Lifewide and Lifelong Learning”, was coined to reflect the research problem for investigation which is the continuing general focus on the academic transcript/vocational certificate as the primary measure of student success, despite the broader goals of education expressed by both the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century (Delors, 1996), and the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century (UNESCO, 1998). The purposes of this research project follow on and relate to consideration as to whether, in addition to the academic transcript/vocational certificate, a separate document is of benefit to graduating students as evidence of self-managed wider development associated with enrolment at a tertiary institution.

In order to successfully complete the project, the candidate initially undertook a literature review regarding the emerging role of higher education in the digital age, as well as researching existing models in practice that promote and recognise the wider development of students. With this knowledge, the candidate then undertook a case study review of one existing framework, the ACK Award, established in 2013, to nurture student self-management of lifewide learning. The three research questions associated with the case study were:

- 1) Did the ACK Award program achieve its objective to assist students towards self-authorship and, if so, how and to what degree?

- 2) Has the ACK Award assisted in meeting the career shaping aspirations of participants and, if so, how?
- 3) To what extent, if at all, did the presence and encouragement of a staff mentor assist participating students in clarifying and pursuing lifewide goals and, if so, how?

In considering the research problem and the associated research questions, there is no suggestion that formal education is in any way expected to compensate for any inadequacies in parenting or broader society support towards the nurturing of balanced, independent and engaged fledgling citizens. However, parents, communities and governments rely on educators to contribute professional expertise. The precise role of formal education should be clearly understood and agreed upon by all parties so that at graduation, students leave the campus with the underpinning capability and confidence to purposefully navigate their futures amidst increasingly uncertain economic, workplace and social environments.

The escalating challenge for governments, parents and educators is that millennials will require professional and general life skills that have not been experienced by their elders and can only be loosely predicted. COVID-19 has added a further level of complexity and it is yet to be determined how the impact of this extended pandemic will affect the future nature of many work roles, commercial, retail and general interchange. The pandemic has also highlighted that the technology already exists to radically change traditional models of education. The unanswered question is how should the formal education system look as part of the 'new normal'. Again, the recent world health crisis has proved that wide scale effective learning can take place without the physical presence of the teacher and the students together on campus.

One of the enduring arguments for face-to-face learning is the nurturing of broader social skills. Yet, if social development is a critical part of formal education, why is it not measured and reported upon? This is just one of the issues associated with the research problem concerning the lingering emphasis on the academic transcript/vocational certificate as the key report and measure of student success. How does a GPA on its own demonstrate to parents, prospective employers and the umbrella community that the graduate is ready to self-manage their future, as an engaged member of their society, amidst the pervading climate of uncertainty? The

short answer is that it doesn't and, therefore, the follow-on question directed to governments, communities, educational institutions and parents is why are the graduates themselves having to bear the consequences of failure by others to adequately nurture student self-authorship and give it a priority status as part of the student developmental process? How can local dignitaries and educational heads be satisfied that a testamur is all that is needed to assure parents, and indeed the students themselves, that the school or university has fulfilled its role? The academic transcript, by its nature, is narrow focused and prepared from an institutional perspective. It does little to empower students with the skills and confidence for their present and future lifewide journey. Too many government policy makers and educational decision makers remain indecisive rather actively bridge the void.

With the above as background, the significance of this research project is reflected in the major findings, including:

Issues associated with reporting on holistic student development

Theories associated with student development increasingly highlight the importance of shifting the focus from teaching to learning, from academic to holistic development, and from passive to active student engagement. In Chapter 3, reference was made to the early contributions by Chickering (1969) with his seven vectors of student development, followed by Kegan (1982) and Baxter Magolda (1998) with self-authorship, Astin (1984) with student involvement, and Kuh (1993) with student engagement (Literature Review Finding 1).

The problem is translating these theories into policies and practice. Educational institutions are comfortable with assessing and reporting on curriculum-based learning. For good reason, there are reservations associated with the verification and assessment of non-curricular development. Such concerns were identified during the literature review (Chapter 3, Literature Review Finding 29) and for this reason, even when initiatives have been taken to expand student reports to comment on non-curricular development, only significant and verified achievements are included (Burgess, 2012; Green & Parnell, 2017). No instances were sighted in the literature review of any widespread graduation reporting by educational institutions on progress achieved by students in the critical umbrella developmental stage of self-authorship.

Need for greater student engagement and empowerment

The literature review also referred to the need for deep learning which is “more personally relevant, and becomes part of who the student is, not just something the student has” (Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 117), and use of associated frameworks such as Personal Development Plans or PDPs (Chianese, 2012), to support reflection, and self-directed learning (Beckers et al., 2016, p. 32). There is an increasing emphasis by educational researchers for more student engagement and empowerment (Literature Review Findings 7, 8 and 21).

Widening role of education at all levels

Wider community expectations regarding the role of education at all levels have clearly shifted and will continue to change as technologies, work and social practices evolve. In this regard, the literature review made reference to the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century (Delors, 1996), and the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century (UNESCO, 1998). The former identified four pillars of education for this new millennium. The curriculum and the academic transcript/vocational certificate address the pillars of Learning to Know and Learning to Do. However, the UNESCO International Commission gave special emphasis to the pillar of Learning to Live Together as well as the key wellbeing pillar of Learning to Be. (Literature Review Findings 2). The subsequent UNESCO World Declaration on Higher Education also affirmed the importance of rounded graduates with a commitment to responsible citizenship (Literature Review Finding 3).

Lack of commonality in nurturing and reporting wider student development

In addressing the changing role of education, there have been initiatives taken at international, national and institutional levels to nurture and report on the wider development of students. However, in this regard, the literature review highlighted the associated issues of deciding which non-academic developmental areas to report on and then how to verify and objectively comment on such development (Burgess, 2012). As a result, the European Union Diploma Supplement and the United Kingdom Higher Education Achievement Report expressly state that they only include significant and verified non-academic participation (Literature Review Findings 29 and 30). Elsewhere, the USA Comprehensive Student Record model is still in

developmental stage although institutions have already introduced non-academic reports that, in some instances, include highly visual formats. However, it is still largely at the discretion of the individual institution to determine the extent, if any, of reporting on non-academic development (Literature Findings 31 and 32).

Alternative strategies to promote and recognise wider student development

To avoid the issue of verifying and measuring non-academic development, many governments, communities and institutions have adopted alternative strategies such as promoting e-portfolios and Personal Development Plans within which students can set goals, document achievements and store key evidence of learning for future academic, employment and personal objectives (Literature Review Findings 21 to 28). Selected institutions have also established optional award programs to encourage and recognise holistic student development and even self-authorship (Literature Review Finding 34). Some of these award programs incorporate a mentorship dimension. However, no award program was sighted that includes all the features of the ACK Award:

- Goal setting and regular progress review across all four pillars of learning;
- End of semester reflection on participation;
- Active involvement of approved mentor; and
- Incremental levels of award to promote lifelong learning.

Suggested improvements to ACK Award program

Specifically with regard to the ACK Award as one program that promotes optional participation by students in continued goal setting and progress reflection, the case study interviews provided the basis for a timely review of the purpose, structure and outcomes. The interviews clearly showed that participants valued the usefulness of the program as a structured means to set and subsequently reflect on progress towards lifewide goals that they considered important (Case Study Findings 1 - 4). Indeed, many acknowledged that without the program at least some of their goals were unlikely to have been attained (Case Study Finding 2). However, with regard to nurturing students towards self-authorship, a critical finding from the Case Study was the need to place greater emphasis on the Cognitive Dimension to prepare students for

the transition from relative protection during their time at college to self-managed independence upon graduation (Case Study Findings 1 and 3).

The interviews also identified that the main reasons for continuation in the program were not the goal planning and progress review framework but rather the enjoyment and enrichment received from taking part in group activities particularly to benefit the community (Case Study Finding 4).

The participants highlighted the key role played by their mentors in encouraging them to consider, select and achieve their personal goals and generally in being a source of valued advice regarding their future (Case Study Findings 8 and 9).

Although the participants considered the documentation framework useful in helping them to plan and achieve goals during their college years, none had continued with the practice beyond graduation even though many expressed concerns with regard to growing uncertainty in their professional and personal futures (Case Study Findings 1 and 7).

Of special significance was the dramatic shift in priority areas of goal setting and achievement during their student years in comparison to their current realities as recent graduates. As students, only three of the 49 goals mentioned by participants from their time in the ACK Award related to employability related targets whereas 31 out of 46 present goals, as graduates, relate to further study or career progression (Case Study Finding 3).

During the passage of the case study, the candidate was mindful of the limited scope of the research interviews and the conclusions drawn from this research project are not in any way intended to discount the important initiatives that are being undertaken by various government and other institutions to nurture the holistic development of students. Further, the case study interviews were undertaken during the prolonged COVID-19 crisis and therefore the reflections by participants may have been affected by personal and wider issues associated with the pandemic. Indeed, the COVID-19 factor is yet to be determined with regard to educational models generally in the 'new normal' environment. The forced necessity of government ministries and institutional providers to implement at least interim online learning across every level of formal education has shown to all parties that students (with parental guidance as appropriate)

can take greater responsibility for their learning. Will COVID-19 be remembered as a watershed moment in education? The timing is right and the need is evident.

7.3 Implications of the research

From the literature review in Chapter 3, it was noted that various governments and individual institutions have enacted policies and measures to nurture and recognise student self-management of lifewide learning. Therefore, as mentioned in the previous section regarding significance of this research study, in the same way any implications from this particular study are not intended to undervalue the many initiatives that have been introduced in particular countries and learning establishments. Nonetheless, the implications from this study warrant consideration in other settings according to the current state of play at policy and applied levels. At stake is the present and future wellbeing of young people who rely on governmental and educational leaders, as well as their parents, to prepare them in the best way possible to graduate as confident, focused, enriched and engaged community members. With this understanding, the implications of this research are:

7.3.1 Policy implications

Governments are entrusted by the community to enact regulations for the betterment of society. The role of education at all levels has changed and continues to evolve but for the moment at least there is a need for review of government legislation regarding reporting on student development covering all pillars of learning and across all levels of formal education. If the community expects educational systems to form rounded, capable and connected graduates, then this should be evident in government requirements concerning student reports. This would confirm to all stakeholders that the purpose of education is much more than a short-term goal of gaining the highest possible GPA but rather, demonstrating to the rest of society that at each level of formal education, the student is ready to take the next step towards focused independence and responsible citizenship.

In addition to legislation regarding institutional reporting on holistic student development, if communities consider it important for educators to nurture student self-management then legislation can also require that, incrementally, the students themselves maintain logs of activities associated with planning and monitoring of both

academic and non-academic goals. How is this possible? In all Australian States it is now a requirement for learner drivers to maintain a log of experience in different driving conditions before they are permitted to sit for their final license test. Preparing students to capably steer their future life is at a higher level and therefore it is entirely appropriate for governments to require incremental evidence of lifewide self-management experience prior to graduation from formal education.

In order to achieve the above, it may be appropriate for governments to require that phased advancement in life management skills be a core part of the curriculum and that related activity be incrementally co-assessed by the institution and the student.

7.3.2 *Practical implications*

Educational institutions deliver what they perceive are society expectations with regard to student reports. If communities and employers expect greater emphasis on rounded education, and incremental self-management, then the reporting will change accordingly. Employers should ideally circulate that graduate recruitment criteria includes evidence of self-managed learning and rounded development. While ever employers place relative emphasis on graduating GPA, this will remain the focus of energy by students and their parents.

Educational institutions are in a dilemma. Many teachers, especially the more experienced members of faculty, are themselves grappling with emerging technologies and the exponential growth of learning materials that are accessible via the internet. There is associated uncertainty as to what learning is needed by students who will live independently in environments significantly different to their parents and teachers. Further, many students have better ICT skills than their teachers and can enter class with new information about which the teacher is unfamiliar. Accordingly, the sooner that educational institutions accelerate the shift from teacher led to student managed learning the better for all concerned. If students are incrementally nurtured to set their own learning goals within the context of a wider life plan that makes sense to them, then they come to class because it is for purposes relevant to them. They are drawn, not dragged, into learning.

The teacher still has to ensure that critical elements of learning are achieved and, at the end of the semester, it is the teacher who gives the final academic grade. However,

year by year, the students can be increasingly empowered to co-assess using objective benchmarks. To not expose them to this practice is to fail in preparing them for professional reality. In this regard, within the workplace, a responsible employee wishing to advance in their career does not submit a report that they have self-assessed as below the expectations of their supervisor. Accordingly, students should be nurtured to understand that if they are not satisfied with the quality of the submission themselves then in terms of successful life self-management they have further work to do. The teacher is then seen less in a police role and more as a learning facilitator and mentor, especially as students reach higher levels of education.

Depending on each subject or course, a weighting can be given to recognise the extent to which students have successfully self-managed their learning. From a wider perspective, at the end of each semester, sitting beside the academic transcript as the official institutional evaluation of student performance, the learner prepared report on self-management of goal setting and progress review provides direct empowerment to the students themselves. Incrementally, they set their own learning and lifewide goals and manage their own progress. They are in control and the extent to which they have set and achieved challenging targets is a reflection on their growth in ability to successfully manage their future. This student prepared report does not need to be verified by the institution; however, the institution may elect to add comments particularly if the model includes involvement of a mentor, most likely but not necessarily the teacher, who can independently comment on the commitment and effort by the student towards self-authorship.

Another benefit of having a separate student prepared report is that it reduces the need for institutions to document student development outside the formal curriculum. In this regard, the literature review highlighted the difficulties experienced by institutions in verifying scope and scale of student participation in non-curricular activities. If such participation is self-reported by the student then in certain instances the institution may choose to confirm involvement at least to the extent of attendance and roles known to have been undertaken. Significantly, the initiative is with the student to obtain such verification if desired.

The research also identified challenges facing students beyond graduation with increasingly uncertain futures. There are major implications here for governments,

communities and educational providers not only in relation to facilitation of lifelong learning but also general support mechanisms especially during the early years of transition from formal education to independent life/careers. The more equipped that students are for this major step before they depart from their campus, the better the expected outcomes for all stakeholders. Additional support structures that can be put in place by educational institutions include expansion of e-portfolio frameworks to not only store learning materials for subjects but for wider goal setting, progress review, career planning and retention of key artefacts for use in job applications, as well as for any general purposes. Access to such e-portfolios can remain beyond graduation and even be available to the wider public as part of institutional Corporate Social Responsibility.

Linked to e-portfolios, if institutions have a mentorship program for students, the mentor can not only play an active support role in the development of students as they approach graduation but also in the transitional years. With the bond already established between the student and the mentor, the final step from the campus into their unfolding future is thereby not so daunting and advice is on hand as needed.

If all the above can be achieved then the ACK Award is no longer needed. However, in the meantime, the implications of the case study specifically in relation to the ACK Award and the host institution are:

Current emphasis on team-based activities

Currently, the award is more popular because of the opportunity it creates for students to be together in group projects outside the curriculum. Without diminishing the social benefits from such participation, a review is needed to consider how to strengthen other elements of the program, especially relating to the cognitive dimension of self-authorship.

Career rather than general employability goal

The fact that employability related goals were not of any significant consequence to participants during their student years but suddenly became priorities upon graduation presents the clear implication that more nurturing is required in this area. Accordingly, inclusion of a specific career goal and associated discussions between the student and their mentor would be of benefit.

Support in goal setting beyond graduation

The reality that none of the participants continued to document goal setting and progress review beyond graduation indicates that respondents did not see any lifelong relevance in the framework. Yet, some form of at least transitional support may be of benefit. This is an area for further research.

7.3.3 *Theoretical and research implications*

The body of knowledge in relation to student learning, personal development, identity theory, self-authorship and student engagement continues to unfold and expand. In the meantime, external factors such as the recent COVID-19 crisis forced governments and educational institutions to develop short term solutions that enable continued formal learning through remote means. Overnight, students and their parents were more directly involved in the management of their learning. The fact that so much learning was possible off campus during the pandemic raises the question as to how much learning should remain extra mural. Even before the pandemic, students were already immersed in digital lifestyles through which they could Google search information and communicate with each other, derive income, and buy and sell almost anything without having to leave their room.

It will be a step backwards for governments and educators to pretend that the formal post-pandemic education system should revert to previous practices. It is disappointing that it took a world health crisis to force policy makers and educational establishments to rethink the relative roles of institutions, teachers, students, parents and others in the learning process. Research is now urgently needed to consider recent developmental theories in the context of educational models for the post-pandemic era. Specifically with regard to this research project, most students and their parents now have months, if not years, of experience with at least some level of self-managing their academic learning. How can this experience be built upon as a step towards increasing self-management of both academic and wider learning? The outcomes from such research will have a broad impact on all levels of formal education and ideally reduce the need for programs such as the ACK Award, if incremental self-managed learning becomes part of government educational policy and institutional reporting.

Now that educational campuses are back to relative normalcy after the pandemic, the as yet unanswered question is to what extent the education system has evolved, along

with every other sector of industry, business and society. COVID-19 has fast tracked the digitisation of work, commerce and communication. Will education remain in its outdated structure? It was already behind in the change process and must now at least catch up. Immediate and decisive action is needed by educational researchers, government ministries and learning institutions to determine theories, policies and practices that better prepare students not just academically but holistically in the ‘new normal’ era.

7.4 Limitations of the research

In undertaking this research project and in presenting the case study findings, the candidate is aware of the limitations which are many and significant. Nonetheless, the individual experiences of graduates who participated in the ACK Award were real and have been presented as a contribution towards ongoing research concerning support by higher education institutions in the holistic development of students.

The major limitations of this study are:

Single location

This case study specifically focused on experiences of participants in the ACK Award program at the Australian College of Kuwait, a private degree level HEI located in Kuwait. Student tuition fees are relatively expensive. Accordingly, the study is limited to:

- One institution (ACK) within one country (Kuwait);
- Higher education students and therefore does not include lifewide development of primary and secondary level students and also youth who do not continue into higher education;
- Private education environment and therefore does not cover the majority of higher education students in Kuwait who attend the public Kuwait University; and
- Students who met the entry requirements for admission into the college and who therefore are from relatively affluent families or who are academically gifted. Accordingly, the study does not include students with low academic results or from lower socio-economic circumstances.

Geo-political considerations

Kuwait is an Islamic, Arab country located in the Middle East. Accordingly, the study is limited to a setting where the vast majority of students are Arab Muslims and from relatively high-income families. Although Kuwait has an elected parliament, it can be dissolved at any time by the ruling Amir and this action has been taken more than 10 times in the past 40 years. The study therefore does not take into consideration the experiences of students in other geo-political settings.

Nationality of participation

Significantly, although the vast majority of ACK students are Kuwaiti, they represent only a small percentage of participants in the ACK Award program and despite every effort by the candidate, only eight of the 20 research participants were nationals. Therefore, the findings are based more on the experiences of non-Kuwaitis and are limited accordingly.

College representation

At any one time since introduction of the ACK Award in 2013, only around 2% of the total college population (of around 3000 students) elected to take part in the program. Therefore, the study is limited to the attitudes and experiences of a small minority of volunteer students.

Period covered by study

Since the ACK Award has only been in existence since 2013, the lifewide and lifelong learning experiences of participants since their introduction to the Award are limited to a maximum of eight years up to the time of the case study in 2021.

Timing and structure of applied research

The interviews were conducted during the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the general lifestyle and wellbeing of participants was not in keeping with their normal situations. Further, due to the health crisis, the candidate was not able to conduct face-to-face interviews but rather remote conversations. Initial attempts for video online sessions were not successful due to poor connections and, consequently, the interviews were undertaken by audio contact. Therefore, the

responses by participants may have been affected both by the global health crisis and also by the limitation of purely audio telephone communication.

Prevailing uncertainty

Since 12 of the 20 participants were non-nationals, and with the increasing policy of Kuwaitisation for recruitment, there was a prevailing uncertainty regarding the ability of non-Kuwaitis to remain in the country even though for almost all it has been their only place of residency. As a result, a significant limitation of the study relates to their general attitude regarding future lifewide and lifelong learning which is more focused on the short-term and with a considerable degree of uncertainty.

7.5 Reflection on personal learning objectives

The candidate commenced this research project around the same time as he established the ACK Award in 2013. At that time he had lived in Kuwait for 9 years although, as an expatriate, he was always aware that upon completion of service there was no option to remain in the country as permanent residency is only available to the family members of Kuwaiti's. In February 2020, the candidate flew to Australia to check on one of his daughters who had a cancer operation the previous year. Two days prior to his return flight to Kuwait, the government closed its international airport due to COVID-19 and it remained closed for almost six months. This precipitated the candidate's redundancy. Accordingly, in this section, the reflections on personal learning objectives and professional development are in many areas impacted by the above major life/career changes. With this background, the candidate's reflections on each of the original learning objectives in Section 2.8, are:

- 1. Develop the candidate's professional knowledge and emotional intelligence through high level research of current theory with regard to student lifewide learning and summarise this through a literature review.*

The literature review was largely undertaken in the early stages of the research project and, to the disappointment of the candidate, although comprehensive theories, government policies and models have been developed with regard to official recognition of lifewide learning, there is little evidence of systemic uptake at a national, regional or even institutional level. Again, from the

literature review, it became apparent to the candidate that in sharp contrast to academic achievements which are generally quantifiable and comparable, accomplishments in non-curricular areas are often difficult to verify and in any event should only be measured against the personal lifewide goals of each student and not be compared to other students. Lifewide learning should be collaborative, not competitive.

From an emotional intelligence perspective, the candidate constantly had to remind himself that his own lifewide views and visions have been predominantly as a member of the baby-boomer generation and as such may not hold much relevance to the target market of students for holistic developmental programs such as the ACK Award. On the positive side, the candidate is in very regular contact with his two granddaughters and therefore has the opportunity and joy to learn from them and their mother. The candidate is therefore constantly challenged to perceive life and career from a younger age lens. This is essential when looking into the future as the candidate wishes to offer a modified version of the ACK Award to the primary school of his elder granddaughter now that she has commenced her formal education. In this regard, the candidate is confident that it can work within a primary school just as in a tertiary setting. Indeed, the Principal of the Our Lady of Good Counsel Primary School, Singapore used a simplified model across all grades for a period of eight years until her retirement in 2018.

2. *Build the candidate's critical judgment skills through contrasting the documented results of applied research undertaken during the research project with regard to programs that involve students in setting and reviewing progress towards non-curricular personal goals; thereby identifying program features that have resulted in relatively higher levels of interest and involvement by the target market.*

During the course of his research project, the candidate successfully established contact with coordinators of similar award programs and other institutional initiatives in the UK and USA. The candidate particularly acknowledges the encouraging input received from Professor Norman Jackson who founded the UK Lifewide Education Community, a not for profit social

enterprise promoting and supporting lifewide learning and personal development. The candidate also greatly valued a personal meeting and other communications with Dr Helen Chen from Stanford University, USA, who is a board member for the Association for Authentic, Experiential and Evidence-Based Learning (AAEEBL), a co-author of Documenting Learning with ePortfolios: A Guide for College Instructors, and co-executive editor of the International Journal of ePortfolio.

The candidate was inspired by the enthusiasm and vision of educators such as the above and many others who have shared emails and discussions as a result of conferences and other sources of contact.

Specifically concerning critical judgement, it is not an easy task to compare different types of programs. In this regard, each institution has their own approach and priorities with regard to promotion and recognition of lifewide learning. For instance, although there are numerous universities in the UK that offer award programs to students, as discussed in Section 3.3.20, some are predominantly focused on career preparation, some include ongoing mentor guidance, some are once off and others offer tiered levels, and some require regular reporting whilst others merely specify an end of participation submission of evidence. No award program was found that offers the spread of features associated with the ACK Award and therefore no complete comparison of parallel programs was available. It is in this light that the candidate considers this present study may be of value to others as they explore the establishment or expansion of their own student lifewide developmental programs.

3. *Improve the candidate's analytical and communication skills by evaluating the effectiveness of the Goals Action Plan and associated ACK Award as structured and supportive frameworks to assist students in setting and reviewing lifewide goals. The evaluation will include interviews with former participants in the program and subsequent analysis, review and documentation of these findings in a comprehensive document.*

NVivo software and the subsequent thematic analysis were invaluable in assisting the candidate to address the Case Study questions and he developed

new skills in both these areas. In particular, unlike quantitative research where the focus is largely on statistical analysis, this case study involved semi-structured interviews with former participants of the ACK Award and the candidate was not attempting to prove or disprove the merits of the program but rather deeply explore the individual experiences of each participant and use a qualitative approach associated with an interpretative paradigm.

The fact that the interviews were conducted during the chaos of the COVID-19 lockdown added another level of complexity as uncertainty was clearly evident across the life/career futures of the participants. One had lost his father to the pandemic and suddenly found himself not only responsible for his own children but also carer to his widowed mother. Many of the expatriate participants were nervous regarding their future employment security within Kuwait as the result of further government tightening of the Kuwaitisation policy that restricts opportunities for foreigners. Hence, the communication skills of the candidate required an even higher level of sensitivity.

4. *Extend the candidate's cultural intelligence through a comparison, using participation rates of students with the Goals Action Plan program and associated ACK Award, as to whether significant variances exist between involvement by different nationalities and genders, and document the results for potential related research in other contexts.*

In Section 4.7, the candidate noted that although over 85% of ACK students were Kuwaiti citizens, considerably less than half of students within the ACK Award were nationals. A Kuwaiti staff member explained this apparent anomaly to the candidate with the statement that in the local recruitment process, employers are only interested in the graduation GPA unless there is 'wasta' or family connections. Therefore, Kuwaiti students see little value in college pursuits outside the academic arena unless it is for a specific purpose such as to be part of a sports team. On the other hand, expatriate students are much more open to any non-academic recognition such as the ACK Award that can be added to their resume.

In Section 5.4, the candidate also noted that 55% of all participants in the ACK Award were female. Further, females represented the majority of participants

who completed each of the four levels of the Award. A future comparative study against participation rates in related award programs would be useful to determine whether this is a common trend or peculiar to the ACK Award.

General feedback from many of the female participants in the ACK Award affirmed the value of the program in creating structured and supervised opportunities for them to be involved in non-academic activities outside the home. In this regard, females from conservative Arab families are restricted in their movements away from the family home. As manager of the ACK Award program, the candidate always circulated a flyer including his contact details prior to any organised event and perhaps for this reason there was never an incident when a female participant disclosed their inability to attend due to family reasons. Nonetheless, even though ACK is a co-educational college, it was common practice for females and males to congregate in their own gender groups but they were at liberty to mix according to their individual level of comfort. In a similar way, it was perfectly normal to witness a covered female student walking hand in hand with an openly Western style peer, with neither feeling the slightest discomfort.

At public events such as presentation of certificate ceremonies, there was a seamless arrangement whereby female students and their parents/friends would either sit on one side or at the rear while male participants and their families/friends sat in front or on the opposite side. In this regard, the candidate was impressed with the relaxed manner in which such cultural issues as segregation are addressed without the need for structured planning.

5. *Strengthen the candidate's creativity and innovation skills as well as tolerance for ambiguity/adaptability by participating in conferences to network with other educators for the purposes of becoming aware of innovations in any areas of student development and reflecting as to how these may relate to the candidate's own research into self-managed lifewide learning and incorporate relevant new initiatives into future research reports.*

As part of his research into lifewide learning, the candidate attended international conferences in Singapore, Thailand, Germany, Bahrain, Paris, and locally inside Kuwait. These precipitated invitations to visit

schools/colleges in Singapore, Pakistan, Nepal, Indonesia, Dubai and Kuwait. As noted previously in this Section, this led to the introduction and expansion of the Goals Action Plan throughout the Our Lady of Good Counsel (OLGC) Primary School in Singapore in 2010 until the retirement of the Principal in 2018.

A similar program was introduced within a Dubai based Pakistani school, City Schools International, from 2010 for two years until the transfer of the Principal. Significantly, at that time, the candidate had used the title ‘Lifewide Progress Report’ for the holistic planning framework and it was the OLGC school in Singapore that requested approval to change the name to ‘Goals Action Plan’. The candidate subsequently adopted this latter terminology.

Far from being despondent at the lack of ongoing interest by other institutions in a program similar to the ACK Award, all of these experiences have enabled the candidate to reflect and look deeper into the model. Now that the candidate is resident in Australia and has granddaughters at or approaching school age, he is in a better position to use his previous learning to now explore a pilot Goals Action Plan program locally with interested teachers. In this regard, the only wasted experiences are those from which people do not learn and the candidate remains passionate regarding frameworks that offer the best possible encouragement to the next generation as they steadily map out their individual and unique futures.

7.6 Reflections on anticipated triple dividend and contribution to the body of knowledge on student development

In Section 2.9, the candidate referred to the triple dividend (Fergusson & van der Laan, 2021) associated with Professional Studies projects: to the researcher, to the host organisation, and to the wider professional and academic community. In this section, the candidate discusses the actual compared to intended dividends.

Dividend to researcher

Firstly, for the professional researcher himself, the intended individual dividend, as an empty nester at the twilight end of his career, was always going to be predominantly

intrinsic. In this regard, as a father, grandfather and educator, the candidate has a deep inner drive to contribute towards any framework to help the next generation grow holistically in a purposeful direction. Accordingly, although the candidate was made redundant prior to completion of the research project, this in no way dented his enthusiasm to undertake the case study. Indeed, it actually created the time availability needed to complete the unfinished parts without work pressures.

From a personal perspective, the prolonged energy drain associated with such a major project obviously impacts other life dimensions. A particular mental challenge is to justify the stress associated with gaining an adequate level of mastery over the non-workplace related technical aspects. In this regard, research activity in the grey area salivates the sensory glands of “professional scholars” (Fergusson, van der Laan, White, et al., 2019, p. 700), but causes various degrees of anxiety amongst “scholarly professionals” (p. 700) who usually face ongoing workplace priorities and must somehow navigate a timely path through career, learning, family and personal realities.

Dividend to the host organisation

The second intended dividend was to the host organisation, the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), in the form of a set of recommendations, based on feedback from former ACK Award participants, as to how the ACK Award can be further improved to contribute to the wider development of students.

Although the candidate is no longer employed at ACK, he remains in contact with his former associates and in particular, Dr Usameh Jamali, a board member and close friend of the principal college founder, Mr. Abdullah Al Sharhan. Dr Jamali attended all ACK Award activities and presentation ceremonies during the involvement by the candidate and remains a close family friend. Accordingly, following completion of the research project, the candidate will forward a copy of the thesis to Dr Jamali which includes all the case study findings. Of particular significance, the following Case Study Findings will be highlighted:

- Case Study Finding 3 regarding the need for more focus on participant goal setting in the cognitive dimension towards self-authorship. This is needed as most participants have experienced considerable anxiety in the adjustment

from their relatively protected life as students to the realities of self-managed independence upon graduation.

- Case Study Finding 1 concerning the possible continuation of the ACK Award or similar program to support students after graduation and particularly during the transitional period until they are comfortably established in their careers.
- Case Study Finding 7 with the proposed change of the general employability goal to a more specific career goal to encourage more focused planning and preparation for career entry. However, in the process, students be encouraged to not only carefully consider their desired career path but also prospective opportunities in this field.
- Case Study Findings 8 and 9 relating to the value placed by students on support and guidance received from their mentors. Accordingly, this respected role can be used to nurture students towards deeper reflection on career preparation and also continued support during the transitional years upon graduation.
- Case Study Finding 4 with regard to student engagement with the program and in their enthusiasm towards team and volunteer projects. Accordingly, this interest in shared activities can be used in the promotion of the ACK Award to new students.

In addition to the above specific findings, all the case study findings will be of value to ACK as evidence to the governing Kuwait Private Universities Council (PUC) that the college is proactive in the wider development of students. In this regard, within Kuwait all privately owned HEIs are only accredited for specified periods up to 5 years and for each accreditation cycle there must be evidence of structured and purposeful development in both academic and non-academic activities.

Dividend to wider professional and academic community

The third intended dividend was to the wider professional and academic community through the thesis itself and the desired contribution to the wider body of knowledge regarding the holistic development of students.

Although the literature review in Chapter 3 referred to a variety of official reports and elective award programs that encourage and recognise wider student development, no

holistic model was found that encapsulates all the dimensions associated with the ACK Award, including:

- Nomination of lifewide goals at the start of each semester/year, across all UNESCO pillars of learning;
- Regular documentation of progress;
- End of semester/year reflection on achievements to nurture self-managed learning;
- Tiered award structure over sequential levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum in the case of the ACK Award) to encourage continued participation and development of the habit of lifelong self-management of lifewide learning;
- Active support of approved mentor throughout above process; and
- Official recognition of participation by institution.

Accordingly, the candidate wishes to present this case study research as a further contribution to the body of knowledge regarding holistic student development. Further, the candidate now intends to pursue a trial of a similar model within the Australian school/college system and to continue sharing experiences internationally through academic and professional forums.

7.7 Future research and concluding comments

7.7.1 Future research

COVID-19 will be remembered as a prolonged time of personal loss and hardship. It will also be remembered as a watershed moment in the digitisation of work, commerce, learning and general lifestyle practices. Only time will reveal the extent of enduring changes across all sectors, including formal education. Although it has now been shown that entire populations can adjust to fully online learning at all levels, is mere acquisition of knowledge the role of education? Historically, an important dimension of school and higher education has been the development of social skills not only for personal but shared betterment. Team building and group activities can be effectively undertaken in a virtual environment but people live in real communities and therefore need a solid foundation to become “responsible citizens” (UNESCO, 1998, p. 3). The question can therefore be asked: “What is the role and the look of formal education at all levels, as part of the new normal”? Specifically in relation to

this research project, in the post-COVID-19 era, what are the appropriate frameworks for HEIs to nurture student self-authorship and preparation for unpredictable careers and community practices?

COVID-19 may be the catalyst but it is not the cause of widespread changes across all sectors, including education. Already, prior to the health crisis, exponential advancements in digital technologies were having seismic effects within workplaces, supplier/customer relationships and communications generally. The increasing challenge for governments, educational researchers and practitioners is to consider how to best prepare digital natives to collectively, responsibly and sustainably thrive amidst escalating change. Meanwhile, students have instant personal access to information from anywhere and are often more competent with digital technology and associated search functions than their teachers.

In view of the above, and based on the findings from this research project, the candidate presents the following areas for further research:

Goal setting support to alumni

Participants in the case study interviews clearly valued the existence of a structured framework to set and review progress towards lifewide goals. However, only one had used a documented approach prior to involvement in the ACK Award and none continued to document their goal setting beyond the award. Is this because the award is seen as a short-term exercise with no continuing relevance beyond graduation? Further research is needed to investigate whether a goal-setting framework such as the ACK Award can be nurtured within formal education that will also be useful to participants as alumni.

Frameworks to support lifelong learning for alumni

Also in relation to the above, most case study participants, as graduates, had current priority goals for continuing education. It is now acknowledged that workers have to self-manage their life/careers in a purposeful direction that makes sense to them. Accordingly, further research is needed to consider seamless ongoing support to graduates not just in relation to frameworks for goal setting and review but also mentor guidance along the way and especially during the transitional years.

Mentorship role of teachers towards self-authorship

Since lifewide mentorship by teachers outside the curriculum was esteemed by many participants within the ACK Award, further research is needed to consider how teachers generally can play a greater role in guiding all students, not just optional award participants, on an individual basis towards self-authorship.

Female opportunities especially in developing countries

Presently 55% of all participants in the ACK Award are female. A future comparative study against participation rates in related award programs would be useful to determine whether this is a general trend, and particularly in the context of creating better learning and developmental opportunities for females in developing countries.

Role of higher education and student reports on learning to live together

One of the Case Study Findings (Finding 4) related to the value of participation in team and volunteer projects. Accordingly, especially with increased time spent in virtual rather than physical communications, further research is needed to consider the role of higher education in the development of social skills and community enrichment as part of ‘Learning to Live Together’ and the recognition thereof in student reports. In this latter regard, if governments and communities now rely on higher education to nurture both scholastic advancement and ‘responsible citizenship’, then both must be seen as key areas of development and reported on as such. Since the academic transcript remains the primary focus of students, parents, teachers and prospective employers, further research is needed with regard to graduation documents to report on holistic development not just academic achievement.

Frameworks in nurturing student self-authorship

In addressing the above, the candidate is aware of the dilemmas faced by governments, educational researchers and practitioners in preparing students for unpredictable futures. Accordingly, further research is needed towards incremental self-reporting by students of their journey towards self-authorship. It is their future and it is one they will have to take full responsibility for upon graduation. Long after students have forgotten the technical content of classes and programs, they will benefit from the skills they acquired in self-authorship.

7.7.2 *Concluding comments*

Reflecting on all the above sections within this chapter, the conclusions from this research project are:

Greater involvement of students in lifewide goal setting and review

Digital natives will live and work in different environments to their elders. On the positive side, they will have instant personal access to information from anywhere and can communicate, work, transact and learn online without having to leave home. On the challenging side, their future careers and general lifestyles cannot be anticipated beyond the short term and as a result they will have to continue learning throughout their lives in order to secure ongoing income. Therefore, governments and educators are faced with the dilemma of preparing the next generation for medium term careers and lifestyles that cannot yet be defined.

Everyone knows that the role of education must change, but change to what? How long will any new model remain relevant? The solution to this predicament is to shift the focus from the institutional educational process to the person, the student. Instead of trying to decide what is most needed as an educational product to hand to the graduate as the pre-requisite for their future, shift the focus to the person and the self-management framework they will need, throughout their futures, to capably filter all the variables that come into their lives, process these against their own determined set of values, priorities and purposes, and then make ongoing adjustments as needed to be independent and engaged members of their communities. By way of analogy, it is pointless handing learners a certificate that confirms they know everything about driving a car if they have never experienced sitting behind the wheel, under guidance during their training, on the open road. Accordingly, a major conclusion from this research project is that policy makers and educational practitioners should consider changes to educational models from an emphasis on what students need to know to an incremental capacity for applied self-authorship encompassing:

- Ability to access and objectively filter information from multiple sources;
- Interpret new information and experiences towards their unfolding set of values and life purposes; and

- Develop fluid life/career plans with the expectation that throughout their future there will be external and internal factors that require ongoing self-management within shared work, social and family settings.

The academic transcript should no longer be regarded as the prized outcome from any level of formal education. Rather, governments, employers, communities and parents should collectively affirm the critical importance of an equally valued holistic report, including incremental contributions by the students themselves, that documents progress in their journey towards self-authorship.

Just as communities have a right and a need to expect that driving license assessors confirm the ability of a learner driver to responsibly control the wheel on the open road, in no less manner, societies have a right and a need to expect that educational assessors confirm that learners have been given the foundations to responsibly control their own life wheel beyond graduation, in the course of living harmoniously with others. Accordingly, just as a learner driver now has to present a log of supervised driving experience before their final test, students within formal education should be required to present a log of their incremental experience in mentored self-authorship.

Greater emphasis on teachers as mentors

As a flow on from the above conclusion, governments and educational institutions need to consider changes in the whole focus of education to more active involvement by students in all aspects of learning. Already, students can access vast learning materials without the presence of a teacher. Indeed, many students are more capable of digitally researching new information than their educators. This is not to discount the critical involvement of teachers, but rather a call to review the nature of their role. In this regard, an important conclusion from the case study is the high value placed by students on their teacher being their mentor.

Students can access most information for themselves and need to be constantly challenged so that their time spent with digital technologies is used as productively as possible. What they lack is the lived experiences of their teachers and therefore a conclusion from this research is that more importance should be placed on mentoring and learning facilitation by educational institutions. This mentorship role becomes increasingly important as students progress through their formal education and ideally

take increasing control of their learning management. Mentorship can easily be incorporated into self-authorship applied models and, as part of this, mentors can add comments onto student Personal Development Plans, e-portfolios, Goals Action Plans or other hardcopy/electronic resources used to promote student self-management.

Importance of shared learning for development of social skills

Although team projects can be undertaken online just as easily as in class, one of the unexpected findings from the case study was the high value placed by students on participation in team-based activities and in volunteer community projects. In this nascent era of social media, 'virtual' friends and individualisation, it is significant that case study participants highlighted the enrichment they received from physically being with their friends and especially in helping others. Therefore, a further conclusion from this research project is that although people now have the capacity to do more and more online and alone, an important role of education is to bring fledgling community members together to develop their social skills and at the same time nurture practical means by which they can edify their own life by assisting others. Planning and taking part in these activities can then become part of their self-authorship process and be recognised as such in graduation reports.

Mentorship support in post-graduation transition

Given that many of the case study participants expressed concern, as young graduates, regarding major uncertainties in their future, another conclusion of this research project is that nurturing of self-authorship during formal education should continue to be available even beyond graduation whilst ever there is a benefit to the student. In this regard, if mentorship programs already exist, then the support mechanism can remain active and the mentor seamlessly maintain at least initial contact beyond graduation until such time as it becomes evident the mentee is confident with their life transition.

Educational institutions as learning hubs not silos as part of lifelong learning

Related to the above, recognising that the majority of the case study participants identified the need beyond graduation for further study, a conclusion from the research is that formal education providers should be seen more and more as learning hubs and not silos. Ongoing life/learning/career advice and programs are a further means by

which educational providers can offer continuing support not only to graduating students and alumni but even to wider community members.

In the end, this research project is about people, not a product or process. Young students have their future ahead of them, as uncertain and as exciting as it may be. To merely present them with an academic transcript/vocational certificate upon graduation is not the license they need to successfully manage their early life/careers. Yet, that is what they are currently led to believe is the best way to prepare for their future. Graduates require guidance in how to purposefully map out a flexible future that continues to have meaning even when everything around them is constantly changing. The ACK Award was designed for this purpose but self-managed, holistic student development should not just be encouraged by institutions through optional programs but be front and centre of the whole of campus ethos.

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APPENDIX A: ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) Example of Completed Form

Student.....Ahmad Al X..... ACK ID. 130485 Semester..... Fall 2017

Complete the following form and give to your ACK Award Mentor at the end of the two semesters if you wish to obtain ACK Award. To be eligible for the Award you must also attach a copy of your statement of results to show that you have completed all your academic units.

Academic Goal for Semester. Targeted semester GPA3.00..... Actual semester GPA.3.05.....

Employability activities (You must spend at least 10 hours in total of your own time during two semesters)		Community/Environment activities (20-30 hours in total of your own time during two semesters depending on level of Award)		Other personal development (You must spend on average two hours each week on the nominated 'other' personal development)		Mentor initial and date
Proposed activity	Details of activity and time(s) spent	Proposed activity	Details of activity and time(s) spent	Proposed activity	Details of activity and time(s) spent	
Attend guest speaker programs and field trips through ACK		Be part of ACK beach clean-up day on Saturday 14 December		To learn playing guitar		
Progress as at 30/ 09 / 2017	On 25 September attended talk about ACK Award in auditorium from 1pm to 2pm	Progress as at 30/ 09 / 2017	Attended information meeting on 17 September from 1pm to 2pm about 2017 ACK beach clean-up project	Progress as at 30/ 09 / 2017	Met up with music group on 16 Sept and went shopping to buy a guitar and learning materials	E. Al Y 30/9
Progress as at 31/ 10 / 2017	On 25 October attended talk by guest speaker from NBK in Auditorium from 1pm to 2pm	Progress as at 31/ 10 / 2017	Attended organising meeting on 12 Oct from 1pm to 2pm and agreed to design poster	Progress as at 31/ 10 / 2017	Learnt E, G and C chords but slow	E. Al Y 31/10

APPENDIX A: ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) Example of Completed Form

Progress as at 30 / 11 / 2017	On 23 November attended seminar on recruitment held by KOC in Auditorium from 2pm to 4pm	Progress as at 30 / 11 / 2017	Attended organising meeting on 15 November from 1pm to 2pm and showed draft poster. Also spent 4 hours working on poster	Progress as at 30 / 11 / 2017	Could play E, G and C chords without looking at guitar	E. Al Y 30/11
Progress as at 31 / 12 / 2017	Participated in field trip to Zain call centre on 16 Dec to talk with HR manager about training from 1pm to 4pm	Progress as at 31 / 12 / 2017	Participated in ACK Beach Clean Up day from 9am to 3pm at Salmiya Beach	Progress as at 31 / 12 / 2017	Can play my first song slowly using these chords	E. Al Y 31/12

End of first semester sign off and reflection						
Who can confirm the above information?	Name: Attendance sheets Phone or email: Registration Unit	Who can confirm the above information	Name: Mr Brian Phone or email: 96777777	Who can confirm the above information	Name: Mentor, Mr Easa Phone or email: 96969696	Mentor initial and date
End of first semester reflection on achievements and usefulness of GAP goal setting framework (attach extra sheet if necessary) <u>Employability activities.</u> I really enjoyed the field trip to the Zain call centre to see how it works and to speak with the HR manager. It gave me a good understanding of the pressures of working in a call centre and also the incentives to work hard, get bonuses and promotions. <u>Community/environmental activities.</u> At the beginning I only joined the ACK Beach Clean Up team because my friend was in this project. But I like designing posters and so when they needed someone to help come up with posters to put around the college to advertise the clean-up I was very happy to spend some time doing this. On the day of the beach clean-up it was great to be part of a team with other students. I						E. Al Y 2/1

APPENDIX A: **ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) Example of Completed Form**

was really annoyed when I found needles on the beach. That is just stupid and dangerous. It was good that the newspapers were there and that our instructors showed them the needles and spoke about how dangerous it is for children. I am going to design a poster about this and my Mentor said he will help me to put it up around the college. After the clean-up we had a party and a barbeque on the beach and it was great fun.

Other personal development.

I have always wanted to learn the guitar and finally I have decided to make a start. My ACK Award Mentor, Mr Easa, is very good at music and helped me to decide the best guitar for me and also gave me some books to help me learn. Our Mentor group are all interested in music and we decided to meet once a week at the college just to practice together. I am not the only one starting from the beginning which is good and I like getting encouragement from others. So far, I have learnt three important chords and can now play a simple song SLOWLY. We are talking about an end of year concert and it will be fun to work towards that next semester.

GAP program.

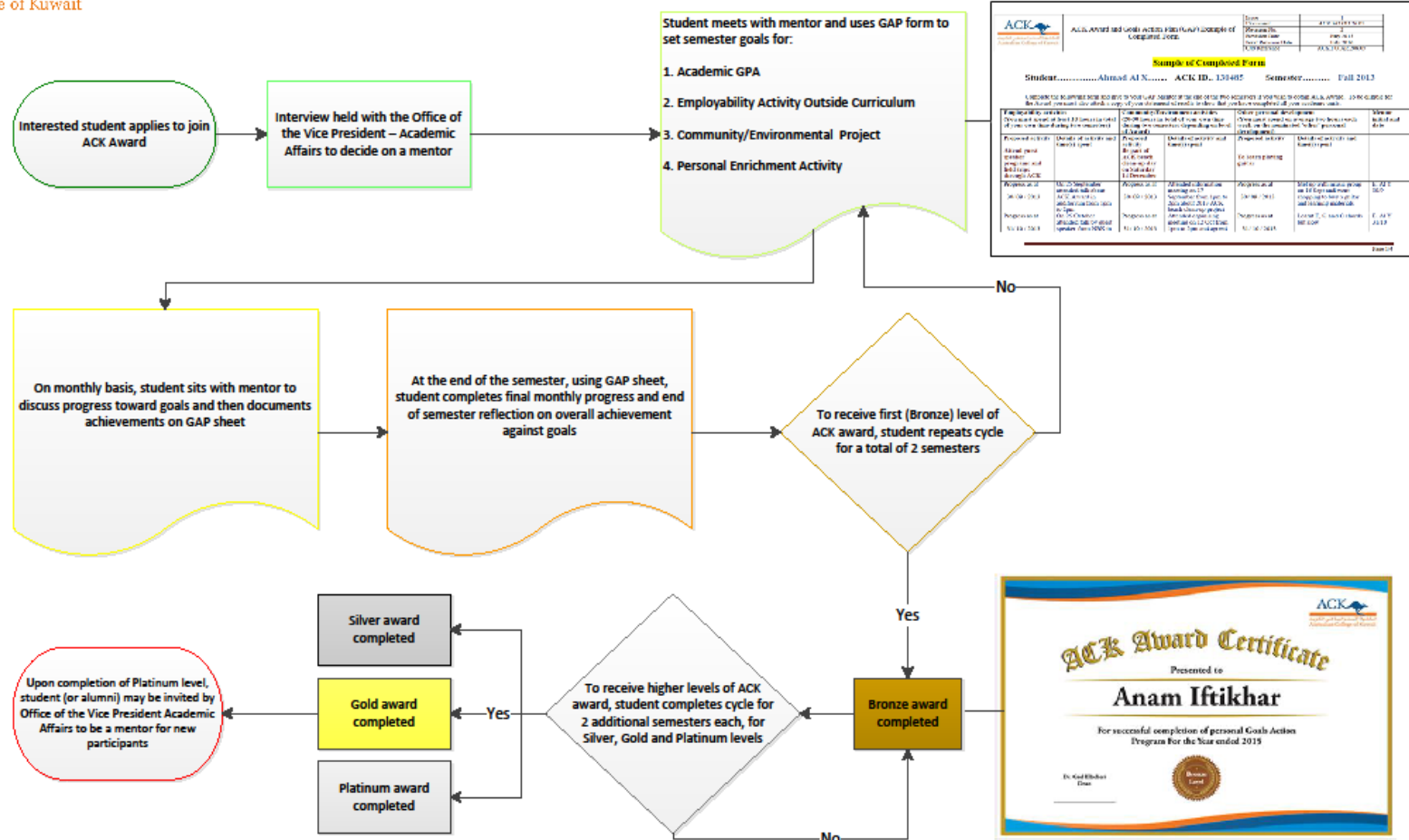
I am really glad that I have joined the ACK Award program. I find it is making me do the things that I wanted to do before but never really organised myself to do.

Student Signature...Ahmad Al X..... Date2/1/2018..... (hand copy to ACK Award Mentor by last day of semester)


APPENDIX B: Flowchart of Process to Complete ACK Award

2019

ACK Award Process for Completion



APPENDIX C: ACK Policy and Procedure for ACK Award

	ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) Policy and Procedure	Issue	1
		Document	ACK.PLR.OD.26
		Revision No.	3
		Revision Date	November 2016
		Next Revision Date	November 2017
		Old Reference	ACK.PL.AR.208

Approvals


Prepared by : Senior Manager –Office of the Dean
 Reviewed by : Associate Dean- Curriculum and Academic Support
 QMR : Director - Quality Management
 Approved by : Dean
 Chief Executive Officer
 Targeted Audience : ACK Staff
 ACK Students
 ACK Alumni who have participated in ACK Award

Original Issue Effective Date : July 2015
 Current Revision Effective Date : November 2016

Note 1: This controlled document once approved; it will be digitally signed by the approver.

Note 2: The current official version of this procedure is maintained on the Australian College of Kuwait portal and downloading and printing of this procedure will produce an uncontrolled copy which may not be current.

APPENDIX C: ACK Policy and Procedure for ACK Award

 الكلية الامتيرالية في الكويت Australian College of Kuwait	ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) Policy and Procedure	Issue	1
		Document	ACK.PLR.OD.26
		Revision No.	3
		Revision Date	November 2016
		Next Revision Date	November 2017
		Old Reference	ACK.PL.AR.208


Document Amendment Record

Date of Amendment	Memo Ref. No.	Summary of Amendment	Current Rev. No.	Edited By	Signed off By
19 April 2015	Email from Senior Manager –Office of the Dean to the Academic Policies Controller on 7 June 2015	Transfer of function to Office of Dean and change of Policy Title	2	Senior Manager –Office of the Dean	CEO
April 2016	Email from Senior Manager – Office of the Dean to the Academic Policies Controller April 2015	Merging of Policy ACK Award and Goals Action Plan Policy ACK.PL.OD.26 and related Procedure ACK.PR.AR.208 into a combined Policy and Procedure ACK Award and Goals Action Plan ACK.PLR.OD.26. Section 7 introduced.	3	Senior Manager –Office of the Dean	CEO

* Minor Change

** Major Change

APPENDIX C: ACK Policy and Procedure for ACK Award

	ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) Policy and Procedure	Issue	1
		Document	ACK.PL.R.OD.26
		Revision No.	3
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		Old Reference	ACK.PL.AR.208

1. PURPOSE

The ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) are frameworks to encourage and recognize student personal goal setting and subsequent achievement.

2. SCOPE

This policy and procedure applies to ACK award for ACK students who were able to achieve their personal goals.

3. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 ISO 9000:2005 International Standard "Quality Management Systems Fundamentals and Vocabulary".
- 3.2 ISO 9001:2008 International Standard "Quality Management Systems Requirements".
- 3.3 "Control of Documents and Records" procedure NO. (ACK.PR.QM.001).
- 3.4 Student Handbook.

4. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS


- 4.1 Goals Action Program (GAP): is a structured system using a template for guidance in setting personal goals and recording subsequent progress.
- 4.2 ACK Award: is a certificate, at various levels, to confirm active participation in ACK Goals Action Program (GAP) as specified below:
 - ACK Award Bronze level: is a certificate confirming participation in ACK GAP program for one year.
 - ACK Award Silver level: is a certificate confirming participation in ACK GAP program for two years.
 - ACK Award Gold level: is a certificate confirming participation in ACK GAP program for three years.
 - ACK Award Platinum level: is a certificate confirming participation in ACK GAP program for four years.
 - ACK Award Mentor level: is a certificate confirming participation in ACK GAP program as a GAP Mentor for one year.
- 4.3 ACK Award Mentor: is a person approved by the Dean to mentor a student within the ACK Award Program.
- 4.4 Year: is interpreted as two full consecutive semesters which may include a full summer semester.

5. OWNERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

5.1 Ownership

The owner of this Policy and its related processes is the Dean.

APPENDIX C: ACK Policy and Procedure for ACK Award

	ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) Policy and Procedure	Issue	1
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5.2 Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the Senior Manager- Office of the Dean to ensure that all personnel are engaged in the process understand and conform to this policy and its related documents.

5.3 Authority

The Chief Executive Officer will approve all changes and authorize the issuance of new revisions of this policy, in accordance with "Control of Documents and Records" procedure NO. (ACK.PR.QM.001).

6. POLICY STATEMENT

6.1 Any registered student at ACK is able to participate in the ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP).

6.2 To receive ACK Award at any level, a participating student must:

- Complete all units undertaken during the period of two consecutive full semesters;
- Use the GAP template (ACK.FO.OD.26.02) to set goals at the start of each semester and then record progress at monthly intervals during the semester;
- Participate in a minimum of 10 hours employability related activities outside normal class times;
- Contribute the required number of hours in community or environmental projects (20 hours for bronze level, 25 hours for silver level and 30 hours for gold and platinum levels);
- Spend on average 2 hours each week on nominated personal development activities such as sport, music, photography, etc.;
- Complete an interim reflection on the GAP form at the end of the first semester and a final reflection at the end of the second semester of participation; and
- Sign the declaration at the end of the GAP form at the completion of participation over a two semester period.


The ACK Award mentor must also separately confirm (using the ACK Award Mentor Declaration- ACK form number ACK.FO.OD.26.03) that the student has demonstrated a commitment towards ACK Award during the two full consecutive semesters.

6.3 Levels of ACK Award

There are four levels of ACK Award for students and also special ACK Awards for ACK Award mentors as follows:

- Bronze level for first year of successful participation in ACK GAP program;
- Silver level for second year of successful participation in ACK GAP program;
- Gold level for third year of successful participation in ACK GAP program;

APPENDIX C: ACK Policy and Procedure for ACK Award


 الكلية الأسترالية في الكويت Australian College of Kuwait	ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) Policy and Procedure	Issue	1
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- Platinum level for fourth year of successful participation in ACK GAP program;
- Mentor level for mentors with ACK Award program for one year; and
- Mentor re-award for mentors with ACK Award program for more than one year.

7. PROCEDURE STATEMENT

- 7.1 Any existing student may apply through the Senior Manager- Office of the Dean to join ACK Award program. All applications will be approved subject to the student submitting the ACK Award Application Form (ACK.FO.OD.26.01) by the end of week 4 of the first semester of participation in ACK Award program.
- 7.2 The Senior Manager- Office of the Dean will contact students to notify acceptance in the ACK Award and to arrange for the student to complete the ACK Goals Action Program (GAP) Form (ACK.FO.OD.26.02) and to discuss appointment of an ACK Award mentor.
- 7.3 The participating student should arrange to meet with the appointed ACK Award mentor and use the Goals Action Program (GAP) Form (ACK.FO.OD.26.02) to document personal goals for the semester towards:
- 7.3.1 employability enhancement;
 - 7.3.2 community/environmental participation; and
 - 7.3.3 'Other' personal development.
- 7.4 During the semester, the participating student and the ACK Award mentor meet on a monthly basis during which time the student should record progress towards personal goals on the Goals Action Program (GAP) Form (ACK.FO.OD.26.02). The ACK Award mentor should initial the student entry to confirm that the progress update was undertaken month by month.
- 7.5 At the end of the first semester, complete the reflection section on the Goals Action Program (GAP) Form (ACK.FO.OD.26.02) and arrange to meet with the ACK Award mentor who should also sign this section.
- 7.6 At the start of the following semester, the participating student should meet again with the ACK Award mentor and undertake the same process using the Goals Action Program (GAP) Form (ACK.FO.OD.26.02) to initially set goals for the semester and then meet with the ACK Award mentor on a monthly basis during the semester to record progress.
- 7.7 At the end of the second semester of participation, complete the reflection section on the Goals Action Program (GAP) Form

APPENDIX C: ACK Policy and Procedure for ACK Award

	ACK Award and Goals Action Program (GAP) Policy and Procedure	Issue	1
		Document	ACK.PLR.OD.26
		Revision No.	3
		Revision Date	November 2016
		Next Revision Date	November 2017
		Old Reference	ACK.PL.AR.208

(ACK.FO.OD.26.02) and arrange to meet with the ACK Award mentor who should also sign this section.

7.8 Having completed two full semesters in the ACK Award program, the participating student is eligible for the first or Bronze level certificate for the ACK Award. Provided the ACK Award mentor is satisfied with the participation by the student within the ACK Award program, the ACK Award mentor completes the ACK Award End of Year Mentor Declaration (ACK.FO.OD.26.03) and submits to the Office of the Dean.

7.9 Upon receipt of the ACK Award End of Year Mentor Declaration (ACK.FO.OD.26.03), the Senior Manager Office of the Dean will review the document and arrange for issuance of the ACK Award Certificate.

7.10 Students may elect to continue participation in the ACK Award program and use the Goals Action Program (GAP) Form (ACK.FO.OD.26.02) each semester to document goal setting, progress reporting and end of semester reflection with the guidance of the ACK Award mentor. Upon completion of each further two semesters of participation, the ACK Award mentor completes the ACK Award End of Year Mentor Declaration (ACK.FO.OD.26.03) and submits to the Office of the Dean in order for the participating student to receive higher levels of ACK Award as prescribed in Section 6.3.

7.11 Upon receipt of any subsequent ACK Award End of Year Mentor Declaration (ACK.FO.OD.26.03), the Senior Manager Office of the Dean will review the document and arrange for issuance of the appropriate level of the ACK Award Certificate.

8. EVIDENCE RECORDS

Records will be filed by the record owner and will be maintained as evidence of conformance. Hardcopy records will be maintained for a minimum period of 5 years. Softcopy records to be retained permanently.

9. ATTACHMENTS

9.1 ACK Award Application to Participate Form (ACK.FO.OD.26.01)

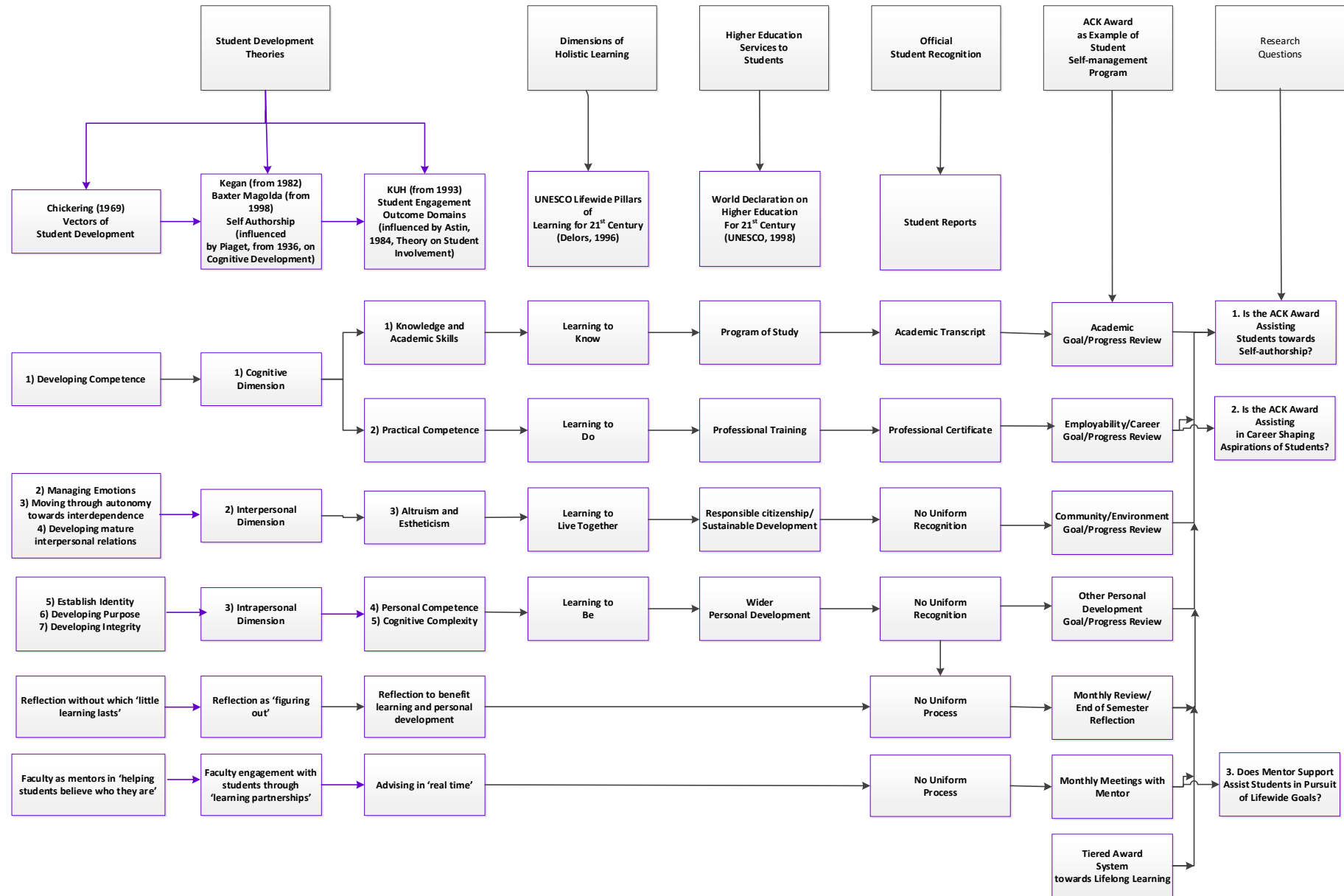
9.2 ACK Goals Action Program (GAP) Form (ACK.FO.OD.26.02)

9.3 ACK Award End of Year Mentor Declaration (ACK.FO.OD.26.03).

9.4 ACK Award Requirements (ACK.FO.OD.26.04)

9.5 ACK Award Program Sample of Completed Goals Action Plan (GAP) Form (ACK.FO.OD.26.05)

APPENDIX D: Cross-mapping of ACK Award against Student Development Theories



APPENDIX E: Code Groupings (CG) in Determining Themes

Code Groupings from Codes Allocated from Data Extracts

CG	Heading
CG1	Pre-ACK Award Goal Setting
CG2	Structured Goal Setting
CG3	Family/Health/Wellbeing
CG4	General Benefits Goal Setting
CG5	Learning to Know Goal Setting
CG6	Learning to Do Goal Setting
CG7	Learning to Live Together Goals
CG8	Learning to Be Goal Setting
CG9	Individual Activities
CG10	Team Activities
CG11	Volunteer Activities
CG12	Meetings with Mentor
CG13	Tiered Levels of ACK Award
CG14	Recognition from Activities
CG15	Future Goal of Study
CG16	Future Goal re. Employment
CG17	Future Goals, Other
CG18	Current Employment
CG19	Mentor Goal Support
CG20	Mentor Progress Support
CG21	Mentor Motivation Support
CG22	Mentor Other Support
CG23	Other Positive Comments
CG24	Other Negative Comments
CG25	Future Career Goal Comments