University of Southern Queensland

VARIATIONS IN ENABLING EDUCATORS’ ACADEMIC IDENTITIES: A PHENOMENOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ENABLING EDUCATORS’ EXPERIENCES IN PATHWAY PROGRAMS

A Thesis submitted by

Russell Crank, M Ed Stud

For the award of

Doctor of Philosophy

2022

ABSTRACT

Enabling Educators are important stakeholders in widening university participation. However, little is known about these academics, a knowledge gap that contributes to their marginalisation and lack of recognition in higher education. This thesis uses a phenomenographic study of variations in Enabling Educators' academic identities to explore their experiences and understandings of working in pathway programs. Data was collected via 31 open-ended questionnaires and 14 semi-structured interviews with Enabling Educators across the sector. Data analysis generated five qualitatively distinct variations in Enabling Educator Identity (EEI): *equity advocate*, *student academic developer*, *empowerer*, *carer* and *educator*. Individually, each variation in EEI represents a critical higher education strategy that Enabling Educators contribute to pathway programs. Collectively, the five variations in EEI represent a comprehensive, holistic response to widening university participation. The study further generated a description of Enabling Educators as *pathway academics who are student-focused educators teaching non-traditional students essential academic capabilities to improve equity in university participation*. The study made several recommendations regarding the identities and work of Enabling Educators. Firstly, Enabling Educators be afforded greater recognition and validation as academics. Secondly, Enabling Educators' workloads require adjustment to reflect the time intensity and emotional burden of working in pathway programs. Thirdly, greater support be afforded to developing research and a research agenda in enabling education that explores enabling pedagogies and curriculum. Finally, that the funding, recognition and support of pathway programs be prioritised and continued.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I Russell Crank declare that the PhD Thesis entitled *Variations in enabling educators' academic identities: A phenomenographic study of enabling educators' experiences in pathway programs* 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.

Date:13th September 2022

Endorsed by:

Associate Professor Ann Dashwood
Principal Supervisor

Dr Warren Midgely
Associate Supervisor

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been supported and made possible by the contributions of many people. While there are too many to thank everyone individually, I particularly want to thank the following people.

Firstly, my greatest thanks and gratitude are to my family. Much of the time taken to research and write was stolen from them, and I appreciate their support and grace with my absences and late nights. I am looking forward to life together 'post PhD.'

Next, it is no exaggeration to say that this research and thesis would not have been possible without the essential advice and personal support of my supervisors, Associate Professor Ann Dashwood and Dr Warren Midgely. This thesis represents a journey in becoming a researcher and Ann and Warren have been experienced guides who have offered direction, wise council and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to express gratitude to the study's participants and to the Enabling Educators at the University of Southern Queensland College. I have been inspired by your work and stories, and am grateful for your collegial acceptance as a sessional academic and researcher. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the University of Southern Queensland, who have been a constant source of advice and encouragement, my managers who have approved and allowed me time for study assistance and Laura Black for proofreading in the final stages of my thesis preparation.

This research has been supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT I
CERTIFICATION OF THESIS II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS III
TABLE OF CONTENTS IV
LIST OF TABLES X
LIST OF FIGURES XI
GLOSSARY XIII
NOTES REGARDING TERMINOLOGY XIV
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Context to the study 1
1.2 The research problem 5
1.3 The research questions 5
1.4 The significance of the study 8
1.5 Scope and limitations 9
1.6 The structure of the thesis 11
1.7 Conclusion 13
CHAPTER 2: EQUITY, WIDENING UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION AND THE ROLE OF ENABLING EDUCATORS 14
2.1 What is equity and why does it matter? 14
2.1.1 Merit-based concepts of equity 15
2.1.2 Proportional or representative concepts of equity 17
2.1.3 Active inclusion concepts of equity 18
2.2 Concepts of widening participation 19
2.2.1 Massification in the international context 22
2.2.2 Demand driven systems in the Australian context 26
2.2.3 Equity groups in the Australian context 28
2.3 If access and support, what support? 32
2.4 The role of Enabling Educators and enabling education 37
2.5 Conclusion 44

CHAPTER 3: ENABLING EDUCATORS AND ACADEMIC IDENTITY .. 46
3.1 Positioning identity ... 47
3.1.1 The self and identity ... 48
3.1.2 Psychological and sociological constructs of identity . 51
3.1.3 A phenomenographic framework for studying identity ... 64
3.2 Towards a study of Enabling Educator Identity (EEI) ... 68
3.2.1 Concepts of professional identity ... 68
3.2.2 Academics' professional identities ... 73
3.2.3 The value of understanding Enabling Educator Identity (EEI) ... 75
3.3 Conclusion ... 77
CHAPTER 4: PHENOMENOGRAPHY AS A RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY: VARIATIONS IN WAYS OF KNOWING ... 79
4.1 History and branches of phenomenography ... 80
4.2 Phenomenography as a philosophical framework ... 85
4.2.1 Phenomenography and phenomenology ... 85
4.2.2 Ontological, epistemological and axiological foundations ... 88
4.2.3 The structure of awareness ... 94
4.2.4 The outcome space ... 97
4.3 Various criticisms of phenomenography ... 98
4.4 Phenomenography's contribution to this research. ... 101
4.5 Conclusion ... 104
CHAPTER 5: PHENOMENOGRAPHIC RESEARCH METHODOLOGY . 106
5.1 Phenomenographic research methodology ... 110
5.2 Trustworthiness in phenomenographic research ... 116
5.3 Research methods: Implementation of methodology . 125
5.3.1 Ethics and ethical considerations ... 126
5.3.2 Data collection ... 127
5.3.3 Data analysis ... 138

5.4 Conclusion 147
CHAPTER 6: OUTCOME SPACE 148
6.1 Generating the outcome space 150
6.2 The outcome space and comprising descriptive categories 157
6.3 Conclusion 160
CHAPTER 7: WORK AS EQUITY IN UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION (*EQUITY*) 162
7.1 Overview of the descriptive category....................... 162
7.2 The content of work as equity in university participation (*equity*).. 163
7.3 Themes 167
7.3.1 Theme 1: Principles of social justice 167
7.3.2 Theme 2: Access for non-traditional students 168
7.3.3 Theme 3: Inclusivity of diverse students 170
7.4 The process of work as equity in university participation (*equity*).. 172
7.5 The act of equity 173
7.6 The result of equity... 175
7.7 External horizon 177
7.8 Conclusion 181
CHAPTER 8: WORK AS STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT (*STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT*).................................. 182
8.1 Overview of the descriptive category....................... 182
8.2 The content of work as student academic development (*student academic development*)....................... 184
8.3 Themes 187
8.3.1 Theme 1: Development of student academic capabilities 188
8.3.2 Theme 2: Acculturation into university culture 189
8.3.3 Theme 3: Development of a student identity 191

8.4 The process of work as student academic development (*student academic development*)....................... 194
8.4.1 The act of student academic development............ 195
8.4.2 The result of student academic development......... 198
8.5 External horizon 200
8.6 Conclusion 202
CHAPTER 9: WORK AS STUDENT EMPOWERMENT (*STUDENT EMPOWERMENT*)..203
9.1 Overview of the descriptive category...................... 203
9.2 The content of work as student empowerment (*student empowerment*) 205
9.3 Themes 207
9.3.1 Theme 1: Empowerment as positioning 208
9.3.2 Theme 2: Empowerment as learning experiences... 210
9.4 The process of work as student empowerment (*student empowerment*).................................. 213
9.4.1 The act of student empowerment........................ 213
9.4.2 The result of student empowerment 215
9.5 External horizon 218
9.6 Conclusion 220
CHAPTER 10: WORK AS STUDENT CARE (*STUDENT CARE*)........222
10.1 Overview of the descriptive category...................... 222
10.2 The content of work as student care (*student care*) .. 224
10.3 Themes 228
10.3.1 Theme 1: Empathy 228
10.3.2 Theme 2: Management of stress and self-confidence 230
10.4 The process of work as student care (*student care*) .. 232
10.4.1 The act of student care 233
10.4.2 The result of student care 236
10.5 External horizon 238
10.6 Conclusion 241

CHAPTER 11: QUALITY LEARNING AND TEACHING (*LEARNING AND TEACHING*) 242
11.1 Overview of the descriptive category....................... 242
11.2 The content of work as quality learning and teaching (*learning and teaching*) 243
11.3 Themes 247
11.3.1 Theme 1: Facilitation of student learning 247
11.3.2 Theme 2: Development of quality curriculum 249
11.4 The process of work as quality learning and teaching (*learning and teaching*) 250
11.4.1 The act of learning and teaching 251
11.4.2 The result of learning and teaching 255
11.5 External horizon 259
11.6 Conclusion 261
CHAPTER 12: ENABLING EDUCATOR IDENTITY 263
12.1 A broad description of Enabling Educators 263
12.2 Variations in Enabling Educator Identity 265
12.3 Positioning Enabling Educator Identity within the Australian enabling literature 276
12.4 Assertions about Enabling Education 281
12.5 Conclusion 284
CHAPTER 13: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENABLING EDUCATORS WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY SECTOR 286
13.1 Enabling Educators require different workload allocations and recognition in academia 288
13.1.1 Impact of time and emotional investment. 288
13.1.2 Status and position within the university context ... 290
13.2 Enabling educators require time release and support to conduct research 291
13.3 Enabling education requires further development and recognition as an emerging discipline................. 294
13.3.1 Developing as a distinct discipline identity............ 294

13.3.2 Developing a distinct curriculum and pedagogical approach 297
13.3.3 Returns on the university sector’s investment........ 298
13.4 Enabling Educators require time and financial resourcing for collaborative practice 299
13.4.1 Value of collegial collaborations within individual pathway programs........ 299
13.4.2 Value of cross-institution collaborations 302
13.5 Enabling education requires confidence in continued financial support........ 304
13.6 Conclusion 304
CHAPTER 14: CONCLUSION 306
14.1 Responding to the study’s research questions 306
14.2 Recommendations 310
14.3 Limitations of the study 312
14.4 Future research........ 314
14.5 Conclusion 315
REFERENCES........318
APPENDIX A: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE (INCLUDING PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM)........360
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – INTERVIEWS 370
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM – INTERVIEWS 372
APPENDIX D: RUN SHEET FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS 373

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 *The essential differences between phenomenography and phenomenology* 87
Table 5.1 *Overview of research design* 108
Table 5.2 *Online survey participant demographics* 129
Table 5.3 *Question sets from the first piloting stage* 131
Table 5.4 *Interview survey participant demographics* 132
Table 5.5 *Dahlgren & Fallsberg's (1991) seven-step analysis* 140
Table 5.6 *Final set of data analysis questions* 144
Table 6.1 *Descriptive categories and themes* 149
Table 6.2 *Overview of descriptive categories* 153
Table 12.1 *Assertions implicit in the description of Enabling Educators* 282
Table 14.1 *A broad description of Enabling Educators* 310

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 *Phenomenographic relationality* 92
Figure 4.2 *The experience of learning: A diagram of the structure, or anatomy, of awareness* 95
Figure 4.3 *Diagrammatic representation of concepts of learning with a focus on the how and what aspects of learning* 97
Figure 5.1 *Overview of the experiences and understandings of Enabling Educators' work* 145
Figure 5.2 *The simplified diagram for experiences and understandings of Enabling Educators' work* 146
Figure 6.1 *Diagrammatic representation of the outcome space* 158
Figure 7.1 *Experience and understanding of work as equity in university participation (equity)* 163
Figure 7.2 *Themes of work as equity in university participation*. 167
Figure 7.3 *Process of work as equity in university participation* . 172
Figure 8.1 *Experience and understanding of work as student academic development (student academic development)* 184
Figure 8.2 *Themes of student academic development* 187
Figure 8.3 *Process of work as student development* 194
Figure 9.1 *Experience and understanding of work as student empowerment (student empowerment)* 204
Figure 9.2 *Themes of work as student empowerment* 207
Figure 9.3 *Process of work as student empowerment* 213
Figure 10.1 *Experience and understanding of work as student care (student care)* 224
Figure 10.2 *Themes of work as student care* 228
Figure 10.3 *Process of work as student care* 232
Figure 11.1 *Experience and understanding of work as quality learning and teaching (learning and teaching)* 243
Figure 11.2 *Themes of work as quality learning and teaching* ... 247

Figure 11.3 *Process of quality learning and teaching*................ 250
Figure 12.1 *Generated phenomenographic descriptors of Enabling Educator Identity* 264
Figure 12.2 *Variations in Enabling Educator Identity*................ 266
Figure 12.3 *Foundational identity: educator* 267
Figure 12.4 *Central identities: student academic developer, empowerer and carer (student support in a specific pathway program)* 269
Figure 12.5 *Outward facing identity: equity advocate* 274
Figure 12.6 *Enabling transition pedagogy model: The trident*.... 280
Figure 14.1 *Diagrammatic representations of EEI and Enabling Educators' understandings and experiences of work* 308

GLOSSARY

Term	**Descriptor**
Academic	A professional employed at a university to teach into a specific discipline and conduct research.
Conception	A qualitatively distinct way of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon. A second-order conception is the individual's (the subject's) way of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon (the object). Conceptions are abstract and internal constructs.
Descriptive category	A description of a qualitatively distinct way of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon. Descriptive categories are generated by phenomenographic researchers to capture and describe sets of qualitatively distinct ways a phenomenon can be experienced and understood.
Dimensions of variation	Aspects of a study's descriptive categories that vary, presenting uniquely within each category.
Horizon, external	An external horizon refers to those aspects of the experience of a phenomenon which are in the background or on the periphery of awareness.
Horizon, internal	That which an individual is most aware of and is their main focus. The internal horizon, or main focus of awareness, is significant when considering what is qualitatively distinct about each descriptive category.
Identity	A construct, an external projection of the self in social contexts and roles. Individuals' identities provide them with a concept of who they are and how to relate in social contexts. Identity is a useful construct for studying people's conceptions of themselves, their experiences and social contexts.
Phenomenon	An occurrence that an individual can experience and be aware of.

NOTES REGARDING TERMINOLOGY

i. Use of Enabling Educator. The term Enabling Educator was used in this study to refer to academics who work in university pathway programs. It is acknowledged that the term 'enabling' was problematic for some participants, due to potential associations with deficit discourse. However, the terms Enabling Educator and enabling education were retained in this thesis as the terms are understood within university contexts and used by the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA), the organisation from which the participants were recruited. In this thesis, Enabling Educator, has been capitalised, as a proper noun.

ii. Use of work rather than teaching. This thesis examined Enabling Educators' experiences and understandings of their work rather than experiences and understandings of their teaching. This focus on work was deliberate because, firstly, its use aligned with other phenomenographic studies of professionals. Secondly, the focus on work was selected for its breadth, to avoid narrowing the scope and limiting the study to solely examine the academics' teaching practices or classroom activity.

iii. Use of pathway, enabling, equity and non-traditional as identifiers. Equity groups or categories are terms defined in Australian government widening participation policy and used in reference to specific groups of students such as Indigenous students or regional and remote students (further addressed in 2.4). Although students in equity groups are considered as beneficiaries of the support offered through pathway programs, these programs are not limited to, nor exclusively for, students represented in enabling groups. Pathway programs have a broader demographic (Chojenta, 2017). Students in pathway programs are also considered to be non-traditional students, who are contrasted with traditional students. Traditional students are generally on

campus, full-time students, who have recently left high school with a sufficient Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) for direct enrolment in an undergraduate degree program at university. In contrast, students in pathway programs tend to be mature-aged, have "disrupted educational journeys" and "struggle to get to university" (Jarvis, 2021, p. 27). Pathway programs provide many of these non-traditional students with an alternative means of accessing university (Baker et al., 2022). Thus, in this thesis, 'pathway student,' 'enabling student' and 'non-traditional student' are general terms used to refer to students *in the context of a pathway program*. It is acknowledged that although pathway students are non-traditional students the converse cannot be assumed; as not all non-traditional students at university entered via a pathway program. It is further acknowledged that the definition of a non-traditional student is contentious and fluid. As McCall et al. (2020) argue, "the face of the 'traditional student' in higher education has continued to change" (p. 91) with shifting student demographics due to increasing numbers of non-traditional students entering university.

The terms, 'equity students' and 'students in equity groups or categories', are only used in specific reference to students in the categories defined by the Australian government. Finally, in this thesis, a 'pathway program' is also considered to be synonymous with an 'enabling program', and the two terms are used interchangeably.

iv. Use of higher education and university as identifiers. Higher education is a broad term that includes qualifications such as diplomas, bachelor's degrees and postgraduate degrees (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), 2021), awarded by a range of post-secondary institutions, such as vocational training centres, colleges and universities. As much of the international literature on equity and

massification uses the all-encompassing terms, ‘higher education’ or ‘widening participation in higher education,’ these terms have been adopted in the chapter’s initial broad survey of equity and discussion of global trends (specifically in Chapter 2). As the enabling programs that were the focus of this study operated in Australian universities, the terms university and ‘widening university participation’ have been incorporated in narrower discussions of enabling education in the Australian university context.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The work of Enabling Educators in pathway programs provides non-traditional students with the opportunity to gain access to university and the support needed to succeed in their studies. Enabling education, through the inclusion and success of non-traditional students represents both personal development for the students and a substantial contribution to equity for the higher education sector (Baker et al, 2022). Although Enabling Educators are key stakeholders in enabling education and integral to the success of non-traditional students in pathway programs, little is known about their professional identities and their experiences of working in pathway programs. This lack of knowledge represents a gap in the literature in enabling education. Therefore, this thesis is a phenomenographic study to investigate and describe Enabling Educators' professional identities and the various ways they experience and understand their work in pathway programs.

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the thesis, starting with a description of the context of the research (Section 1.1). The context allows discussion of the research problem and the accompanying research questions (Sections 1.2 and 1.3). The rationale for conducting the research is considered in Section 1.4, which explains the study's significance. Transferability is addressed in a discussion of the study's scope and limitations in Section 1.5. Finally, Sections 1.6 and 1.7 provide a brief outline of the findings and the structure of the thesis' chapters.

1.1 CONTEXT TO THE STUDY

The aim of this thesis was to study variations in Enabling Educators' identities by exploring their experiences and understandings of their work in pathway programs. Enabling Educators are academics who work in sub-bachelor, pathway

programs. A pathway, or enabling, program is defined as a "course of instruction provided to a person for the purpose of enabling the person to undertake a course leading to a higher education award" (Department of the Attorney-General, 2003, p. 490). Pathway programs represent a substantial contribution to the Australian Government's widening participation strategy to increase equity in higher education (Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations, 2009). There are 48 pathway programs in Australian universities (Pitman et al. 2016) and these programs contextualise the work and academic identities of Enabling Educators.

Pathway programs ostensibly cater to students from various enabling groups including low socioeconomic status (SES) students; Indigenous students; students with disabilities; students from regional and remote areas; students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) (also referred to as students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD)); (and female students in non-traditional areas of study, in particular Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) areas (Carroll & Li, 2022; Pitman et al., 2016). Pathway programs are not exclusive to students from equity groups and attract a wide and diverse cohort of non-traditional students, who would otherwise be excluded from university as they lack the traditional qualifications for direct entry (Hodges, 2018). Students entering pathway programs are frequently mature-aged; have complex, and often negative, experiences of education; and "typically occupy some position of disadvantage" (Jarvis, 2021, p. 28). Research on non-traditional students indicates that although these students possess a range of strengths and life skills, they also frequently encounter additional barriers to university participation (Corley & McNeil, 2017; McCall et al., 2020). Such barriers include low efficacy; being academically underprepared; being uncertain about

the value of their studies; having limited exposure to the culture and requirements of higher education; and multiple complex roles and financial obstacles (Devlin, 2010; Devlin & McKay, 2018), all of which contribute to the attrition rate of these courses

The identities of Enabling Educators, as a group, are defined by their collaborative work which supports non-traditional students in university pathway programs.

This study of Enabling Educators is contextualised by their work in pathway programs to improve equity for non-traditional students. Enabling Educators contribute to equity through their work in pathway programs. This work provides non-traditional students with both an alternate pathway to university and a range of academic and social supports that assist them to succeed at university. In this study the work of Enabling Educators is contextualised by their pathway programs. These pathway programs represent both the work context of Enabling Educators and the vehicle by which the educators facilitate the access and support required to redress the inequities that exclude of non-traditional students' from university.

This study of Enabling Educators is contextualised by their academic identities, identities that exist in a contested space and that can be positioned as 'not quite academic'. Enabling Educator Identity (EEI) can be positioned as a subset of academic identity, contextualised by the Enabling Educator's particular areas of expertise and work in university pathway programs. Although Enabling Educators are academic employees with the same teaching, research and service responsibilities as other academics, Enabling Educators express concerns that their work in pathway programs is positioned in an ambiguous space on the periphery of higher education (Burke, 2013; Johnston et al., 2021). Pathway programs are sub-bachelor, non-award programs which are not included in the Australian Qualification Framework.

Moreover, these programs typically experience higher attrition rates than bachelor programs (Crawford, 2014) and questions have been raised about the effectiveness of such developmental programs (Valentine et al., 2017). In addition, the intensity of working with non-traditional students in pathway programs can inhibit Enabling Educators' participation in, and contribution to, their university's service and research goals. Such concerns contextualise this study and position Enabling Educator Identity as a contested academic identity.

This study of Enabling Educators is contextualised by collaborative work drawing on the varied contributions of individual Enabling Educators. The pathway programs that provide the context of Enabling Educators' work are a collegial enterprise in which the educators work collaboratively. The complexity and diversity of non-traditional students' obstacles, and strengths, means that addressing inequity in university participation is beyond the individual skill set and experience of any single Enabling Educator. Pathway programs require Enabling Educators with a range of skills, discipline backgrounds, teaching approaches and experiences, who collaboratively work in support of equity for non-traditional students. Thus, this study of Enabling Educators is contextualised by the assumptions that variations and differences among Enabling Educators are both present and necessary for pathway programs to be comprehensive and effective.

In summary, Enabling Educators' professional identities are contextualised by the academics' experiences of their work with non-traditional students in pathway programs; their position within, and contribution to, Australian universities; and their varied contributions to collaborative practices that offer a broad and holistic approach to widening university participation.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Pathway programs contribute to university access and the success of students from historically underrepresented sections of Australian society (Bradley et al., 2008). The higher attrition rates experienced by students in these programs (Crawford, 2014) call for a better understanding of factors that contribute to improving student outcomes (Li & Carroll, 2017). To date, studies of pathway programs have generally focused on the motivations, experiences and identities of the students, in particular mature-aged students (Bookallil & Harreveld, 2017), and so the experiences and identities of Enabling Educators working in these programs remain underresearched. It is acknowledged that an educator's understanding of their identity significantly determines their effectiveness and teaching practice (Kim & Greene, 2011; Milner, 2010). For this reason, the lack of research into Enabling Educators' identities represents a missing perspective when considering factors that contribute to improved student outcomes. Moreover, this knowledge gap means that Enabling Educators' perspectives and concerns may be overlooked in deliberations regarding university policy impacting these academics' emotional wellbeing, teaching and research time allocations, and contributions to higher education. Therefore, the research problem posed by this study is to generate a description of Enabling Educators that portrays the variations in their professional identities as well as their understandings and experiences of working in pathway programs.

1.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Studying Enabling Educator Identity (EEI) is problematic and the three research questions are framed by two specific challenges. In this section, each challenge is discussed in turn.

The first challenge encountered in researching EEI is that individual Enabling Educators had differing understandings of their identities. My own experience working with Enabling Educators is considerable. I have worked as both a sessional academic in a pathway program and as an educational designer with responsibility for supporting Enabling Educators. This experience has created an awareness of variations in Enabling Educators' understandings of their professional identities, skill sets, approaches to working with pathway students, career histories and life experiences. Moreover, I consider the variations to be important. Enabling Educators with different professional identities, skills and experiences, have attributes that offer a range of approaches that support the diverse, non-traditional students in pathway programs. Therefore, I believe there to be no single, ideal concept of Enabling Educator Identity to be drawn from this research. Although my anecdotal observations are not substantiated in the scant literature pertaining to Enabling Educators, these observations are supported by identity research (see Chapter 3) and represent the inspiration and motivation to study EEI. Thus, one research challenge central to the study was how to recognise and capture differences in EEI.

The second challenge encountered in researching EEI is that identity, itself, is an enigmatic concept that is variously understood in both common parlance and research. The numerous uses, definitions and understandings of identity present a challenge when investigating this abstract concept. For example, considering whether to provide participants with a definition of identity raises questions regarding which definition would be the most useful and accurate. Moreover, any identity definition provided for the participants could potentially influence and manipulate the participants' thoughts about their own identities. Conversely, considering the ambiguous nature of identity, if not defined, there

could be no surety that the interview participants were discussing the same concept. Thus, a second research challenge was to capture the participants' own understandings and experiences of their identities as Enabling Educators.

Both research challenges were considered when selecting the study's methodology and formulating the research questions. The challenge of capturing variations in EEI was addressed through using a phenomenographic research approach. Phenomenography is the study of variations in understandings and experiences of phenomena (see Chapter 4). As a research approach, phenomenography allowed the capture and mapping of differences in the academics' identities. Moreover, as professional identity is shaped by, and reflexively interrelated with experiences of work (see Chapter 3), studying Enabling Educators' more concrete, common experiences and understandings of their work offered a means of obliquely approaching the exploration of their identities. Thus, the study undertaken in this thesis is a phenomenographic study of variations in Enabling Educator Identity (EEI) investigated through the educators' experiences and understandings of their work in pathway programs.

The study of EEI was designed around three specific research questions:

1. What are the different experiences, life events and ideas that Enabling Educators select when describing their work in pathway programs?
2. What are the variations in meanings that Enabling Educators give to these aspects of their work in pathway programs?
3. What conclusions can be drawn about variations in Enabling Educator Identity from the qualitative differences in Enabling Educators' experiences and understandings of their work in pathway programs?

1.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is a paucity of research investigating Enabling Educators. This thesis, therefore, contributes to the literature on Enabling Educators' academic identities and the value and role of pathway programs. Firstly, for Enabling Educators this research gives voice to their experiences in, and perspectives on, their academic identities and contributions to equity in university participation. Moreover, researching the identities of a particular group or subset of academics provides that group with a sense of belonging in academia and establishes their work as a scholarly discipline (Daniel, 2018). Thus, this thesis promotes Enabling Educators' presence in both academia and the literature.

Secondly, this research contributes to the body of knowledge regarding factors that influence student success in pathway programs. Positive student outcomes in pathway programs represent socially just outcomes for the students and are beneficial to national economic growth (Bookallil & Harreveld, 2017). Conversely, student failure and attrition represent significant personal and economic losses on the investment made in pathway programs by both the students and the Australian government (Carmichael & Taylor, 2005; Pitman et al. 2016). Thus, there is both intrinsic and economic value in conducting research that supports improved student outcomes in pathway programs.

Although Enabling Educators are significant stakeholders in these programs, little is known about their identities, their contributions and experiences. As the literature notes there is correspondence between educators' understandings of their identities, their world view and, importantly, their teaching practice (van Lankveld et al., 2017; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2018). The paucity of research on Enabling Educators invites studies of their identities and experiences, which contribute to enabling education by

considering one of the factors that influence student outcomes in pathway programs.

1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The study's scope was limited to Australian Enabling Educators, working in the university sector. As a qualitative, phenomenographic study of Australian Enabling Educators' identities, the scope of this study has both methodological and contextual limitations. The phenomenographic research approach introduces methodological limitations and the study's scope has intrinsic, contextual limitations. These limitations are briefly outlined below and addressed in turn.

Two key limitations of the study's findings were researcher subjectivity and sample size, both inherent in phenomenographic methodological idiosyncrasies. The first limitation is inherent in the subjective nature of phenomenographic data analysis, which emphasises the researcher's role in analysing the data to generate the study's outcome space and descriptive categories. Although the subjective nature of the analysis can be managed through considerations of trustworthiness, subjectivity cannot be negated entirely and represents a limitation. A second limitation is due to the phenomenographic requirement for the researcher to be simultaneously across the entire data set. In practice this requirement restricts the amount of participant data a researcher can manage, in effect limiting participant numbers. Thus, the participant numbers of this study (31 respondents to the questionnaire and 14 interview participants) also represent a limitation to transferability.

Two further limitations arise from the scope of the study and the characteristics of the study's participants. The third limitation restricts the scope of the study to the Australian university context. Knowing that the study would have a limited sample size, the

study’s scope was restricted to Enabling Educators working in Australian university pathway programs. The final limitation pertains to the characteristics of the study’s participants. To attain a sample pool of Enabling Educators, participants were contacted via an email sent from the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA), a national association with a broad membership. This method of participant recruitment was purposive and directed towards a sample pool with broad variation of experiences with, and understandings of, the phenomenon being studied. Thus, participant membership of a professional body of Enabling Educators, although not central to the study’s research questions, formed part of the study’s scope and limitations. Also, while the study’s participants represented variation in a range of demographic characteristics, no sessional, part-time or casual Enabling Educators participated in the study, so effectively, participants were limited to full-time academics who were members of NAEEA.

Given these limitations, the findings of this study have transferability to the contexts of the 48 Australian university pathway programs (Pitman et al., 2016). While the study has relevance internationally, each country’s approach to educational equity is influenced by its own local student demographics, education systems, economic and political structures (Coyle et al., 2021). Deliberation on contextual similarities and differences is required when considering the transferability of this study’s findings. Although contextual differences challenge transferability beyond the Australian context, the issues considered in this thesis align with current international interest in the role of educators and institutions in addressing educational inequality and widening participation in higher education. Thus, this thesis contributes to the wider body of international research considering equity in

higher education and may offer useful points of departure for other studies in widening participation.

1.6 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis is composed of four sections, including this introductory chapter. The remaining three sections consist of a review of widening participation and identity literature; the research approach and methodology of this study; description and analysis of the findings and discussion of the study's outcomes. Each of the three main sections is outlined below.

Chapters 2 and 3: Literature review. The paucity of research on Enabling Educators' experiences and identities means that there is currently no specific body of literature to draw on to position this study. The literature review (Chapters 2 and 3) therefore combines literature from widening participation and identity studies to develop and position Enabling Educator Identity.

Chapter 2 explores concepts of equity and widening participation in higher education as a global, far-reaching concern that engages educators, educational institutions, organisations and governments. Enabling education exists within the wider global movement for educational equity as a contextualised response to widening participation in Australian universities. Thus, Chapter 2 defines and draws upon concepts of equity and widening participation to contextualise and position the role of enabling education and the work of Enabling Educators.

Chapter 3 provides a framework to position a phenomenographic study of the identities of Enabling Educators. The chapter considers both the nature of a phenomenographic identity construct and how Enabling Educator Identity may be positioned within identity research. Firstly, Chapter 3 surveys identity literature to support the thesis' phenomenographic approach to identity. The chapter begins by drawing on identity

literature to present an identity framework, congruent with a phenomenographic study. An important aspect of the Chapter's discussion, and the study's methodology, is the literature's support of the reflexive link between an individual's experiences, which are more concrete and descriptive, and their identity, which is more ambiguous and esoteric. Validating the reflexive link between experience and identity supports this study's use of the participants' experiences of working in enabling education to draw conclusions about their identities as Enabling Educators.

Secondly, as Enabling Educators work as academics in university pathway programs, Chapter 3 also explores the literature on both professional and academic identity to position Enabling Educator Identity (EEI) as a subset of academic identity.

Chapters 4 and 5: Theoretical approach and methodology. Trustworthy research clearly discloses, and conforms to, its chosen approach and so, Chapters 4 and 5 contribute to the study's trustworthiness. Chapter 4 outlines phenomenography's underpinning philosophical approach, providing a broad introduction to the ontological and epistemological foundations of phenomenography and its branches of research. The chapter also introduces and describes the 'pure' phenomenographic approach adopted by the study. Chapter 5 outlines the overarching methodological approach, methods of data collection and analysis, and explains how they conform to a phenomenographic research tradition.

Chapters 6 to 14: Results and discussion. In qualitative research, transferability and confirmability are enhanced when the findings are supported by clear explanation, illustrated by numerous participant observations and opinions. The chapters that detail the study's findings (Chapters 6 to 11), therefore, use ample participant contributions to describe the generation and nature of the study's outcome space and descriptive categories.

Chapter 6 introduces an outcome space with five descriptive categories capturing variations in Enabling Educators' experiences of work in pathway programs. The following five chapters (Chapters 7 to 11) are each devoted to one of the five descriptive categories. Chapter 12 draws on these to generate five corresponding categories of Enabling Educator Identity and a broad description of Enabling Educators. Chapter 13 outlines the implications of the findings for the Enabling Educators and the enabling education sector, with recommendations for professional development and policy decisions. The thesis concludes (Chapter 14) with a summary, and discussion of the study's limitations and scope for further research.

1.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided context and an overview for the research undertaken in this thesis. The next chapter will begin with a review of the literature by exploring Enabling Educators and their contribution to equity in university participation.

CHAPTER 2: EQUITY, WIDENING UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION AND THE ROLE OF ENABLING EDUCATORS

The chapter begins by exploring concepts of equity and widening participation in higher education. The trenchant nature of social injustice makes these concepts both complex and challenging. These complexities and challenges are explored through three approaches to widening participation: massification, demand-driven systems and focusing on enabling groups. The discussion notes that students from groups underrepresented in higher education experience greater challenges, both academically and socially, when participating in higher education studies. Therefore, widening participation initiatives that incorporate both access and student support are proposed as contributing to a comprehensive solution to inequity in higher education. Pathway programs represent one widening participation initiative that provides both access and support, and this chapter discusses and explores the involvement and contribution of the Enabling Educators who work in these programs. Considering the paucity of research about Enabling Educators, the chapter concludes by highlighting the need for greater research on the identities of such educators.

2.1 WHAT IS EQUITY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Equity of educational opportunity is a social justice principle that, while often evoked, remains ambiguous and ill-defined. Although equity is commonly considered an enduring value in higher education, a widely accepted definition capable of informing policy and measuring effectiveness, remains elusive. The intangibility of a definitive concept of equity reflects the differences found in various interpretations and stances on fundamental issues

and applications of equity, such as disagreement on the contribution of rights and social justice to equity, and complexities in defining key concepts and approaches (Castelli et al., 2012; Walton et al., 2014). Although problematic to define, equity continues to be relevant to educational contexts because education has the propensity to either positively contribute to empowerment and development (Hornsby & Osman, 2014) or negatively reinforce entrenched social privilege (Pitman, 2015). With accessibility and delivery of education being a value-laden proposition, it is important to delimit the concepts of equity that inform the role that higher education plays in achieving a socially just society (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008).

This section reviews three common and broadly influential views of equity in higher education. The concepts of; merit as equity, proportional representation as equity and active inclusion as equity (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007), while not mutually exclusive, are distinct. The distinctions, although at times subtle, are not trivial as they inform different approaches to formulating and evaluating equity policy (James, 2007). In this section each of the three concepts is briefly discussed before drawing some conclusions about what is required to redress entrenched social inequity.

2.1.1 MERIT-BASED CONCEPTS OF EQUITY

Merit-based concepts of equity argue that access to higher education should be solely based on a student's demonstrated record of academic achievement. Merit-based equity is informed by principles of fairness and the belief that all students who have demonstrated the appropriate standard of academic ability should have equal access to educational opportunity. Access to higher education via merit is supported by the World Declaration on Higher Education (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and

Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1998), which states that, “admission to higher education should be based on the merit, capacity, efforts, perseverance and devotion” (p. 22). Moreover, the World Declaration on Higher Education precludes discrimination on the basis of “race, gender, language or religion, or economic, cultural or social distinctions, or physical disabilities” (UNESCO, 1998, p. 4).

Although merit is a seemingly obvious and fair standard for equity in education, merit-based access to education is neither simple nor uncontested. The notion that all students have equal opportunity to develop and demonstrate the merit of their full educational potential is misleading. Merit-based concepts of access to higher education fail to fully consider the impact of social advantage and disadvantage on students’ educational opportunities and outcomes. Competitive socioeconomic conditions, financial limitations and restricted access to schooling impede merit-based approaches to equality of access to higher education (Vukasovic & Scarrico, 2010). Moreover, gender, ethnicity and economic status all represent persistent and significant obstacles that, globally, limit access to higher education for many students (Schendel & McCowan, 2016).

As an informing principle, merit fails to recognise and account for hegemonic social forces that impede academic development (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007). Failure to recognise and critically analyse the role of historical, political and socioeconomic structures works to reinforce, rather than address, the educational inequality in higher education for certain sectors of societies (Bennett et al., 2015). For these reasons, merit-based concepts of equity fail to represent a comprehensive solution to inequity of participation in higher education.

2.1.2 PROPORTIONAL OR REPRESENTATIVE CONCEPTS OF EQUITY

An alternative view of equity is a proportional or representative view of access to higher education. Representative equity works on the principle of opening access to education by offering uncapped, or greater numbers of, student placements to everyone, including students from underrepresented groups (Pitman, 2017). Thus, although no specific societal group is targeted, representative equity positively asserts that if the number of student places is sufficient, then the demographic representation of societal groups should be proportionally mirrored in higher education student demographics (Bradley et al., 2008). In practice, representative equity has offered some benefit to students from underrepresented groups. Increasing access to higher education has increased opportunity and the participation of individual students from all sectors of society. Thus, while proportional representation has been of some benefit, underrepresentation persists (Gale & Parker, 2013).

Moreover, representational equity does not equate to parity in educational quality, outcome or experience. Inequities still exist in institutional access, enrolment patterns and educational experiences for students in underrepresented groups. Although difference exist with underrepresented groups, these students generally experience fewer opportunities in accessing prestigious and selective higher education institutions (Pitman, 2015) and are more likely to select courses with lower financial burdens and more secure employment pathways (Marginson, 2016), and are more likely to experience greater financial and personal issues with higher rates of attrition and failure (Altbach, 2013; Unterhalter & Carpentier, 2010). Further obstacles for students in underrepresented groups include lower educational attainment and aspirations; financial constraints and burdens; and lack of

awareness of the benefits of higher education (Jacob & Gokbel 2018; James, 2007). Such barriers impact student retention and the length of time students take to graduate (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007). Engstrom and Tinto (2008), for example found that American low socioeconomic students (LSES) students experienced both lower rates of completion and longer times to finish their degrees, concluding that for many LSES students the "open door" of access had become a "revolving door" to attrition (p. 47).

Thus, representational concepts of equity, while offering some improvement in access for non-traditional, underrepresented students, generally do not recognise, or account for, the additional barriers and obstacles that these students encounter when undertaking higher education studies. For this reason, proportional or representative concepts of equity cannot offer a comprehensive approach to reducing social inequality in higher education (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007).

2.1.3 ACTIVE INCLUSION CONCEPTS OF EQUITY

A third concept of equity, active inclusion, is a proactive concept that represents "equality turned into an action" (Unterhalter, 2009, p. 416) through proactive initiatives that "advance the 'cause' of inclusion" (Armstrong & Cairnduff, 2012, p. 918). Both merit and representative notions of equity fail to comprehensively address issues of inequality because those perspectives neither recognise nor account for the barriers that students from underrepresented groups experience in accessing and completing higher education. Thus, equity requires both access and support (Tinto, 2014). For this reason, actively inclusive notions of equity are required to positively account for both greater access to higher education and the provision of appropriate support to counter barriers to student success.

A comprehensive concept of equity in higher education must incorporate a range of strategies and approaches that are developed to support students from underrepresented groups, as they journey into and through their higher education studies. Students who have experienced disadvantage face 'trenchant' obstacles that hinder participation in higher education (Armstrong & Cairnduff, 2012, p. 919). Such barriers include poor prior academic experiences; racial, ethnic and language barriers; financial obstacles; and a lack of awareness of educational options (Herbaut & Geven, 2019; Younger et al., 2019). Thus, equity requires proactive initiatives that provide students from underrepresented groups access to experiences that raise awareness of opportunities in higher education and increase students' aspiration to study; alternate pathways into higher education; and both academic and non-academic support mechanisms (Andrewartha & Harvey, 2014; Bradley et al., 2008; McKay et al., 2018). Moreover, active inclusion requires institutions to be proactive in providing a sense of belonging for diverse students, as well as developing resources and infrastructure that enable these students to freely participate (Naylor & Mifsud, 2019). Therefore, while the entrenched nature of social disadvantage belies any simple or singular solution, active inclusion offers a comprehensive means to address inequity in higher education.

2.2 CONCEPTS OF WIDENING PARTICIPATION

Widening participation is a concept variously defined in policy and the literature while an agreed definition remains contested and elusive. Moreover, although concepts of widening participation invariably embody a notion of equity, those notions vary. As the previous section has already considered concepts of equity, this section briefly draws on two of these concepts for comparing

widening participation, one of proportional representation, the other of widening participation as active inclusion.

Widening participation as proportional representation embodies the foundational requirement of increasing student access to higher education. References to proportionally balancing student demographics "to reflect more closely the composition of society as a whole" (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1990, p. 2) are common in policy documents. The idea that 'a rising tide lifts all boats' (Sheldon & Gottschalk, 1986 cited in Pitman, 2017, p. 38), implies that proportional representation will simply and naturally flow from removing caps on student enrolment numbers. By contrast, Nicholson (2018) exemplifies a concept of widening participation that is clearly associated with representative participation:

> Widening participation has been defined by the policy that people such as those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students, students from ethnic and cultural groups, and disabled students should be encouraged to take part, and be represented proportionately, within higher education. (p. 2)

In this view, widening participation focuses on the *means* of encouraging participation to the *end* of proportional representation. Thus, widening participation only requires that students from disadvantaged backgrounds be "encouraged to take part", and they will be "represented proportionally" (Nicholson, 2018, p. 2). In this concept of widening participation, everyone is free to participant and is offered equal access and treatment. However, arguments for equality of treatment or process (procedural justice) tend to negate difference (Walton et al., 2014) and assume that all students' life circumstances are either equal or not relevant.

An alternate understanding and definition of widening participation considers equity as active inclusion, thereby acknowledging the value of representative participation and insisting that intentional and proactive intervention is required to bring about representative participation.

> [Widening participation] is largely concerned with redressing the under-representation of certain social groups in higher education. [Widening participation] is also connected to wider social movements for greater educational equality, for example, through access, enabling, and foundation programs driven by concerns to develop more socially just higher education systems. (Burke, 2016, p. 1)

Here the joint *means* of access and support through the proactive provision of enabling programs are harnessed to the joint *ends* of representation and social justice. This concept of equity recognises that for students in underrepresented groups, social inequity needs to be proactively addressed through both greater access and supporting programs. Such concepts for widening participation acknowledge that people's life circumstances can be considerably disparate, arguing for proactive intervention to achieve equality of outcome (distributive-justice) (Walton et al., 2014).

Notions of widening participation are more complex than the simple dichotomy presented in this section. However, the two illustrative quotes demonstrate key differences between the approaches. The following sections consider three examples of movements in widening participation to explore the diversity in approaches to, and results of, approaches to widening participation: massification, demand-driven systems and the Australian equity groups.

2.2.1 MASSIFICATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The first example of widening participation discussed is massification. Increasing access to higher education has been purported as a solution to inequity in higher education participation. However, global trends in the massification of higher education have borne mixed results for equity. This section discusses the massification and diversification of higher education participation, explaining how massification has increased both access and obstacles for underrepresented students. The section addresses the inability to account for the barriers faced by underrepresented students in higher education, finishing with an argument for equity that considers both increased access and appropriate support for underrepresented students.

Massification and equity: The international experience

Globally, the "unprecedented demand for and a great diversification in higher education" (UNESCO, 1998, p. 1) has opened higher education access to the 'masses'. This rapid expanse has been termed the massification of higher education (Hornsby & Osman, 2014) and represents a global trend of greater inclusivity that is increasing both the number and the diversity of student enrolments (Schendel & McCowan, 2016). Massification is a response to a range of factors including; "the demand for economic opportunity and social mobility, and perhaps most importantly, the shift globally from industrial to knowledge economies. public outcomes" (de Wit & Reisberg, 2017, p. 192). The drive behind massification is expressed in statements such as the following from the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (United Kingdom).

> If we want to see social progress and economic prosperity in an increasingly competitive global market, the principle we should, as a country, aim for is all those that have the ability,

aptitude and potential to benefit from a university education have a fair chance to do so. (2013, p. 2)

The impetus to expand access to higher education has led to demand-driven, inclusive enrolment policies and practices, with participation "growing at an unprecedented rate" of approximately 1% per year (Marginson, 2016, p. 413). The growth in higher education participation has, in fact, considerably surpassed world population growth. For example, between 1997 and 2017, gross higher education enrolments increased by 154% compared to a world population increase of 28% (UNESCO, 2018; World Bank, 2018).

Although massification offers some benefit to students from underrepresented sectors of society, this increased access has failed to comprehensively redress inequity in higher education. Massification has transitioned higher education from exclusive access to more inclusive enrolment policies (Bennett et al., 2015). However, the "demographic imbalances in the people going on to university continue to be striking in most nations" (James et al., 2008, p. 71). Students from disadvantaged sectors of society are less likely to access higher education, compared to traditional students, even when they have the ability to do so. Even in affluent countries, such as the United Kingdom, the "strong correlation between someone's social class and their likelihood of going to university," indicates that "there is a long way to go before access to higher education can be said to be truly classless" (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013, p. 5).

One, somewhat ironic, reason for the failure of massification is that greater numbers of increasingly diverse students have placed considerable burdens on limited higher education resources. Massification has dramatically changed the demographics, expectations and demands on public universities (Machovec,

2017). As Strating and Earl (2015) assert, “the more diverse the student body, the greater the gap can be between new students and the academic culture of universities, and the greater the numbers of students who experience this gap” (p. 34). Thus, significantly higher student enrolments and the greater diversity among these students have considerably increased pressure on higher education systems (Schendel & McCowan, 2016). Contributing to this pressure is the increasing gap between student numbers and university funding. Irreconcilable differences between the ideals of market competition and inclusivity have created “an intractable tension between the demands of quality, equity and funding” (Unterhalter & Carpentier, 2010, p. 102). In the competition for higher education resources, it is students from socially excluded groups who continue to be impacted the most. Thus, the contested space of higher education sees the perpetuation of wider socioeconomic, gender and ethnic inequities, leading to considerable differences in educational quality and outcomes (Goastellec, 2010; Marginson, 2016). Although the massification of higher education has meant an overall increase in enrolments, access to higher-status, elite, research-intensive universities are disproportionally skewed against underrepresented students, including students from low SES backgrounds (Naidoo, 2004; Pitman 2015). Thus, the effect of increased competition for resources and skewed access to educational quality is that massification simultaneously enables greater access and reinforces inequity for disadvantaged students (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008, p. 291). Thus, as Altbach (2013) asserts, “It seems a contradiction that access would bring inequality to higher education, but that trend is the usual case” (p. 21).

A further reason massification offers an inadequate response is the failure to account for the greater obstacles faced by students traditionally excluded from higher education. Students from

marginalised categories risk greater relative costs and experience higher rates of attrition and failure (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007). Disadvantaged students face a range of obstacles, including financial barriers; being underprepared academically; lacking appropriate information about the requirements and expectations of higher education; and dispositional barriers (Herbaut & Geven, 2019). For these reasons, access alone for students from underrepresented sectors of society can be insufficient. Disadvantaged students require additional support to develop the academic and non-academic capabilities required for persistence and success in higher education. Thus, while the increased participation facilitated by massification contributes towards equity in higher education, further proactive intervention is required to target the barriers faced by students in underrepresented groups.

In conclusion, the purported advantages of massification have not been borne out in practice for students from underrepresented groups. Although massification has been of some benefit, it has failed to achieve representational equity as participation rates of disadvantaged students are still below demographic representation. As Strauss (2020) notes, "Despite the lip service paid to widening access to tertiary study, the actual implementation of this access does not appear to be successful in western countries" (p. 1022). Students from underrepresented groups continue to experience higher than average rates of failure and attrition. Although, increasing access alone, has failed to address global inequity in higher education, massification's failures do "not argue against access but rather call for a more realistic understanding of the implications of massification and the steps needed to ameliorate the problems" (Altbach, 2013, p. 21). Higher education institutions need to offer more than just increased enrolments. These institutions need to create more inclusive structures that acknowledge the barriers and obstacles faced by

diverse students and proactively adopt evidence-based academic and non-academic support structures that enable greater success (Shah, 2015). These concerns are pertinent for Australian universities and the task of defining a 'realistic' and effective concept of equity in higher education is important for informing the role that university plays in achieving a socially just society (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008). The contribution of Australian universities to socially just participation is addressed in the following section.

2.2.2 DEMAND DRIVEN SYSTEMS IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

The second example of widening participation is Australia's demand-driven system. Although the concept of widening participation is not unique to Australia, this section explores widening participation in the Australian context as it positions the work of the Australian Enabling Educators, who are the focus of this study.

Widening participation as representational equity. The Australian higher education sector has mirrored global massification trends (Krause, 2017) and domestic enrolments have dramatically increased since the 1960s (Norton & Cherastidtham, 2018). In Australia, widening participation policy was influenced by the White Paper (Dawkins, 1988) that set targets to increase participation in higher education. More recently, a key recommendation of the Bradley Review (Bradley et al., 2008) was that 40% of all 25 to 34 year-olds be qualified at bachelor's level or above by 2025. This review was influential in shaping what became known as the 'demand-driven system', whereby the Australian Government extended a level of financial support to all domestic undergraduate students, compared to its previous policy of restricting supply. The demand-driven funding model had

considerable impact on student enrolments and from 2010 to 2017 university attendance increased from 53% to 60%, for people under the age of 22 (Productivity Commission, 2019). Government policies for widening participation have also sought to expand access to higher education through increasing the participation of students from underrepresented groups (Bradley et al., 2008; Gale & Parker, 2013). For example, the Australian government's "A Fair Chance for All" policy clearly reflects representative participation in calling for "changing the balance of the student population to reflect more closely the composition of society as a whole" (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1990, p. 2).

The Australian demand-driven approach has had a positive and wide impact on student enrolments and participation. Kemp and Norton's (2014) review of Australia's demand-driven system found improved access and completion rates across all sectors of society and argued for the retention of the demand-driven system as it served the interests of "student opportunity, institutional flexibility and economic productivity" (Kemp & Norton, 2014, p. xii). The report's authors also noted that many of the additional students accessing university had lower literacy and school exit (ATAR) levels than their peers. For these students, being unprepared academically had a negative impact their prospects of completing university (Kemp & Norton, 2014). A recent Australian Productivity Commission report (2019) had similar findings regarding the positive, wide-reaching impact of the demand-driven approach to university participation. That report also gave the demand-driven system a 'mixed report card,' noting that improvements in participation fluctuated among the various equity groups. For example, although numbers of low SES and 'first in family' students rose, gaps remained for Indigenous students and regional and remote students. Thus, benefits promised by

increased access to university have not been distributed equitably (Bradley et al., 2008).

Significantly, the Productivity Commission (2019) report noted that "an equity group student with a given level of academic ability is still significantly less likely to attend university than their non-equity equivalents" (p. 2). Moreover, when entering university equity students tended to be underprepared, leading these students to struggle academically, so that;

> on average, the additional students need greater academic support to succeed. While universities had strong incentives to expand student numbers, the incentives for remedial support are weak. (Productivity Commission, 2019, p. 2)

Thus, the increased access granted by the demand-driven system in Australia has not directly translated into equal outcomes for students from all sectors of Australian society. As Naylor and Mifsud (2020) discovered, "University campuses are increasingly diverse, reflecting substantial growth in student enrolments, but this has not translated to equitable outcomes for all students" (p. 259). Socioeconomic factors remain a significant indicator of limitations on educational attainment (Redmond et al., 2014) and the completion rates for groups of students, such as Indigenous and remote students, are below the national average (Pitman et al, 2017). Thus, as with the global experience of massification, the Australian experience of proportional representation has not naturally materialised into greater equity for university participants.

2.2.3 EQUITY GROUPS IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

The third, and final, example of widening participation considers the role of equity groups for specific reasons. Firstly, widening participation considers equity as active inclusion for both

access and student support. Secondly, the pathway programs that contextualise this study were established as a proactive approach to increasing participation of students from equity groups. Finally, despite practice engagement, the mixed success of this focus on equity groups highlights the complexity and challenges of entrenched inequality.

Widening participation as targeting equity groups. Each country has a unique focus for widening participation initiatives (Coyle et al., 2021). In the Australian context, government and university initiatives for widening participation have sought to address the access, retention and success of specific equity groups from underrepresented sectors of society (Shah et al., 2014). The World Declaration on Higher Education contends that access for "special target groups", including First Nations peoples, LSES groups and cultural and linguistic minorities "must be actively facilitated" (UNESCO 1998, p. 4). In the Australian context, these 'special target groups' are referred to as 'equity groups' that encompass students from diverse backgrounds, including low socioeconomic status (SES) students, Indigenous students, students with disabilities, students from regional and remote areas, students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), and female students in non-traditional areas of study (Carroll & Li, 2022; Pitman et al., 2016).

Widening university participation for students in equity groups requires proactive engagement. Increasing access for, and the success of, equity students is of fundamental importance (Naylor et al., 2013). Equity students need access to experiences that raise awareness of opportunities in higher education, increase student aspiration to study, offer alternative pathways and academic and non-academic support mechanisms (Andrewartha & Harvey, 2014; Bradley et al., 2008). University pathway programs represent one proactive approach to widening participation that

support students from equity groups who would otherwise be excluded (Lomax-Smith et al., 2011)

Even with proactive engagement, the widening of participation initiatives for equity groups has had mixed success. The focus on enabling groups has resulted in a level of success as there have been distinct improvements in the participation for students with disabilities and female students in non-traditional areas of study (Bradley et al., 2008). Widening participation for underrepresented, vulnerable students is complex and challenging (Bennett et al., 2015) and for "most equity target groups, and Indigenous people in particular, parity in the share of higher education places seems a long way off" (Naylor et al., 2013, p. 6). In fact, it has been noted that the representation of a number of students, including those in higher education from LSES, those who are Indigenous, and students with disabilities still considerably falls below proportional representation targets (Grant-Smith et al., 2020). Moreover, participation of students in enabling groups is skewed with an overrepresentation in less prestigious universities and an underrepresentation in more elite universities (Grant-Smith et al., 2020). Thus, the same global experience of skewed and inequitable access to elite institutions is also prevalent in the Australian experience of widening participation of equity students.

Moreover, an over-reliance on the use and application of enabling groups presents a challenge to widening participation. There are many inherent challenges in categorising students in enabling groups, as broad brushstroke approaches and assumptions about the characteristics of these students reduces the effectiveness of widening participation initiatives. Firstly, there is potential for students to be included in multiple enabling groups (Smith et al., 2015), meaning a single label, such as LSES, is insufficient in comprehensively representing and understanding the student's experiences and educational needs. Next, even within a

single enabling category, for example students with a disability, student experience can range so widely as to make a single identifying category implausible or meaningless. Finally, giving too much attention to certain equity groups may mean that other marginalised and vulnerable groups are ignored or overlooked. For example, two considerably marginalised groups of university students are incarcerated students (Harmes et al., 2019; Hopkins, 2015) and former refugees (Baker et al., 2019). It would be difficult to argue these students are not disadvantaged in accessing university and yet students from these two groups are excluded from current definitions of equity groups.

Widening participation initiatives for equity groups highlights the challenges of entrenched societal inequity. Equity groups do not represent a 'silver bullet' nor offer a unilateral approach to what is required for equity. Contextual differences between individual students argue against an over-reliance on categories which overlook the highly individualistic nature of each person's experience (Pitman, 2017). Each area of disadvantage has its unique challenges, and so a broad intervention that benefits one group of students may offer little or no benefit to others. For example, improvements to online learning environments are known to offer support to "regional, disabled and indigenous [sic] learners often juggling work, study and caring for children or elders" (Lambert, 2019, p. 162). However, such improvements fail to support, and may even increase disparity for low SES and incarcerated students who lack computing and internet access. Thus, while some form of equity grouping or categorisation has become a quintessential component of Australia's widening participation policy, the application of these groups requires cautious consideration.

In conclusion, this section has argued that widening participation, while a frequently used concept, remains poorly

defined and contested. Depending on the context or policy, widening participation can correspond with notions of equity as proportional representation or as active inclusion. Proportional representation, while contributing to widening participation, represents an incomplete solution as it fails to acknowledge that "social systems (including education systems) tend to produce unequal outcomes" partly because "individuals' starting positions and the processes involved in the production of social and economic outcomes are unfair" (National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, 2011, p. v). As Tinto (2014) asserts, "providing students access without support is not opportunity." (p. 6). Concepts of widening participation through active inclusion are better able to consider and proactively engage with the barriers and obstacles faced by many students, offering access to university as well as academic and social support. Thus, widening participation initiatives informed by active inclusion offer a more comprehensive solution to widening participation.

2.3 IF ACCESS AND SUPPORT, WHAT SUPPORT?

The previous section emphasised the complexity of actively inclusive approaches that provide underrepresented students with both pathways to access higher education and "support that enables them to translate access into success" (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p. 50). Advocating for access and support raises questions of what constitutes appropriate support. This section addresses the types of support required to justify an actively inclusive concept of widening participation.

Widening participation and support for non-traditional students. Non-traditional students are, for various reasons, unable to access university via the traditional route of matriculation from high school, with a sufficient Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) to directly enter university and enrol in a full-time, on

campus undergraduate degree program. McCall et al. (2020) note that “there is a considerable body of research and literature on widening participation and the challenges and strengths that non-traditional students bring to their educational journey” (p. 104). Non-traditional students are characterised as more likely to be mature-aged (older than school-leavers), second-chance learners with complex educational histories; LSES; first in family who are unfamiliar with university discourses, culture and expectations; academically underprepared; online part-time students; and those balancing complex and demanding lives (Devlin, 2010; Devlin & McKay, 2018). Thus, while acknowledging the variety of strengths and life skills non-traditional students bring to their studies these students frequently encounter additional barriers to university participation (Corley & McNeil, 2017). As fundamental academic and social differences exist between traditional undergraduate students and non-traditional students (Orth & Robinson, 2013), offering these students access “without providing measures to support their particular needs adequately, can be both short-sighted and counter to equity principles” (Klinger & Murray, 2012, p. 27).

Moreover, non-traditional students frequently navigate complex lives and contexts, of which their university study represents just one component. The complexity of non-traditional students' participation in university is compounded by academic and social obstacles and barriers, including:

1. Financial obstacles and constraints
2. Time constraints, including holding full and part-time work commitments and carer responsibilities
3. Distance from campus, travel obstacles and constraints
4. Complex educational histories, an under-preparedness for university study and low self-efficacy

5. Unfamiliarity with university culture, expectations and requirements, a sense of not belonging
6. Mismatched expectations between university and the student
7. Physical and mental health concerns (anxiety, depression)
8. Individuality and commonality (Corley & McNeil, 2017; Jarvis, 2021; Crawford & Johns, 2018; Pedler et al., 2022; Shah & Cheng, 2019; Kemp & Norton, 2014).

The composition of support appropriate for widening university participation would need to address these academic and social barriers. Thus, five traits encompassed by appropriate support are: flexible and nuanced support; financial support; online and flexible modes of study and support; effective educational support; health support; and support through research and advocacy.

i. Flexible and nuanced support and university structures. Non-traditional students not only have individual, unique sets of strengths and challenges, they also experience varying degrees of these strengths and challenges. The diversity and complexity of disadvantage in higher education requires a nuanced response to equity that is grounded in an understanding of students' individual circumstances and identities (Pitman, 2017). Thus, non-traditional students require flexible support, necessitating a variety of approaches to academic, personal and social support. Moreover, non-traditional students require flexible institutions. Non-traditional students have different requirements to the traditional, on campus, full-time students that university teaching and social structures have historically catered to. The differences between rigid, traditional university teaching structures and the lives of non-traditional students need to be meet by flexible, adaptive student-centred approaches. Student-centred structures and pedagogies that "focus on relationships and

responsiveness to students' needs" support student welfare (Crawford et al., 2019, p. 167)

ii. Financial support. Financial constraints and problems are attributed to an increased risk of psychological distress (Nieuwoudt, 2021) and increase the need for paid employment, both of which have negative impacts on the quality of a student's life, time and ability to study. The provision of financial support and services, such as financial advice, loans and provision of essential equipment can support the retention and success of non-traditional students experiencing financial hardship (McKay & Devlin, 2015).

iii. Online and flexible modes of study and support. The barriers presented by time constraints and distance from campus can be offset by the delivery of well-designed online programs of study (Lambert, 2019). Online study can offer non-traditional students flexibility and the convenience of pursuing their studies at home and at times that suit the various commitments these students may have (Shah et al., 2014).

iv. Effective educational support. The considerable increase in both the net number and diversity of the incoming students, calls for a greater focus on preparation for university (Schendel & McCowan, 2016). Although possessing a wealth of experience to draw on, non-traditional students can be underprepared for the culture and academic requirements of university. This lack of experience and preparedness can be addressed by appropriate support courses (Kemp & Norton, 2014). Effective teaching offers essential support for students learning the requirements of higher education (Devlin, 2013), academic literacies and efficient study practices (Baker et al., 2022).

v. Health support. Non-traditional students represent a diverse student cohort. This diverse student cohort includes students experiencing mental ill-health who benefit from proactive

and supportive learning and teaching activities, structures and strategies (Crawford et al., 2019). Health information and access to university health support services is also of benefit and aid to students with health difficulties.

vi. Support through research and advocacy. Non-traditional students benefit from research and advocacy. Slee (2011), from the perspective of persons with disability, argues that inclusive education requires research to capture and understand experiences of students who are marginalised from, and outsiders to, the dominant educational culture. Non-traditional students are supported by research that contributes to their success and retention. Pedler et al. (2022) researched the relationship between student sense of belonging and retention, finding "a significant difference in the level of belonging between first-generation students and students whose parents had both completed university" (p. 397). A sense of belonging is an indication of retention as there is little motivation for non-traditional students to participate in, and remain committed to, a course of study and institution in which they feel they do not belong. It is, therefore, imperative for "institutions to continue to explore how best to support, include, retain, and graduate students who have diversity in their preparedness and social capital" (McKay & Devlin, 2015, p. 161). Universities need to advocate for, and adapt to, the new student demographic. This advocacy promotes changes to educational culture to serve the needs of all students, including non-traditional students (Ravulo et al., 2020).

In summary, the complexity and individuality of non-traditional students' lives and experiences of disadvantage means that inequity in university participation represents a broad and complex problem. Equity in university participation requires that non-traditional students have access to both university and a range of varied support strategies. Thus, practices that represent an

actively inclusive approach to widening participation need to be multifaceted and flexible.

Although no single approach can bear the full weight of widening university participation, enabling education does make a substantial contribution to equity of university participation. A strength of enabling education is its ability to flexibly provide a range of support strategies that incorporate many of the areas described in this section. The contribution of Enabling Educators and enabling education is explored in the following section.

2.4 THE ROLE OF ENABLING EDUCATORS AND ENABLING EDUCATION

The preceding section argued that efforts to increase the accessibility of higher education have borne mixed results and offered an incomplete solution to redressing issues of equity in higher education. Furthermore, it has been noted that a reason for this lack of success is that students from underrepresented groups often require flexible support from a range of initiatives. Enabling education is one such initiative that makes an important contribution to equity in university participation through offering both access and support. Enabling education is delivered through university pathway programs which provide students, who are underrepresented in university, with the "opportunity to demonstrate a capacity to perform at the levels expected by the institutions to which they seek entry" (Levy & Treacy, 2015, p. 131). These pathway programs provide non-traditional students with both an alternate route to university and support that addresses academic and non-academic barriers.

Enabling education and its contribution to redress issues of equity in higher education. Interest in inclusive education has become a worldwide trend as countries grapple with what it means for education to be more accessible and equitable

(Walton, 2015). Enabling education represents a key initiative in this global trend. Enabling education is internationally known as developmental education (USA), access education (UK), bridging or foundation education. In the Australian context, enabling programs represent an expanding sector in higher education (Bookallil & Rolfe, 2016) and are variously referred to as tertiary preparation programs, pathway programs or foundation programs.

The intent of enabling programs is to improve social inclusion and equity through offering underprepared students from diverse backgrounds access to higher education (Roche & Syme, 2018). Enabling programs are fee-free, providing access to university for students who do not have the necessary academic qualifications or skills for direct entry (Pitman et al., 2017). These programs constitute a substantive part of the Australian Government's widening participation strategy aimed at increasing equity in higher education (Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations, 2009).

The Higher Education Support Act defines an enabling program as "a course of instruction provided to a person for the purpose of enabling the person to undertake a course leading to a higher education award" (Department of the Attorney General, 2003, p. 490). Shah, et al. (2014), provides a more comprehensive, definition of pathway or enabling programs.

> Enabling programs are preparatory courses which on successful completion qualify students to apply for entry into undergraduate programs. These programs cater for students such as recent school-leavers who have not obtained a sufficient entry rank for university or who have dropped out in senior years of secondary education; mature-aged adults; and students from Indigenous, low socio-economic, first in

family, non-English speaking, and refugee backgrounds. (p. 37)

Thus, enabling programs represent both the vehicle for providing access and the vehicle for providing support. Enabling programs are positioned within a proactive concept of widening participation; of "equality turned into an action" (Unterhalter, 2009, p. 416). However, in the Australian context such enabling programs represent a diverse range of programs, with individual characteristics and differences in "*duration*, *mode of delivery* and *target audience*" (McKay et al., 2018, p. 47, italics in original). This variation has been attributed to these programs positioning outside of external standards and alignment with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and Tertiary Education Quality and Standard Agency's (TEQSA) (Baker et al., 2022). The absence of such external, independent benchmarking raises questions regarding these programs' quality and effectiveness (Syme, Davis, et al, 2021).

Enabling programs and support of equity. Enabling programs represent actively inclusive equity as they address both access and appropriate support as defined by the five traits previously discussed (in Section 2.3). Enabling programs actively respond to the five traits that encompass appropriate support, as follows.

Firstly, enabling programs offer students flexible and nuanced support. Enabling programs are identifiable as 'pedagogies of care' that "are foregrounded in enabling pedagogies, including the emotional labour of care and connection" (Bennett et al., 2016, p. 28). Enabling Educators working in enabling programs "'go the extra mile' for students," engaging with them in ways that are approachable, empathetic and respectful (Bennett et al., 2016, p. 39).

Secondly, the fee-free nature of enabling programs reduces financial pressure, allowing non-traditional students the opportunity to trial university with minimal financial risk. Moreover, enabling programs often offer hire or loan schemes that allow students to access essential equipment such as computers, in such a way as to reduce the financial burden for students.

Thirdly, many enabling programs offer online modes of study to offset constraints of time and distance from campus. These online courses "can meet students where they are currently placed, allowing participation in ways that suit the student considering their individual circumstances and the personal barriers they may have" (Dodo-Balu, 2018, p. 35). Although online study is not without its challenges, online modes of program delivery have a "critical place in widening access and participation in education for a diverse range of students" (Stone, 2017, p. 5; Stone 2021).

Fourthly, enabling programs typically focus on academically underprepared students, who are unable to access university through traditional pathways (Bunn & Westrenius, 2017). Therefore, a significant role of enabling programs is to provide effective teaching support that assists students learning a range of academic skills and competencies, such as academic literacies and study management. As such, enabling programs are a beneficial entry point for academically underprepared students, as their chances of success improve substantially if they first take a pathway program (Kemp & Norton, 2014).

Fifthly, supplying access to counselling support is important for students "at risk of withdrawing from study due to family pressures and mental health issues" (Shah & Cheng, 2019, p. 195). Enabling Educators, in enabling programs can be "an unrecognised source of support and pastoral care" (Bennet & Jones, 2018, p. 2). These educators are also aware of university

counselling and support services and refer students to these, allowing students to access the profession services they require.

Finally, enabling education supports non-traditional students through research and advocacy. Individual Enabling Educators both research and advocate for their students and enabling programs. Moreover, Enabling Educators, through their combined efforts via their professional organisations, such as the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA) and The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), and publications such as International Studies in Widening Participation, research and advocate for non-traditional students, both publicly and at a government level.

The inequity observed in university participation is symptomatic of the wider inequity experienced in Australian society. As such, no approach to widening university education can claim to be wholly successful or comprehensive. However, it is worth noting that approximately 50% of students enrolled in Australia's enabling programs are identified as being from one or more equity groups, such as: low socioeconomic status, as well as regional and remote students (Lomax-Smith et al., 2011). As Syme et al (2021) note, "Enabling programs are designed to equip unprepared students for university study, providing access to a wide range of study options previously inaccessible to them" (p, 2). Considering the social significance of enabling programs, it is curious that little is known about the Enabling Educators whose work facilitates these programs. The paucity of research studying these educators is considered in the following section.

Researching Enabling Educators' understandings of their work and identity. There is variance across the enabling sector in Enabling Educators' identities, employment conditions and experiences of work. Employment conditions of Enabling Educators can vary greatly. Enabling Educators can be employed in academic

or professional roles, on a fulltime or casual basis and are employed in a range of contracts and conditions (Baker et al, 2020). Enabling Educators also occupy a contested space. As Lisciandro (2019) argues, universities are "constantly pressuring [Enabling Educators] to do more with less" (p. 125) and the unique labour demands on Enabling Educators (Crawford, 2018) place time pressures on Enabling Educators who seek to simultaneously fulfill a broad role that includes "lecturing, unit coordinating, professional development, research and the extended help given by each of the lecturers to their students" (Johnson et al., 2021, p. 53). These aspects of Enabling Educators' experiences remain underresearched.

There is a "small but rich body of work that speaks to the importance of enabling education as a key area of equity practice" (Baker et al., 2022, p. 335). In this literature, Australian studies in widening participation have focused on the experiences of students (McKay & Devlin, 2015; Krause, 2017), enabling pedagogy and curriculum (Hitch et al., 2015; O'Rourke et al., 2019) and impact on equity (Bradley et al., 2008; Naylor & James, 2015). Thus, to date, research in enabling education has largely focused on the experiences and identities of the students, with limited attention paid to the experiences and identities of the academics who work in enabling programs.

Although the body of literature studying of Enabling Educators still remains small, the literature does evidence the positive contribution educators make to student success in higher education. For example, Devlin and O'Shea (2012) found that low SES students believed that having competent and engaged lecturers did contribute to their success. Orth and Robinson (2013) found that students believed having a positive attitude towards, and the support of, their lecturers also contributed to success. Hossain et al. (2008) drew attention to the importance of lecturers

who understood the cultural dimensions of teaching students from Indigenous backgrounds and the potential need for greater academic support.

Moreover, the Enabling Educators, themselves, acknowledged the significance of inclusive, flexible and supportive environments for their students (Crawford, 2014; see also Devlin et al., 2012, regarding low SES students), believed that their work provided students with greater preparation for, and resilience at, university (James, 2013). Also, Enabling Educators' engagement in online course delivery, while contested, can be "a method through which previously excluded or marginalised students can gain access to higher education" (Irwin & Hamilton, 2019, p. 102). Although Enabling Educators are key stakeholders in enabling education, they "occupy a somewhat ambiguous space on the fringes of higher education" (Johnston et al., 2021, p. 45) and their contribution "has remained largely unexplored" (Mann, 2021, p. 6).

There is a growing interest in Enabling Educators examining their own pedagogies and identities. Although little is known about Enabling Educators (Priest & McDougall, 2021) the picture emerging of Enabling Educators is one of academics whose identities are marked by a passion and commitment to equity for their students (Strauss, 2020), who utilise distinctive pedagogies concerned with holistic student wellbeing, care and academic capacity (Bennett et al., 2016; Crawford et al., 2019).

For example, Crawford and Johns (2018), in examining student wellbeing in an enabling program, concluded that these educators considered holistic student support, both academic and non-academic, to be intrinsic to their role. The authors further argued for more studies examining the impact of holistic student care on these academics. Crawford et al. (2018) conducted a collaborative autoethnographical study of the emotional labour demands of four enabling educators, reporting on the participants'

experience of the emotional cost of diverse academic and non-academic student issues, and the support offered by community and by observing student success. The authors recommended further research into the emotion labour of enabling educators.

Bunn's (2019) research examining the role of enabling educators, also supported the importance of holistic student care, concluding the role needed to be reconceptualised from a "solely academic role to one that incorporates and acknowledges the practice of care and support of students is required to meet the holistic needs of students" (Bunn, 2019, p. 152). Recently a special edition of the journal of International Studies in Widening Participation presented a number of insightful autoethnographic and self-reflective narratives that personalise Enabling Educators (Johnston, 2021; Santamaria & Priest, 2021; Willans, 2021).

The small body of research examining Enabling Educator Identity (EEI) is eclipsed by the volume of similar studies of teacher identity and academic identity. The relative paucity of research examining Enabling Educators represents a knowledge gap in enabling education. This gap will be addressed in greater detail at the conclusion of the following chapter (Chapter 3) that considers Enabling Educators and academic identity.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined three concepts of equity and the comprehensiveness of their contribution to widening participation. The three concepts were merit, proportional representation and active inclusion. The first two approaches to equity, merit and proportional based approaches considered student access to higher education but disregarded the range of academic and social barriers encountered by non-traditional students. In failing to recognise and account for student disadvantage, merit and proportional based approaches to equity failed to comprehensively

address widening participation. The third approach to equity, equity as active inclusion, accounted for both the access and support non-traditional students require, and so represented a more comprehensive approach to widening participation. Enabling education was considered to be an actively inclusive approach to widening participation. Although the trenchant nature of inequity poses too great a challenge for any single approach to redressing inequity in higher education, enabling education has made a measurable contribution to widening university participation. Considering the role Enabling Educators play in enabling education, not enough is currently known about these educators' identities and how they understand their support of non-traditional students in pathway programs. Therefore, this thesis in researching variations in Enabling Educators' experiences and understandings of their work in enabling programs gives these educators voice and contributes to a gap that exists in enabling education literature.

CHAPTER 3: ENABLING EDUCATORS AND ACADEMIC IDENTITY

Identity is a powerful construct for studying individual's conceptions of themselves, their experiences and social contexts. "Identity gives us an idea of who we are and how we relate to others and to the world in which we live" (Woodward, 1997, p. 1).

Identity provides an individual with a frame of reference for their decision-making, values and actions (Berzonsky, 2011) and so represents an effective research tool for studying how people understand their roles, selves, interactions in society, behaviours and experiences (Côté & Levine, 2014). This chapter provides a broad overview of several key debates in identity literature that help define and position a concept of identity congruent with this phenomenographic study of Enabling Educator Identity (EEI).

The chapter is composed of two sections that provide the context necessary for a phenomenographic study of the identity of Enabling Educators. The first section draws from literature on identity to describe and position an identity framework conducive to a phenomenographic research approach. It maps a broad typography of identity literature through exploring the self and identity; psychological and sociological identity perspectives; the interaction between agency and identity; the fluidity of identity; and recognised research approaches. This section concludes with a summary that describes a phenomenographic research approach framework for identity. The second section draws on literature more specifically focused on concepts of professional and academic identities to contextualise the study of Enabling Educator Identity (EEI). As Enabling Educators are academics who work in university enabling programs, this section positions EEI within the literature that studies academic identity. The chapter concludes by making

exploratory statements about the Enabling Educator academic identities that are the focus of this study.

3.1 POSITIONING IDENTITY

Identity is an enigmatic concept that is frequently drawn upon in both the literature and general discourse. Although identity is a useful concept for research framing and understanding peoples' experiences and activity (Castelló et al., 2021), definitions of identity vary across academic disciplines (O'Keeffe & Skerritt 2021) and there is a wide spectrum of perspectives on the nature and locus of identity (West, 2018). In western tradition, identity presents as a vast and complex concept with many hidden elements (Baumeister, 1997). The multiplicity of approaches and definitions contributes to the elusive nature of the concept and the difficulty to formulate a consistent fundamental definition (Wheeler, 2017). As a result, identity literature "incorporates a grab bag of varying approaches, theses, and conceptual understandings" (Baumeister, 1997, p. 16). The volume and diversity of identity constructs presents a challenge for researchers causing universal conclusions about identity to be largely impossible and impractical (Castelló et al., 2021). A solution to this dilemma for researchers lies in working to "carve out of the vast literature on the self and identity a workable set of definitions" (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 733) while acknowledging the richness of this multidimensional perspective on identity. Thus, the modest scope and pragmatic task of this chapter is 'carving out' a workable framework for identity that is compatible with phenomenographic research methodology.

A common thread in both identity literature and phenomenographic studies of identity is an interest in the ways individuals and groups understand and interpret their life experiences. Identity studies have an interest in experience

because peoples' understandings of their life experiences and identities are inseparably joined (West, 2018). Experiences and understandings are also significant themes in phenomenography, for as Marton, the founder of phenomenography, asserts,

> … in order to make sense of how people handle problems, situations, the world, we have to understand the way in which they experience the problems, the situations, the world, that they are handling. (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 111)

Thus, the aim of this chapter is to draw on commonalities between phenomenography and identity studies to describe and position a concept of identity that is congruent with, and effective in, the phenomenographic study of the phenomenon of Enabling Educator Identity (EEI). The chapter explores this framework of identity through the following key questions:

1. What are the characteristics of an identity construct that are congruent with phenomenography?
2. What is the best way to collect participant data on a phenomenographic identity construct?
3. What can phenomenographic research of Enabling Educator Identity (EEI) contribute to an understanding of Enabling Educators and their work of widening university?

The initial two questions will be explored first, starting with a discussion of the self and identity. The final question, regarding the thesis' contribution to the work of Enabling Educators, is explored later in the chapter.

3.1.1 THE SELF AND IDENTITY

The self and identity are constructs used to explore and understand how people position and understand themselves. Although the concepts of the self and identity widely permeate

research, there is a lack of consensus about the meanings of the two concepts (Côté & Levine, 2014). A clear distinction between the self and identity remains elusive (Rodgers & Scott, 2008), which is in part attributable to the intertwined nature of the two concepts. The self and identity represent "opposing sides of the same reality, sides of a coin, in which the self-side is a subjective side opening to an inward life and the identity-side opening to an external life" (Duus, 2020, p. xi). Thus, while the two concepts are inextricably and reflexively connected, the self can be understood as an internal self-representation while identity can be understood as an external self-representation.

The self as internal self-representation. The self can be understood as an internalised "mental representation of oneself" (Kihlstrom et al., 2003, p. 69). The self asserts itself externally in social contexts through the behavioural and cognitive activity of the identity (Morf & Mischel, 2012). The self is not an isolated and immutable entity but an internalised cognitive self-representation that can reflexively interact with other selves and social structures (Kihlstrom et al., 2003). The self can also be informed and shaped by experience (West, 2018), mediated either consciously or unconsciously, allowing the potential for either continuity of the self or change. New experiences and roles, other's positive and negative perceptions, are incorporated and filtered through the current self-perceptions held by the individual (Tice & Wallace, 2003).

Being reflective, socially cognisant and agentic, the self is both established and constantly modified by reference to a person's own understandings, memories, thoughts, cognition and emotion (Elliott, 2020). This complex, reflexive interaction allows the self to be "stable *and* variable, consistent *and* inconsistent, rational *and* irrational, planful *and* automatic, agentic *and* routinized" (Morf & Mischel, 2012, p. 27, emphasis in original).

Thus, the self can exhibit characteristics of both continuity and discontinuity.

Identity: The self as external self-expression. Identity is the expression of the self in social contexts and roles. Identity can be defined as "the ways in which the self is represented and understood in dynamic, multidimensional and evolving ways" (Ecclestone, 2007, p. 122). Identity responds within specific social settings or professional roles, facilitating social position and connectedness (Ryan & Deci, 2003). For example, the expression 'the self as an educator,' or 'the self as a student' both represent socially understood identities (Stets & Burke, 2003).

Identities can also be considered malleable and adjustable. An individual's cognitive self-awareness allows the self to response to changes in the social environment by reflexivity adapting identity. Therefore, it can be argued that identity reflexively engages with the self, as a "crucial interface between the private organism and society" (Baumeister, 1997, p. 191). It is through identity that the inner self represents and expresses itself in society and by which society expresses itself to, and categorises, the individual (Hewer & Lyon, 2018). Thus, identity can also be considered as an idiosyncratic construction of the self that acts as a two-way conduit to both externally project the self in society while transmitting feedback from the society, internally, back to the self.

One mechanism for identity adjustment and adaptation is facilitated by the internalised awareness of similarity and difference. Hewer and Lyon (2018) concisely articulate the relationship between reflective cognition and social interaction, in stating;

> … we have the unique ability to reflect on who we are and the groups to which we belong, categorization appears to be

> an integral part of living in a social world, and it appears to satisfy two psychological needs—a sense of belonging with others and a sense of distinctiveness from others. (p. 95)

In this way, identity constructs are formed and continuously maintained through complex feedback loops, generated as the internal self externally projects and expresses the self in social contexts through identity. Simultaneously, the self internally reflects and responds to social cues and experiences of acceptance and rejection, commonality and difference. In such concepts of the self and identity, although the self animates identity, the self remains hidden, internal and inaccessible to another person. The focus of the study consists of Enabling Educators' concepts of their identities as the more accessible, external-facing expressions of their selves.

3.1.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS OF IDENTITY

Psychological and sociological constructs of identity represent two significant perspectives that have tended to dominate the landscape and define points of reference in identity studies. Epistemological differences in psychological and sociological approaches to identity have led psychology and sociology to different definitions of identity (Hoang & Pretorius 2019). The following section broadly surveys psychological and sociological constructs of identity to consider the guiding questions regarding innate characteristics of identity and suitable research approaches.

Psychological concepts of identity internalise the locus of identity and explore the significance of biological, cognitive and reflective processes in constructing identity. Sociological concepts, on the other hand, externalise identity and explore the significance of subjective experience, power structures and societal forces in shaping identity. Although psychology and sociology represent two

differing approaches to constructing concepts of identity, these approaches should not be considered mutually exclusive. In fact, using a combined, multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach contributes to a comprehensive understanding of identity and recognises the complexity of the subject (Côté & Levine, 2014, Elliott, 2020). Examining the differing implicit psychological and sociological assumptions about the nature and study of identity contributes to a comprehensive perspective on the locus of identity, the level of agency and permanency afforded to identity and appropriate methodological approaches to the study of identity. Each of these considerations is discussed in turn below.

i. The locus of identity*.* Psychological and sociological constructs of identity position the locus of identity differently. Psychology places identity within biological and cognitive processes, whereas sociology considers identity within societal structures.

External, sociological identity constructs. Sociology studies identity constructs through analysing individuals' subjective experiences of social structures (Cổté & Levine, 2002). Sociological studies of identity have traditionally emphasised an external, social construction of identity, viewed through the perspective of various established social structures such class, gender and ethnicity. In sociology, experience is quintessential to both forming and understanding. Social and cultural contexts are emphasised as they are considered to have a preeminent role in moulding and defining identity (Owens et al., 2010). This has led to an emergent and fluid concept of identity that is deeply influenced by, and reflective of, modern fragmented societies and changing social forces (Stets & Burke, 2003).

Although societal influence on identity is undeniable, questions are raised about extreme sociological positions. Even within the field of sociology, the argument is raised is that, taken

to the extreme, sociologism establishes a reductionist position which attributes all human behaviour to social processes and leads to a form of social determinism (Côté & Levine, 2014). Furthermore, Côté and Levine (2014) posit that the classic sociological emphasis of the role of social stimulus, is less able to account for agency and the roles of cognition and emotion in interacting with social stimuli and shaping identity. Differing social theories attribute varying levels of determination or agency to the individual (Elliott, 2020). For example, Stryker (2008) argues that although individuals are born into pre-existing social structures that shape their identities, societies are also influenced and shaped by individuals. Acknowledging that society and individuals are constitutive of each other, allows for a pragmatic concept of identity, variously influenced by both social determinism and agency. A further criticism of sociological research is that due to their qualitative research techniques, sociological studies are considered to lack both empirical support of their theoretical claims and a coherence as a body of work, which limits its wider availability and use (Côté & Levine, 2014).

Thus, sociological approaches recognise, and account for, the role of societal forces in the construction of identity. However, sociological studies of identity lack accountability of the internal processes such as agency, cognition and emotion, thereby raising questions about rigour and wider generalisability.

Internal, physiological identity constructs. Psychological studies of identity constructs have traditionally focused on internal cognitive and biological processes that interact to construct a conception of identity that is a continuous and relatively stable mental representation (Owens et al., 2010). Psychological approaches view identity as an internal phenomenon, originating within an individual’s psyche and located in the central nervous system (Vignoles, 2017). Furthermore, psychology has tended to

study the formation and maintenance of identity from a cognitive perspective (Côté & Levine, 2014). Thus, psychological researchers have tended to emphasise personal, cognitive processes to account for human identity and behaviour. Psychological perspectives take account of social forces, but give greater emphasis to developmental, biological and cognitive influences in identity formation and maintenance. Thus, psychological studies may overlook the influence of cultures, social structures and lifestyle factors on physical and cognitive development. Therefore, a fundamental criticism of psychological approaches is the failure to consider the influence of social constructs on the internal cognitive and biological processes that mould and shape identity.

A combined psychological-sociological identity construct. Psychological and sociological approaches are not mutually exclusive, and a combination offers a pragmatic and more comprehensive perspective of identity. The importance and influence of both psychological and sociological factors raises questions regarding the wisdom of discarding the insight offered by either approach. Moreover, considering the two approaches together creates potential for a concept of identity that reflexively incorporates both external experiences and the internal processing and consideration of these experiences. The combination allows for a concept of identity "codetermined by individual proclivities and interests as they interact with social pressures, constraints and reward systems" (Ryan & Deci, 2003, p. 255). Thus, in merging approaches, identity can be understood as an active, reflexive response to both internal emotional reactions and reflective thought processes as well as an external sociological environment (Rodrigues & Mogarro, 2019). In this study, the joint consideration of both psychological and societal forces allows for a concept of identity that is responsive to phenomenographic research that

considers both social experience and the cognitive reflection required to create and articulate meaning for that experience.

ii. Societal structure, agency and identity. The structure-agency debate concerns the extent to which an individual has agency to express individual choices and behaviours over the dictates of social structures and cultural norms (Côté & Levine, 2002). The influences of agency, on one hand, and experiences of societal pressure, on the other, are important factors in the formation, adaptation or maintenance of identity constructs. Thus, the question of agency is significant because it regards an individual's ability to shape their own identity within, or even independently of, their experiences of prevailing social structures.

The argument against agency: the social structure argument. Within the structure-agency debate, the social structure argument supports the role of societal structures in establishing and reinforcing identities. Traditionally, this side of the debate has been supported by sociologists who, in studying social structures such as class, sexual orientation and gender identification, or ethnicity, have conceived human social interactions, attitudes and behaviours to be determined and shaped by societal forces (Elliott, 2020). So strong is the perceived link between identity and societal structures that Côté and Levine (2014) suggest that for many sociologists, social structures are imbibed with a "level of existence of their own" (p. 9), so that without society there can be no concept of identity.

Sociological conceptualisations of identity attribute the formation and maintenance of identity to social structures and interaction, thus, limiting the level of agency attributed to the individual (Canrinus et al., 2012). The influence of social structures on individual identity and behaviours can be exerted through the choices offered or denied by social status, economics or education, along with various rewards or punishments offered by society for

compliance with or rejection of societal norms and expectations. Taken to the logical extreme, the social structural position assigns the individual the role of a "mere helpless, passive spectator of events" (Baumeister, 1997, p. 193).

The argument for agency. In this debate, the argument for agency supports the role and freedom of the individual to act independently of societal and cultural norms, to be unconstrained and active in shaping their own identities and environments. In the literature, agency "refers to separation of the individual from, and his or her mastery of, the environment" (McAdams, 1997, p. 66) and is evidenced through the "capacity for intentional, wilful behaviour, sometimes in spite of social structural obstacles" (Côté & Levine, 2014, p. 219). Agency, is, therefore, a means of altering an individuals' behaviour and environment allowing individuals to be social producers and not merely social products (Holland et al., 1998). Thus, agency is a reflective strength allowing individuals to, firstly, differentiate between their desires and the dictates of societal structures and, secondly, act upon their choices. Acts of choice in which individuals or groups experience exclusion or difficulty not only define agency, but choices also play a role in forming and strengthening identity (Day 2018; Elliott, 2020). Moreover, modern cultures attribute high degrees of agency to the individuals in ways that connote assertiveness and independence, actively facilitating acts of choice (Sigelman et al., 2013). Thus, modern societies have greatly extended the agency attributed to the individual in decision-making and the formation of identities (Baumeister, 1997).

Critics of extreme agentic positions argue that such a view denies the unavoidable impact that social structures exert on agency. Social structures impact agency through influencing the options individuals have access to, are aware of and value. Individuals do not exist as detached free agents in their

communities and societies. The self cannot be understood without reference to the surrounding environment, including political, spatial, temporal structures (Elliott, 2020) and so individual identities are not completely independent of societal contexts (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2018). In fact, social contexts provide professionals, such as the Enabling Educators in this study, with agreed roles and expectations. Thus, it is argued that social structures and cultures are not inherently oppressive and serve a function in providing context and negotiated meaning for productive and beneficial interaction and communication.

An argument for a combined structural-agentic view of identity. Both social structures and agency contribute to an understanding of identity and the ways in which individuals act in social contexts. Constructs of the self and identity are functions of both structural and agentic factors, and an understanding of both is required for a comprehensive perspective on the complex nature of self and identity (Côté & Levine, 2014). As Elliott (2020) states,

> The self is not simply 'influenced' by the external world, since the self cannot be set apart from the social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which it is embedded. Social process in part constitute, and so in a sense are internal to, the self. (p. 16)

In this way, "self and society shape each other" (Baumeister, 1997, p. 201).

Thus, an understanding of identity requires experiences of agency and social structures be considered simultaneously and in tension, as both contribute to a holistic perspective. Agency can operate within a context to either renegotiate an identity that better conforms with collective expectations or resist collective expectations to define and strengthen an independent identity

(Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2018). Thus, identity is defined both by what it conforms with and what it rejects (Westen & Heim, 2003).

iii. The nature of identity: Stable, unified, fluid or fragmented. A further debate considers the fixed or fragmented nature of identity. At the extremes, the debate potentially calls into question the perceived value of studies of identity. If identities are rigid and fixed then practical applications of identity studies, such as professional development studies that inform the growth of professionals' identities, are of limited value. However, if identities are necessarily infinite, fragmented and fluid, the value of studies providing insight and understanding of identity, may only have very limited temporal and narrow contextual value.

Stable, unitary identity constructs. Traditionally both psychological and sociological approaches have viewed identity as stable for a considerable portion of human history (Johnson et al., 2012). Historically, defining an adult's identity has been as straightforward as describing their family, heritage and culture. Such stability of identities was indicative of fixed localities and rigid social structures (Côté & Levine, 2002). Thus, historically societal stability created a sense of identity that was connoted to be continuous, unified and stable (Friese, 2002). Moreover, early modernist cognitive perspectives also theorised identity as stable, often considering identity to be relatively established in adolescence (Wheeler, 2017). However, more recently, postmodernism has presented sociological concepts of identity that are increasingly contested, fluid and fractured (Johnson et al., 2012).

Fragmented and fluid identity constructs. Individuals in contemporary societies have less connection to a specific locality, greater mobility, greater choice through consumerism and have experienced the postmodern collapse of trust in traditional structures (Bauman, 2004). Thus, within the complex, transitory

and decentred nature of contemporary societies, individuals are open to multiple and contradictory sub-identities (Harter, 1997). These more complex and fragmented modern identities are thought to be reflective of contemporary societies. Several postmodernists advance a completely fragmented view of identity, suggesting that the vast multiplicity of sub-identities played out across a seemingly infinite variety of relationship and social contexts, causes "a bombardment of external influences … erodes the very sense that there is an authentic core" (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 41).

As social structures and individual identity are interactively and reflexively developed the fragmented and often contradictory nature of postmodern life is mirrored internally within the individual's self and identity (Elliott, 2020). The many different roles and social descriptors individuals hold and negotiate. These different roles and social descriptors correspond to various sub-identities that can either inform, influence and reflect each other (Stets & Burke, 2003) or be fragmented and in conflict (Harter, 1997 p. 87). As "the pace, intensity and complexity of contemporary culture accelerate, so too does the self become increasingly dispersed" (Elliott, 2020, p. 14), leading to identities that are increasingly acknowledged as "contingent, fragile and incomplete" (du Gay et al., 2000, p. 2).

The complete fragmentation of identity posited by some postmodern perspectives is not inevitable. Although the effects of postmodernism are undeniable, the impact has not been as chaotic or definitive as postmodernists have suggested (Côté & Levine, 2014) because individuals are capable of reflexively and actively synthesising experiences in a self-defining process of unifying their life's narrative (McAdams, 1997, p. 56). Thus, self-reflection and cognitive processes work to unify and stabilise identity, allowing for a "more or less" unitary conceptualisation of identity.

An argument for a contextualised, fluid conceptualisation of identity that is "more or less" unitary.

This section has argued that stable, unitary, continuous concepts of identity fail to adequately address the complexity of modern societies (Ryan & Deci, 2003). The complexity and frequent discontinuity of change in modern societies requires a concept of identity that can allow for both levels of fluidity, complexity and fragmentation (Bauman, 2004). Acknowledging that the nature of modern societies has given rise to complex, multifaceted conceptualisations of identities, does not automatically concede the complete fragmentation of these identities. Reflecting on perceptions of the past, current experiences, and future expectations, allows the individual to find coherence and maintain an identity that is relatively fixed and flexible (Roger et al., 2018). For as Holland et al. (1998) state;

> We are not possessed by one identity, one discourse, one subject-position. Each act is simultaneously a social dynamic, social work, a set of identifications and negotiations, an orchestration or arrangement of voices. Our sense of self comes from the history of our arrangements, our "styles" of saying and doing through others. (p. 211)

Identities are, therefore, subject to a continuous cognitive process of reflective construction and reconstruction, in negotiation with the social contexts (Dugas et al.,2020). Thus, while identities are not stable (Flecknoe et al., 2017), they can be experienced in a way that "feels stable because it is held together in time by memory" (Wheeler, 2017, p. 4). Considering a "more or less" unitary concept of identity avoids the extremes of random ever-changing fragmentation and immutable fixed rigidity, allowing for a construct of identity that has both meaning as a conceptual

research tool, and the ability to contribute to individual and professional development.

iv. The study of identity through objective or subjective research. Identity offers an effective tool for research investigating people's understanding of and experiences in the world they inhabit. Although identity is a valuable construct for researchers, research approaches vary depending on epistemological assumptions (Hoang & Pretorius, 2019). Thus, a further difference in psychological and sociological approaches to identity are the inherent differences in research data collection methods.

A result of the difference in perceived locus of identity is a corresponding difference in preferred research approaches (Côté & Levine, 2014). Psychological approaches traditionally conceive identity as internalised and have tended towards objective and empirical methodologies. Sociological approaches conceptualise identity as experienced in, and inescapably bound to, the societies, cultures and political environments in which individuals exist, and favour subjective, qualitative research methodologies (Elliott, 2020). Although it may not be possible to reconcile these significant epistemological and ontological differences within an individual study, the body of literature generated by the different approaches allows for a comprehensive view of identity constructs.

The position adopted in this study was to acknowledge the value of diverse research perspectives and provide a theoretical framework for, and justification of, my own research position (Castelló et al., 2021). The value of research investigating educators' identities is well supported (Johnson et al., 2012) and qualitative studies, such as this one, are beneficial for gaining deeper insight into complex phenomena, such as identity, and add to the breadth of knowledge (Hong & Francis, 2020). Thus, this study's use of a qualitative empirical research approach is

congruent with phenomenography and lies within the scope of identity research approaches.

Towards a reflexive, multidimensional understanding of identity. Although identity is a powerful conceptual tool for research, studying aspects of human experience, it defies simple, accepted definition (Hammack, 2015). Thus, it is incumbent of the researcher to 'stake their claim' and describe their assumptions about identity and the framework they are using (Castelló et al., 2021). The chapter has, thus far, deconstructed identity research to analyse individual points of difference in the literature. Individually, these concepts of the self and identity, psychological and sociological perspectives, agency and inevitability, continuity and discontinuity, all capture and express different aspects of the experiences and understandings of identity.

These individual aspects are now considered together to present a balanced and comprehensive framework for identity which is neither ultimately subjective — externally attributed by social context, independent of an individual's agency — nor ultimately objective — as an imaginary, internal psychological construct. The identity framework simultaneously draws on sociological and psychological concepts. As identity is a "multiple and shifting affair, in process and changeable" (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 736), the exact blend of sociological and psychological concepts depends on the situation, psychological makeup and social context. As such, an individual's identity, that is "the 'kind of person' one is recognised as 'being,' at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and of course, can be ambiguous or unstable" (Gee, 2001, p. 99).

Similar composite identity constructs are known in the literature. Jenkins (2014), for example, questions, ontologically, psychology's privileging of the individual and sociology's privileging

of the collective as "one or the other is the more substantial or 'real'", arguing that the human world is "the field in which the individual and the collective meet and meld" (p. 40-41). As such, for Jenkins, identity is both internal and external (p. 50), a "practical accomplishment, a process" (p. 49), understood in the "interplay of similarity and difference during interaction" between the individual and the collective (p. 40). Thus, the individual is active generating meaning from their experience.

> … the person as a social participant, as a meaning-making entity for whom the social world is a resource for constituting an identity. This meaning-making person is not just a cognitive entity. It is a whole person, with a body, a heart, a brain, relationships, aspirations, all the aspects of human experience, all involved in the negotiation of meaning (Wenger, 2010 p. 181)

Moreover, individuals can also 'transition' between various identities and balance identity continuity with personal identity development and discontinuity (Castelló et al., 2021).

Common to many concepts of identity is acknowledgment that identity is formed through complex interactions between the social and the personal, between experience and the act of interpretation. As such, Rodgers and Scott (2008) assert that:

> (1) that identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple *contexts* which bring social, cultural, political, and historical forces to bear upon that formation; (2) that identity is formed in relationship with others and involves *emotions*; (3) that identity is *shifting, unstable, and multiple*; and, (4) that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through *stories* over time. (p. 733, emphasis in original)

Thus, a summary of contemporary concepts of identity underscores the significance of interaction between external and internal aspects of identity formation, stability and fluidity. Such concepts of identity recognise the complexity and multidimensional influences of sociocultural, psychological factors, commonality and difference, experience and reflection, on identities. Moreover, the complexity of identity as a construct validates both subjective and objective research perspectives. Having 'staked a claim' and described an identity construct, the next section discussed how this framework is compatible with a phenomenographic research approach.

3.1.3 A PHENOMENOGRAPHIC FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING IDENTITY

This chapter began by posing broad questions regarding the nature of an identity construct that was coherent with phenomenography. Several researchers have noted that studies within their disciplines either poorly define or imply a definition of identity (Castelló et al., 2021; Fitzgerald, 2020) A similar claim has been made regarding phenomenographic identity research. Providing clear definitions improves the quality of research and, therefore, this section contributes to the quality of the thesis by describing a framework for identity congruent with the phenomenographic research approach used in the study.

A concept of identity compatible with a phenomenography would be understood as existing within the following framework.

i. Identity is conceptualised as non-dualistic.
Ontologically, phenomenography adopts a non-dualistic perspective that considers the objective phenomenon and the participants' subjective experiences of the phenomenon to be inseparable and dependant (Larsson & Holmström, 2007). There are conceptualisations of identity that are similarly non-dualist. Jenkins

(2014), for example, ontologically, rejects that either psychological or sociological perspectives are more real because both meet and meld in the human world. This echoes the words of Marton (2000), the founder of phenomenography, who similarly asserted that in phenomenography:

> “There are not two worlds: a real, object world, on the one hand, and a subjective world of mental representations, on the other. There is only one world, a really existing world, which is experienced and understood in different ways by human beings. It is simultaneously objective and subjective.” (p. 105)

Thus, a concept of identity that considers both the subjective sociological experience and the psychological objective reality of identity as inseparable and reflexively dependant, is congruent with phenomenographic ontology.

ii. Identity conceptualised through both social experience and cognitive reflection. Phenomenography has a qualitative, empirical research approach that explores variations in participant’s experiences with, and conceptions of, a phenomenon (Marton, 1986). Phenomenographic research uses a second-order perspective which studies participants’ experiences and understanding of a phenomenon. As such, a framework for identity that reflexively considers participants’ experiences of a social phenomenon, as well as their reflection and meaning-making is congruent with phenomenography. Vignoles (2017), for example, argues that, "The personal and social nature of identity gives the construct its greatest theoretical potential—namely to provide insight into the relationship between the individual and society” (p. 1). Thus, a concept of identity that reflexively considers both social experience and cognitive reflection is congruent with a phenomenographic study of identity.

iii. Identity conceptualised through variation: as both individual and collective. A framework for identity that accounts for both similarity and difference is congruent with phenomenography. The suggested framework considers that identities within groups and social contexts are delimited and defined through similarity and difference (Hammack, 2015). Phenomenographic research studies variations in experience and understanding of a phenomenon that are related but qualitatively distinct. In phenomenography, these variations are considered to be due to the influence of people's differing experiences, interactions with and conceptions of the phenomenon (Säljö, 1979).

Difference Variation, or difference, is valued and inherent in phenomenographic research, as the participants in phenomenographic research will experience and understand the phenomenon being researched in various ways. As such, the differences inherently expected in phenomenographic studies of identity could be accounted for as being the result of differences in experiences and conceptualisations of identities. The presence and importance of social and personal differences is also echoed in identity literature (Hammack, 2015).

Similarity Phenomenographic studies produce an outcome space that is populated by descriptive categories, with each category composed of a cluster of concepts that represent similar understandings and experiences of the phenomenon. This phenomenographic characteristic could be accounted for if the categories correspond to groups of individuals who share similarities and identities because of similarities in experience and conceptions of their work.

Thus, the presence of the variations and groupings inherent in phenomenographic research of identity is congruent with the differences and similarities in identity found in the literature.

iv. Identity conceptualised as both unitary and multifaceted. A framework for identity that accounts for individuals with relatively unified or multiple identities is congruent with phenomenography. When considering identity, and in particular professional identity, professionals can have a range of experiences, as well as multiple complementary or disparate, roles and responsibilities in their work. As such, professionals have the potential to experience and understand their identity in multiple, unified or fragmented ways. The suggested framework considers the potential for multiple identities, mediated by the self when projecting identities that correspond to different experiences, social contexts and professional roles. There is a correlation in phenomenography as researchers have noted participant responses that are varied and multifaceted and can change within a single interview question (Marton & Pong, 2005). This variation may present when a participant, after discussing one perspective, considers a different perspective on their experiences and understandings of an aspect of their professional work. On the other hand, professionals who have generally clear, stable and consistent experiences may understand and articulate their professional identity in more unified terms. Thus, both identity and phenomenographic research methodologies allow for generally stable and continuous identities as well as those which are more fluid and fragmented.

Thus, the concept of identity development in this chapter is congruent with, and supportive of a phenomenographic study of Enabling Educator Identity (EEI). The following section further explores the concept of EEI.

3.2 TOWARDS A STUDY OF ENABLING EDUCATOR IDENTITY (EEI)

The interest in both professional identity and academic professional identity has generated substantial bodies of literature, each with numerous branches that draw on particular identity constructs. Studies of Enabling Educators identities are not prevalent in the literature and so this thesis responds to this paucity of research through its study of Enabling Educator Identity (EEI). Enabling Educators are employed as academics and work in university pathway programs. For this reason, this thesis positions EEI as a subset within the construct of academic professional identity. Academic identity is, itself, positioned within the wider study of professional identity. Thus, the following section introduces the related concepts of profession and professional identity, and then explores the value of studying professional identity. The section then moves to a more focused discussion of academic identity before concluding with a brief introduction to the concept of EEI.

3.2.1 CONCEPTS OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Professional identity shares many similar characteristics with the broader concept of identity. Professional identity is a complex concept that is studied in a wide range of disciplines (Cardoso et al., 2014) and has broad applicability in exploring professionals' experiences, self-concepts, values and actions. Moreover, professional identity is understood to be dynamic and changing (Daniel, 2018), dependent upon, and negotiated within multiple contexts, such as personal, social and workplace contexts, and influenced by relationships, such as professional relationships (Kasperiuniene & Zydziunaite, 2019). Thus, the literature on professional identity concurs with the broad findings already summarised regarding identity in general.

The following section explores concepts of professional identity beginning with a discussion of what is understood to constitute a profession.

i. Factors informing a concept of 'profession'. Defining the concept of profession is difficult and there remains no commonly accepted description. The exact nature of a profession has remained elusive and becomes increasingly complex within divergent theoretical conceptualisations and a rapidly changing workplace (Abadi et al., 2020). Definitions of a profession include:

- taxonomic perspectives that list characteristics or traits that are recognised by either a professional body or wider society,
- functionalist perspectives (the function of the profession in society),
- process oriented perspectives (the historical development of the profession), and
- perspectives that explore the power and status conferred by professional recognition (Abadi et al., 2020; Aukett, 2017; Reed, 2018).

A considerable and diverse body of literature studies variations in definitions and the nature of a profession. One perspective of this broad body of literature is that its value lies not in its conclusiveness, but in its ability to illuminate the complexity and lived experience of the individuals in various professions. This perspective represents a shift in rationale from studying professions for definition, to studying professions for "understanding what professions are about and how they operate" (Saks, 2012, p. 1). Thus, acknowledging the diversity of approaches to studying professions allows an "entering into and embracing" of the complexity, experiences, assumptions and uses of the concept of profession (Burns, 2019, p. 39).

ii. Approaches to describing a concept of professional identity. Professional identity is useful as a tool for studying issues of theory and practice in various professions (Gee, 2001). Although concepts of professional identity are frequently drawn upon in the literature, these concepts can be variously, or vaguely, defined. In part, the diversity of definitions of professional identity, stems from the range of philosophical approaches taken in its study. This range of philosophical approaches is a strength as the examination of a construct as complex as professional identity benefits from multiple research approaches. Several influential approaches to the study of professional identity are described below, each providing insight into an aspect of professional identity.

Professional traits: Professional identity can be understood as aligned with, or defined by, reference to a particular list or specific set of professional traits. One category of professional identity studies is classified as exploring a universal or generalisable taxonomy or set of professional traits. In these studies, such as Sachs (2001) study of teacher professional identity, identity is explored through to a set of attributes, including beliefs, values, motives and experiences, that may connote and define membership of and differentiation from the profession There are also studies of professional identity that capture and highlight significant factors that contribute to shaping professional identity. Such factors can include "social experience, educational context, perceived congruence with the profession, demographic characteristics, professional image, professional experience, personal development and self-engagement" (Barbarà-Molinero et al., 2017, p. 189). In such studies, the sociological concepts of similarity and difference are influential in defining professional identity.

Professional contexts: Professional identity can also be understood as derived from specific professional contexts. These

studies explore professional identity within the work-related contexts in which professionals live and work. Here, concepts of professional identity can be understood as contextual (Clarke et al., 2013). In a profession, members draw their identity from the social workplace relationships in their professional context. These contexts

> … inevitably shape our notions of who we perceive ourselves to be and how others perceive us. We do not necessarily perceive contexts (which include ways of thinking and knowing) as much as we absorb them, often taking them for granted as what is "real". (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 734)

Common work, or occupational, contexts contribute to professional identity and so professionals develop shared values, norms, and perspectives (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984, p. 287).

Professional roles: Professional identity can further be understood as influenced and shaped by specific professional roles. In these studies, professional identity is intrinsically tied to specific professions. This link is considered so significant that changing to a new profession requires a transition to a new professional identity (Bentley et al., 2019). In these studies, an individual's professional identity is understood to be reflexively influenced by specific professional roles and the social perception of that role, both in the workplace and the broader society in which the professional lives. Moreover, it is noted that even within a single organisation, a professional may have multiple roles and contexts, such as employee, manager and team member. Such "multiple contexts" "brings forth multiple aspects of oneself" (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 735).

Reflective: Professional identity can also be considered as constructed by the individual through reflection (Noble et al., 2014). In these studies, professional identity may also be

understood to be reflective and include the professional's continuous negotiation in defining and identifying with their work and its social context (Dugas et al., 2020). As such, in these studies, professional identity is reflectively constructed as the professional attributes meaning to their experiences, roles and social interactions.

Combined psychological sociological perspectives: Professional identity research can be found that aligns with psychological, sociological or combined perspectives. Combined research approaches reflect a contextualised interplay between the professional's internal, cognitive processes and their sociological environment. Thus, an individual's understanding of their professional identity develops through interaction with the professional environment, as a "subjective self-conceptualization associated with the work role adopted" (Adams et al., 2006, p. 56). In this way, professional identity provides a useful 'framework' by which professionals can "claim purpose and meaning for themselves and explicate how they contribute to society" (Caza & Cleary, 2016, p. 6). Thus, professional identity may be used as a tool to comprehend the ways professionals understand themselves and their professional experiences, beliefs and actions.

In conclusion, professional identity is a broad concept that pragmatically connotes an individual's "sense of being a professional" (Paterson et al., 2002, p. 6). This construct of identity represents an individual's self-concept of who they understand themselves to be professionally (Slay & Smith, 2011) and by which professionals self-define (Ibarra, 1999). As previously noted, a reflexive relationship exists between experience and identity (West, 2018), so professional identity may be understood to consist of "both self-image and role; that is of *who professionals think they should be* as members of their institutionalised collective and *what they do* in their day-to-day

context" (Hendrikx, 2020, p. 5, emphasis in original). The value for this study is that such constructs of professional identity offers a means by which to study the nexus between 'who am I' and 'what I do', through exploring the reflexive relationship between a professional's understanding of their professional identity and professional practice. Thus, professional identity offers a suitably broad context for investigating Enabling Educators' professional identities and the ways of conceiving their work.

3.2.2 ACADEMICS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

Academic identity is a specialised professional identity construct that is used in the study of academics working in universities. Although academic identity is positioned within the wider study of professional identities, academic identity is informed and shaped by its unique professional context. Studying academic identity contributes to the understanding of academics and the development of academic identity as a field of research (Daniel, 2018). Recently, considerable fundamental structural and policy change in higher education has led to greater interest in researching the nature of academic identities and the impact of these changes on academics, both personally and professionally (Flecknoe et al., 2017). This section provides an overview of academic professional identity and discusses the contested nature of academic identities.

As an identity construct, academic's identities are a 'work in progress', shaped by their own personality and an 'amalgam' composed of their personal experiences, history, and social identities (Aitken, 2010; Hoang & Pretorius, 2019). As Taylor (2008) states, noting the relationship between the past, present experience and identity:

> Identity work is ongoing work. It is work that is constituted by history and by the conditions within which we live and

> work, including the conflicts and tensions within specific workplaces. (p. 27)

Historically, academic identity has been defined by the Humboldtian tradition of research and teaching. Originally considered to be two different approaches to the same activity – “a presentation of knowledge-claims to someone to whom it was new” (Macfarlane & Erikson, 2020, p. 1137), these two activities have been considered integral to defining the professional role and identity of academics. Moreover, Australian universities also include a service and administration component in addition to research and teaching, leaving academics feeling overwhelmed with workloads (Miller, 2019).

Although the Humboldtian tradition remains influential, changes in higher education contexts, such as new funding and management models, have placed an increasing strain on traditional concepts of academic identity (Laiho et al., 2020). Increasingly, modern academic identities are shaped and constrained by a range of external pressures (Dashper & Fletcher, 2019) including: institutional financial pressures, market forces, corporatisation and increasing university managerialism, all of which undermine traditional concepts of academic identity and shift the roles and work of academics (Arvaja, 2018; Dugas et al., 2020). As academic identities can be defined by "the values and beliefs" that academics "hold regarding their work" (Leisyte & Dee, 2012, p. 125), academics respond tangentially to the tensions and conflicts created by these external influences. As the academics resist or comply with these influences, they create new facets and aspects of academic identity, both as individual academics and within academic communities (Aitken, 2010, Arvaja, 2018).

Further influences on academic identity are the academics’ associations with their specific disciplines and broader traditional

academic concepts, such as academic freedom and research autonomy (Jawitz, 2009). The relationship between academics' professional identities and their disciplines is not without complexity. Many academics have a specific, recognised discipline that defines their academic identity and confers a level of prestige. However, this aspect of academic identity is vexed for academics in new disciplines and those disciplines perceived as vocational. In these instances, academic professional identities are less clear or even exposed to negative perceptions (Dashper & Fletcher, 2019). Moreover, academics who perceive they lack suitable academic credentials, such as a doctorate, may even feel excluded and incorporate an 'imposter syndrome' as part of their academic identity (Munro et al., 2018).

This chapter positions Enabling Educator Identity within the broader construct of academic identity. This is relevant in a time of flux and challenge, between historical, established, Humboldtian identity constructs and modern, contested, neoliberal constructs. Secondly, the affirmation of the identities of academics in disciplines considered prestigious was contrasted with the questioning of the identities of academics in unknown or vocational disciples. Enabling Educators as academics working in sub-bachelor pathway programs are more likely to identify with the latter group.

3.2.3 THE VALUE OF UNDERSTANDING ENABLING EDUCATOR IDENTITY (EEI)

The current section explores the third question posed in this chapter, 'What can a phenomenographic research of Enabling Educator Identity (EEI) contribute to an understanding of Enabling Educators and their work of widening university (EEI)?' Firstly, phenomenographic research of EEI benefits Enabling Educators.

Educators "ways of thinking and understanding are vital components of their practice" (Nespor, 1987, p. 317) and,

therefore, educators benefit from studies and professional development that leads to a greater self-awareness of their practice and the constructs that guide their own 'meaning-making' (Greyling et al., 2009). Moreover, research that specifically focuses on Enabling Educators promotes both enabling education as a distinct research area, and the position of Enabling Educators within higher education. Enabling Educators can experience feelings of marginalisation in their own institutions (Burke, 2013). Conducting research into academic professional identity is significant because it "supports a sense of belonging and contributes to the scholarly advancement of a discipline" (Daniel, 2018, p. 548). Therefore, researching EEI gives these educators a presence and voice while also contributing to the establishment of enabling education as a discipline.

Secondly, studies that improve Enabling Educators' practices are beneficial to pathway students. Educators are key influencers of student performance and outcomes (Hattie, 2003, Stenfors-Hayes et al., 2012). Education research acknowledges a strong correspondence between educators' understandings of their identities, their world view and teaching practice (van Lankveld et al., 2017). Educators "bring themselves into the classroom" (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 732) and have identities that are deeply influenced by their lived experience (Clegg, 2008). As Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018) notes that, "research on teacher identities and identity development has shown that identities are central in understanding teacher socialization, the development of their expertise, and their relationships to pupils" (p. 25). Research investigating educators, their experiences and understanding of teaching is vital because these educators shape the learning experiences and potential for success of their students (Hargreaves, 1994). Therefore, this study's examination of EEI is important because the findings can positively impact enabling

education for the non-traditional students studying in pathway programs.

Finally, there are advantages to using a phenomenographic research approach to study EEI. While phenomenographic research approaches are discussed in the following two chapters, two benefits are briefly addressed in this section. Firstly, phenomenography allows the abstract concept of identity to be studied obliquely. Phenomenography has a non-dualist ontology, that allows conclusions to be drawn from the study of the relationship between the Enabling Educators and their more concrete and commonly understood experiences and understandings of work as Enabling Educators. As professional identity is shaped by a professional's work experiences, beliefs and values, researching Enabling Educators' experiences and understandings of work allows conclusions to be drawn about EEI. A second advantage afforded by using a phenomenographic research approach is that exploring variations in Enabling Educators' understandings and experience of their work, captures and presents the diverse voices of Enabling Educators.

3.3 CONCLUSION

The chapter has argued that the concept of identity offers a beneficial research tool for understanding how individuals and groups perceive themselves and their actions within their social contexts. Identity is simultaneously both a simple and profoundly complex construct. At one level, and in its essence, identity is the answer to the simple and common question of "Who are you?" However, finding an exact definition of identity and its nature, explaining the psychological and social process by which individual and group identities are formed, maintained and change, have proven to be complex.

Against a multiplicity of concepts of identity, the chapter has carved out a useful set of definitions using three key questions. The first part of the chapter responded to the question of the validity of using a phenomenographic research approach in exploring identity. Drawing on identity literature, a non-dualist concept of identity was conceptualised that equally acknowledged and valued the claims of sociology and psychology. This study's identity construct balances social experience with cognitive reflection; individual with collective identities; and the continuous with the discontinuous nature of identity. This concept of identity aligns with both identity literature and phenomenography's ontological position and expected variations. Moreover, because a range of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are known in identity research, phenomenography's qualitative, empirical research approach is compatible with contemporary studies in the field.

The second part of the chapter explored concepts of professional identity to position the study of Enabling Educator Identity (EEI). This section argued that modern professional identities are contested and shaped by numerous influences. These professional identities, both individually and collectively are shaped by values, beliefs and reflections about work as well as the amalgam of professionals' various social contexts and their experiences practicing their professions. As identities, experiences and meaning are reflexively interrelated, professional identities can be studied by investigating professionals' work experiences and the values and beliefs that inform understandings of their roles and work. Using a phenomenographic research approach to investigate variations in Enabling Educators' experiences and understandings of their work, conclusions were drawn about their identities. A comprehensive discussion of the phenomenographic research approach used in this study is discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4: PHENOMENOGRAPHY AS A RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY: VARIATIONS IN WAYS OF KNOWING

Chapters 2 and 3 presented a synthesis of relevant literature to contextualise and rationalise the study's research questions. Chapter 2 established an actively inclusive description of equity and positioned Enabling Educators within both the broader global trend of widening participation and the narrower Australian university context. Chapter 3, firstly, explored psychological and sociological concepts of identity to propose a composite identity construct that was congruent with a phenomenographic study. Next, the chapter reviewed literature investigating the reflexive relationship between professionals' understandings of their work and identities. The chapter also discussed the positioning and multifaceted, complex academic of identities of Enabling Educator Identity within the broader context of academic identity. Chapter 3 concluded by drawing attention to the value of studying the identities of Enabling Educators and the lack of identity research on an academic Enabling Educator. To this end, the thesis contributes to the literature by using a phenomenographic study of the variations in the ways Enabling Educators experience and understand their professional identities and work in pathway programs.

Chapters 4 and 5 introduce the philosophy and methodology of the research. Chapter 4 introduces phenomenography, focusing on its theoretical aspects. The following chapter (Chapter 5) concerns practical aspects of phenomenography and the research design of this study, also discussing practical implications of using a phenomenographic research approach. It provides details of this study's research methods, including data collection and analysis as well as attending to the quality and rigour of the study.

The current chapter (Chapter 4) introduces phenomenography and discusses the philosophical tenets, underlining assumptions and research interests of phenomenography. A critique is also offered, followed by a justification for the use of pure phenomenography, the branch of phenomenography that informs this study's theoretical framework and methodology. The section concludes with a discussion of phenomenography's contribution to the study's research questions and values.

4.1 HISTORY AND BRANCHES OF PHENOMENOGRAPHY

Phenomenography is an empirical, qualitative approach to research that explores variations in the ways people experience and understand various phenomena in their world. Phenomenography is a relatively new approach that has origins in educational research. More recently, phenomenography has been applied to an ever-widening set of research interests, including the investigation of professionals' experiences and understandings of their work, as with this study. This section backgrounds the chapter with a short introduction to phenomenography, then provides a brief overview of the development of phenomenography in education research and its expanding influence in, and applications to, a range of other disciples and areas of interest. A brief survey of some of the wider applications is offered. The section concludes with a justification of the study's use of a 'pure' phenomenographic approach.

Phenomenographic research emerged in the 1970s and was first described by Ference Marton (1981).

> The kind of research we wish to argue for is complementary to other kinds of research. It is research which aims at description, analysis, and understanding of experiences; that is, research which is directed towards experiential

> description. Such an approach points to a relatively distinct field of inquiry which we would like to label phenomenography. (p. 185)

Thus, phenomenography is a qualitative, empirical methodology designed to explore how people make sense of the ways they experience an aspect of their world, an experience referred to as the phenomenon (Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002).

Phenomenographic research investigates variation in experiences of a phenomenon and is an approach for "mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them" (Marton, 1986, p. 143). Phenomenography holds that the different individual experiences of a phenomenon allow for qualitatively different understandings (Larsson et al., 2003). The "object of phenomenographic research is the way (or the different ways) in which we experience — or are aware of — the world around us" (Marton, 1994, p. 7). Thus, phenomenographic research "addresses the question of what a phenomenon looks like as much as how it is seen" (Marton, 1994, p. 7). Individual nuances of what a phenomenon 'looks like' and 'is seen' can vary greatly. However, initial phenomenographic studies found that, collectively, people hold only a limited number of qualitatively different understandings of a phenomenon (Marton, 1986, p. 37). This finding has been supported by a considerable body of subsequent phenomenographic research (Larsson & Holmström, 2007).

Although the phenomenographic research tradition has its roots in educational research, phenomenography has expanded to incorporate a wider range of areas of study. Phenomenography was originally employed to investigate student conceptions of, and approaches to, learning. Marton and Säljö's (1976) seminal work

on deep and surface learning is representative of this early research focus. Since its inception, phenomenography has developed several strands of phenomenographic philosophy and methodology that differ in purpose and practice. Although, these phenomenographic streams share an overarching common philosophy, there are variations within their research purposes and practices (Åkerlind, 2012). Cibangu and Hepworth's (2016) critical review discusses three 'lines' (p. 152) of phenomenography: naturalistic (observations of participants interacting with the phenomenon), hermeneutic (analysis of texts and statements) and phenomenological (concerned with the essence of an experience). Hasselgren & Beach (1997) added a further two strands of phenomenology, namely discursive and experimental. The various streams of phenomenographic study allow phenomenography to be applied to a wide range of contexts.

Developmental phenomenography and variation theory. Developmental phenomenography and variation theory are two common strands of phenomenographic research. Developmental phenomenography has an empowering focus on providing a means of moving from "less powerful to more powerful ways" (Bowden & Green, 2005 p. 72) of understanding and engaging with the phenomenon. Thus, developmental phenomenography is developed for a particular context (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016), for a particular purpose. As, Green and Bowden (2009) explain, in developmental phenomenography,

> the research is designed with the intention that there will be practical outcomes. Implications for learning and for practice abound. The research is intended to inform and influence practice (as well as add to a body of knowledge). In other words, research is not conducted merely for its own sake, but rather to inform and improve practice. (p. 53)

Variation theory is another well-known branch of phenomenography. This branch of phenomenography is also employed in research that is intentionally aimed at specific problems to effect change. Variation theory, for example, is used to study critical characteristics of student learning, to understand why student conceptions vary in depth, with the express aim of guiding learning theory (Holmqvist & Selin, 2019). There are arguments suggesting phenomenography and variation theory are "basically the same theory" (Åkerlind, 2018, p. 952). Proponents of variation theory argue for a distinction and suggest that the focus of variation theory on attaining a practical outcome of the research is the point of difference. For example, Stamouli and Huggard (2007) posit that, "using phenomenography one can identify how key concepts are understood by the learner, while variation theory can assist in identifying the aspects that need to be varied for the students to gain a deep, and complete, understanding" (p. 181).

Pure or discursive phenomenography. Marton referred to three lines of phenomenographic research: content-related research studying variations in student learning outcomes, domain-related research studying student learning in specific subject area particular domains, and what Marton (1986; Marton & Booth, 1997) called 'pure' phenomenography. This third phenomenographic approach marks an expansion of Marton's original concept of phenomenography, and explores "how people view aspects of their reality in areas outside education, such as politics, inflation, social security or taxes" (Ireland et al., 2009, p. 2). Pure phenomenography coincides with Hasselgren and Beach's (1997) discursive phenomenography and is marked, firstly, by an interest in the 'phenomenographic investigation itself,' rather a concern for experimentation or evaluation and, secondly, the belief that participant conceptions of the phenomenon can be understood from their discourses, alone (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997, p. 197).

Phenomenographic research has been applied to a wide range of contexts and research questions outside of education, investigating disciplines with diverse interests, such as academic identity (Harness & Boyd, 2021), academic advising (McGill, 2018), personal responsibility for health (Björk et al., 2021), baby-boomer engagement in non-standard employment (Niesel et al., 2020), and owner practices that contribute to the resilience of family firms (Conz et al., 2020). Though diverse, each of the previous studies successfully contextualised and applied phenomenography to answer its research questions. This earlier phenomenographic research has been influential in the formation of the research questions and approach adopted in this study. Formative studies include Larrson, Holmström and Rosenqvist's investigations of anaesthetists' understandings of work (Larsson & Holmström, 2007; Larsson et al., 2003) and Sandberg's (1994; 2000) studies of human competence in the workplace.

In summary, this thesis is a 'pure' or 'discursive' phenomenographic study. Although this study has an interest in contributing practical outcomes for Enabling Educators and enabling education, the study is neither probing into the causes of a problem nor has a specific developmental focus. In phenomenography, "the goal of the phenomenographer is to identify and categorize the different conceptions, not judged for their 'correctness', rather they are seen as interesting and useful in and of themselves" (Orgill, 2012, p. 2608). Given that very little is currently known about Enabling Educator Identity (EEI), the identification and categorisation of conceptions of Enabling Educator work and identity are interesting and useful in and of themselves. Thus, as this study presents an initial phenomenographic investigation of an underresearched area, the study's application of a pure phenomenographic research approach

allowed the participants' voices to establish what they considered to be of importance.

4.2 PHENOMENOGRAPHY AS A PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

This section draws a distinction between phenomenography and phenomenology. As phenomenography is often confused with phenomenology, it is appropriate to include a section which outlines areas of commonality and clarifies differences. The section further elaborates the ontological and epistemological foundations of phenomenography.

4.2.1 PHENOMENOGRAPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenography shares phenomenology's interest in exploring lived experience and benefits from phenomenology's "concrete, existential, descriptive, and un-abstracted" philosophical perspective (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016, p. 151). Husserl's concepts of intentionality, intersubjectivity and bracketing influence phenomenographic methodology and analysis (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016) as does Heidegger's concept of Dasein (Wilson, 2014). Dasein is the German word for existence or 'being' and Heidegger's use of the concept reflects his belief that 'being-in-the-world' is the defining attribute of human existence and origin of all philosophical deliberation (Bolt, 2011). The concept of Dasein, excludes Cartesian dualism, instead favouring a concept of reality in which humans exist in the world in such a way that the subject (the being) and the object (the world) are inseparable (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). The belief that reality and consciousness are co-created is significant in both Heidegger's phenomenology and in phenomenography.

Phenomenography argues that the meaning a person holds for an experience cannot be separated from either the individual or the experience, as an experience's meaning is the situated

meaning of a person in their lifeworld (Tan & Tan, 2020). Heidegger further argues that people's familiarity with the everyday phenomena that compose their lifeworlds affects their ability to perceive and understand the world they exist in (Bolt, 2011). Thus, the aim of data collection in Heideggerian phenomenology, and phenomenography, is that the participants are attentive to the phenomena being investigated. In phenomenography, for example, research aims to focus attention on and describe one aspect of "the taken-for-granted world of our everyday existence is 'lived"' (Marton & Booth, 1997, p 117). Therefore, both phenomenology and phenomenography study how people create meaning; to understand a phenomenon by exploring the participants' experiences of interaction with the phenomenon in the context of their everyday world.

Despite some philosophical similarities between phenomenology and phenomenography, considerable differences are apparent in methodology, data collection, including the focus of interview questions, and data analysis. For clarity, several essential differences between the approaches have been tabulated below (see Table 4.1).

Table 4-1

The essential differences between phenomenography and phenomenology

	Points of difference	
	Phenomenography	**Phenomenology**
Aim	to describe variations in the ways a phenomenon can be experienced and understood.	to distil experiential foundations in the form of the essence or core of a phenomenon.
Emphasis	is on the collective meaning.	is on the individual's lived experience.
Research approach	investigates the reflective understandings and perspectives the participants hold regarding the phenomena.	investigates the phenomena as it exists in the participant's lifeworld.
Ontology	is non-dualistic, i.e. the subject and object are inseparable and dependant.	is dualistic, i.e. the subject and object are separate and independent.
Perspective	is second order, that is the participant's description of the experience and perspective on how it is understood, how it appears.	is first order, that is the participant's perspective of their life world, as it is, as a 'thing' itself.

	Points of difference	
	Phenomenography	**Phenomenology**
Result of analysis	is the identification of a limited number of descriptive categories that form a collective, composite outcome space.	is the identification of meaning units.

Note. Table 4.1 has been adapted from Barnard et al., 1999, p. 214 and Larsson & Holmström, 2007.

In summary, the relationship between phenomenography and phenomenology has been considered in the literature. The apparent surface-level similarities between the two approaches should not mask the considerable differences in perspective and emphasis between phenomenography and phenomenology (Svensson, 1997), notes the two approaches are "…no more than a cousin-by-marriage" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 117). Attention will now turn to discussing the specific ontological, epistemological and axiological characteristics of phenomenography in greater detail.

4.2.2 ONTOLOGICAL, EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND AXIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The philosophical approach underpinning an investigation is significant and should align methodology with methods (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, phenomenography's ontological, epistemological and axiological stances need to be considered as these have implications for both methodology and the nature of research findings. The ontological, epistemological and axiological stances of phenomenography are briefly introduced in this section, and then expanded upon in a discussion of the philosophical distinctives of a phenomenographic research framework.

Ontology “refers to philosophical questions about the nature of being and the reality, or otherwise, of existence” (Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 326). Ontologically, phenomenography adopts a non-dualist, second-order perspective (Marton, 2000,). Ontology is significant when researching conceptions such as identity because such concepts represent phenomena in the ‘real’, empirical world. So "when one asks about the meaning of a concept, one is asking about the nature of reality" (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012, p. 207).

Epistemology “refers to philosophical questions relating to the nature of knowledge and truth” (Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 323). In phenomenography, the object of the research is knowledge, knowledge that reveals peoples’ experience and understanding of a phenomenon, (Yates et al., 2012). As philosophy’s ontology and epistemology are inherently related (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012), phenomenographic epistemology embodies the non-dualist ontology. As such, in phenomenography, knowledge is related and reflexively created through subjective reflection on objective reality (Svensson, 1997). This epistemology is apparent in attention to drawing out and accurately capturing the participant’s description of their experience and understanding of the phenomenon (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).

Axiology “addresses questions related to what is valued and considered to be desirable or ‘good’ for humans and society” (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016, p. 140). Phenomenographic research does not have broad transferability, beyond the target population (Sin, 2010), to consider the research’s benefits for humanity or society, in general. Thus, in phenomenographic research, axiology can be understood to consider questions of the research’s values and benefits with respect to participant’s target population. Phenomenography values the collective understandings and experiences of the participants (Marton & Booth, 1997; Yates

et al., 2012) and offers the target population a distinctive perspective on the related variations in their experiences of the phenomenon being investigated.

As a research approach, there are several ramifications of the ontological, epistemological and axiological stances that characteristically define phenomenographic methodology. The following section will introduce several distinctives of phenomenography as a philosophical framework for research. The methodological ramifications are briefly introduced in this section, and more fully explored in the following chapter that describes the research methods (Chapter 5).

A non-dualistic ontological perspective. Phenomenographic research adopts a non-dualist perspective that holds subjective experience and objective reality to be related and dependent (Cossham, 2017). In contrast, dualist perspectives perceive the subject (the participants) and object (the phenomenon) to be independent of each other (Hajar, 2020), and so the subjective, experience is separate and exists independently of the phenomenon. As Marton and Booth (1997) assert, "People live in the world they … experience and so there is no objective reality separate from subjective experience, but *the world* is constituted by an internal relation between them" (p. 13, emphasis in original). Thus, as Marton (1988) insists, an experience and the conceptualisation of that experience are inseparable, as "experience is always experience of *something*, and conceptualization is always the conceptualization of *something*" (p. 67 emphasis in the original).

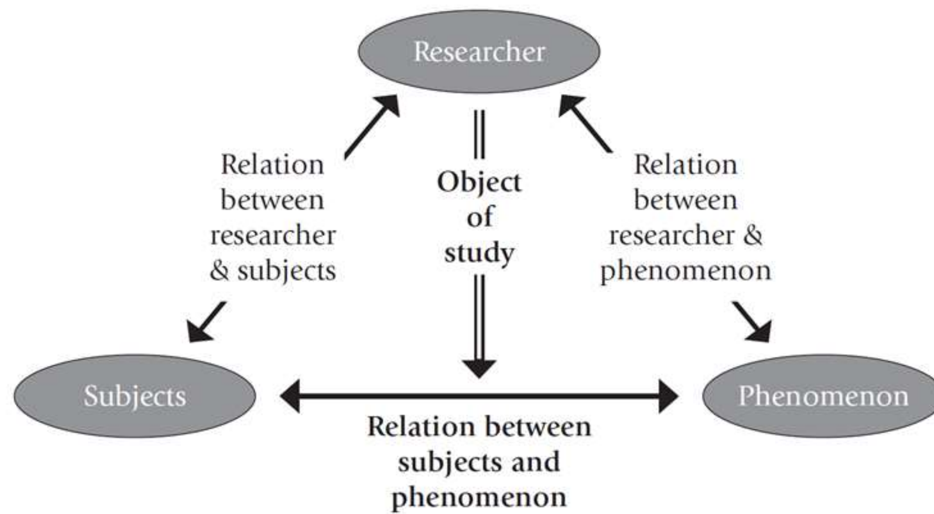
Phenomenography is underpinned by a relational approach to the study of the object (the phenomenon) and the subjects (the participant's representation), as it holds the research's subject and object to be inseparable (Yates et al., 2012). Moreover, Marton asserts that this "really existing world" can be "experienced and

understood in different ways by human beings" (Marton, 2000, 105). In research this allows a simultaneous and reflexive study of the variations in participants' subjective experiences of an objective phenomenon (Marton, 2000; Sandberg, 2000).

A second-order perspective. Phenomenography has a second-order perspective (Marton & Booth, 1997). Such research examines participants' experiences, concepts and understandings of the phenomenon rather than directly studying either the participant or the phenomenon itself (Larsson & Holmström, 2007). As Marton (1981) states, the aim of a second-order perspectives is to "find out the different ways in which people experience, interpret, understand, apprehend, perceive or conceptualize various aspects of reality…the descriptions" (p. 178). Thus, for Marton (1981), a second-order perspective was concerned with the description of "people's experiences of various aspects of the world" (171), compared to a first-order perspective that is concerned with describing the world as it is. From a second-order perspective the researcher investigates the participant's experiences with, understandings of, the phenomenon (see Figure 4.1). Therefore, a "second-order perspective enables researchers to describe particular aspects of the world from the participant's point of view, that is, to reveal human experience and awareness as an object of research." (Yates et al., 2012, p. 100).

Figure 4.1

Phenomenographic relationality



Note. From "Reflections on the Phenomenographic Team Research Process," by J. Bowden, 2005, *Doing Developmental Phenomenography,* p. 13.

The perspectives have implications for research method as the research questions are formulated to pose questions exploring the 'what' and 'how' of an experience, rather than the 'why'. This is evidenced in the use of questions such as, "How do Enabling Educators *experience* widening participation?" (second-order), rather than "Why do Enabling Educators work in widening participation?" (first order). Although, both questions are obviously significant and valid, the question selected depends on the investigation's underpinning philosophical approach and aims.

Participant description of experience. Phenomenographic studies value the participant's description of their experiences and take these descriptions as the point of departure. The emphasis on capturing and describing participant experience is related to phenomenography's epistemology (Svensson, 1997) and a defining characteristic of phenomenographic research approaches. As the researcher attempts to capture the participant's expression of their experiences with the phenomena (Marton & Booth, 1997), the

quality of description of participant experience is significant and directly impacts the quality of the study's findings.

Collective perspectives. Phenomenography values and offers a collective perspective of the phenomena being investigated (Yates et al., 2012). "Phenomenographic research aims to explore the range of meanings within a sample group, as a group, not the range of meanings for each individual within the group" (Åkerlind 2012, p. 117). The interest in collective experiences is significant. In phenomenography, individual participants are held to be attentive of different aspects of a phenomenon and these differences in awareness create qualitatively different understandings of the phenomenon in question (Larsson et al., 2003). However, an individual's experience and understanding of a phenomenon is always partial because no individual can experience every aspect of a phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2012). Collective perspectives have the advantage of adding a greater range of experiences, increasing the comprehensiveness of the findings, albeit at the expense of individual nuance and recognition. Thus, phenomenographic studies are concerned with variation and map the qualitatively different ways the group participants can experience and comprehend a phenomenon (Marton, 1981).

A limited number of qualitatively different variations. When creating descriptive categories, most phenomenographic studies produce a limited number of variations. The object of phenomenographic research is to explore "variation in ways of experiencing something" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 111). The various understandings are actively constructed by the participants as they organise, delimit, and differentiate the various aspects that form the content of, and give meaning to their experience of a phenomenon (Barnard et al., 1999).

In phenomenographic data analysis the "similarities and differences in meaning" (Svensson, 1997, p. 167) that participants

attribute to their experiences and understandings are used to generate clusters of descriptive categories and these descriptive categories represent qualitatively different ways of understanding phenomena (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016). Although, the differences in experiences and understandings mean that a phenomenon can potentially be conceived in an infinite number of ways, the similarities allow these conceptions grouped together, reducing the number of qualitatively different descriptive categories. Numerous phenomenographic studies support the assertion that, collectively, most phenomenographic studies generate a limited number of variations, often between 2 to 6 (Larsson & Holmström, 2007).

4.2.3 THE STRUCTURE OF AWARENESS

The structure of awareness is a further characteristic of phenomenography. In phenomenography, awareness is considered an intentional act of focusing attention on aspects of a phenomenon and relating these aspects. It is individuals' differing foci of attention and construction of relatedness that give rise to variations in experiences and understandings of a phenomenon.

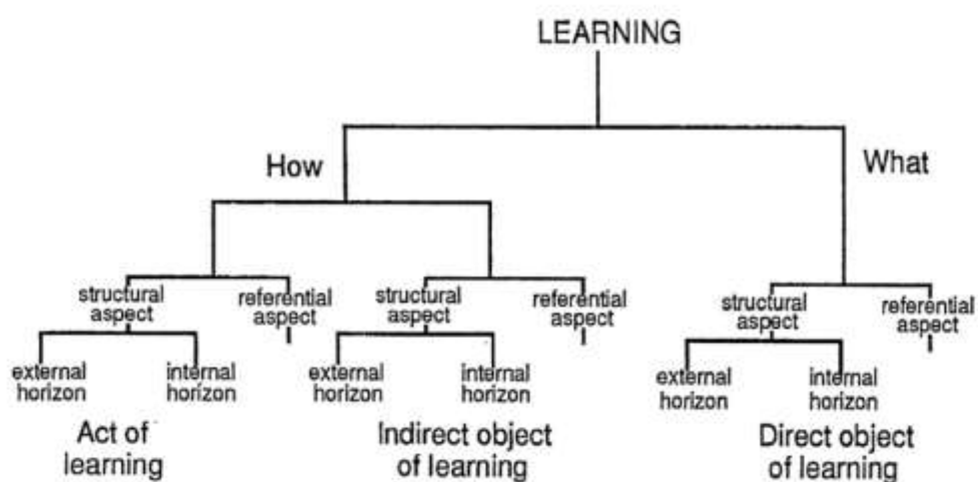
There are various layers to the structure, or anatomy (Marton & Booth, 1997), of awareness. When examining experiences of learning, Marton (1988) distinguished between the learner's awareness of the 'what' aspect, or 'outcome', of the learning, and 'how' aspect, or 'approach', to the learning (p. 66). Distinguishing between what is being learned and how this is being learned is one method of describing the structure of awareness of a phenomenon, and these two aspects can compose the first tier of description. The 'what' and 'how' aspects of awareness can be further examined by exploring referential and structure aspects of awareness. Referential aspects represent the 'global meaning', that the individual ascribes to either the outcome (what) or the process (how) (Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 335). Moreover, structural aspects

examine that which is “discerned and focused on” in both the outcome and process (Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 335). Examination of referential and structural aspects provides a second tier of description of awareness. Further differentiation is possible through examining that which is foregrounded and backgrounded in the individual’s awareness. In this third tier of description, the internal horizon considers aspects of the phenomenon that are foregrounded, or most present, in the individual’s awareness, and the external horizon refers to those aspects which are in the background or on the periphery of awareness (Yates et al., 2012).

There are various representations of the structure of awareness. In Figure 4.2, examination of conceptions of learning by Marton and Booth (1997) provides an example of a representation with three tiers of description: the How and What; the structural and referential and, finally, the external and internal horizons.

Figure 4.2

The experience of learning: A diagram of the structure, or anatomy, of awareness

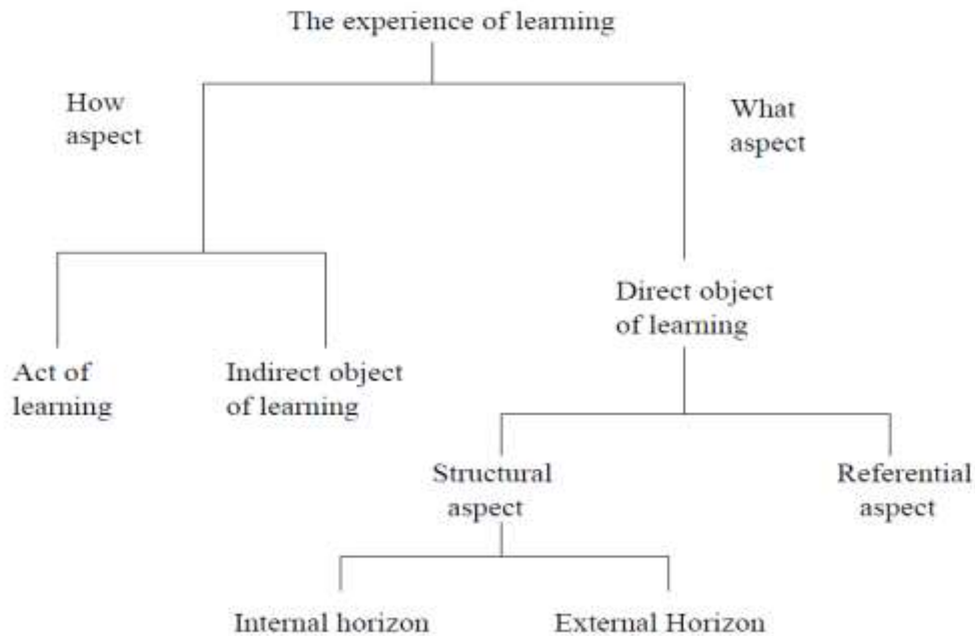


Note. From F. Marton and S. Booth, 1997, *Learning and awareness*, p. 91.

Although a full description is possible, it is not always required. For example, the following adaptation of the Marton and Booth (1997) experience of learning (Figure 4.3) demonstrates a section of the original structure to focus on the 'what' and 'how' aspects of the experience of learning. Marton and Booth (1997) assert that "teacher's ways of experiencing the 'what' and the 'how' of their teaching to be… *the* key aspect, of their teaching" (p. 176 emphasis in original). Thus, the diagrammatic representation in Figure 4.3 allows a researcher to attend to the 'how' of the learning's process (the act and indirect object of learning), the 'what' (structural and referential aspect of outcome of learning), while also allowing the examination of the internal and external horizons.

Figure 4.3

Diagrammatic representation of concepts of learning with a focus on the how and what aspects of learning



Note. From A. Eckerdal, 2006, *Novice students' learning of object-oriented programming,* p. 13. This diagram is a variation of Marton and Booth's (1997) original experience of learning structure.

4.2.4 THE OUTCOME SPACE

The aim of phenomenography is to map collective, qualitatively different and interrelated conceptions of a phenomenon to gain a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016). Thus, phenomenography focuses on studying the breadth of understandings within a group (Stenfors-Hayes et al., 2013). The variations in the group's understanding of the phenomenon are used to construct an outcome space (Åkerlind, 2012; Marton & Booth, 1997) that contains a set of related descriptive categories. The collective outcome space offers a comprehensive perspective of how the phenomena is understood by the group (Yates et al., 2012). This outcome space, "provides a way of looking at collective human experience of phenomena holistically, despite the fact that

the same phenomena may be perceived differently by different people and under different circumstances” (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 116).

In summary, phenomenography takes the individual experiences of participants within a group as the point of departure, to gain a collective understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Mapping the limited number of qualitatively distinct descriptive categories in a study’s outcome space is an essential, defining feature of phenomenography research and the logical result of the collective focus.

4.3 VARIOUS CRITICISMS OF PHENOMENOGRAPHY

This section will introduce several of the contentions and considerations raised by the literature regarding phenomenography, with a brief discussion of the study’s response to each contention. Significant critiques of phenomenography include: a perceived confusion between phenomenography and phenomenology, variations in phenomenographic theories, the loss of detail in participant responses, a perceived judgmentalism and, finally, concerns regarding the use of metaphorical descriptive category titles. Each of these concerns raises a valid argument stemming from the nature of phenomenographic approaches to research. The aim in this section is, therefore, not to negate the criticisms but acknowledge them and explain how the study intends to address each concern.

i. Confusion between phenomenography and phenomenology. This criticism of confusion has been previously discussed in this chapter, simply acknowledged as a recognised criticism. The study’s response to the apparent similarities between phenomenography and phenomenology is to clearly describe the differences in the current chapter (4.3.1). The thesis will also clearly restate the unique philosophical approach to

phenomenographic research when addressing research design in Chapter 5.

ii. Variation in definitions, underpinning assumptions and practice. Phenomenography is a relatively new research methodology and questions have been raised regarding unexamined or loose applications of terminology and methods. Phenomenography's previously established proximity to phenomenology and lack of clear differentiation between theoretical variations suggest a need to clearly define concepts as nuances in meaning and differences in focus can impact methodology (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016). This criticism has been considered in this study and the response has been largely addressed through the two chapters addressing research philosophy (the current chapter, Chapter 4) and research design (Chapter 5). These two chapters offer clear definitions and descriptions of the study's philosophical foundations and practices, and the relationship between them.

iii. Loss of richness in the participants' responses. A further criticism of phenomenography is loss of detail, for as Åkerlind (2003) contends, "in order to capture this collective experience, it was necessary to focus, not on the richness of each individual experience, but on critical aspects of the range in experience across individuals" (p. 379). Again, this is valid criticism. Quality phenomenographic analysis balances parsimony with qualitative difference to yield a limited number of descriptive categories. Although this concern cannot be fully rectified, the thesis provides an in-depth description of the concepts compose the descriptive categories as well as numerous participant quotes. These additions reintroduce some of the richness removed from the data through the generation of limited descriptive categories.

iv. Implication of a 'correct' or 'best' answer. Phenomenographic research conducted with professionals often

uses increasing comprehensiveness (Larsson & Holmström, 2007) or competence (Åkerlind, 2008) in constructing hierarchal outcome spaces. Assumptions about concepts of superiority, correctness or truth can be implied by such hierarchies. As concepts of truth and excellence are constructs of time, context and political perspective (Webb, 1997), a researcher's judgement on the hierarchies can be problematic. The problem is recognised in literature discussing phenomenographic research practice. As Åkerlind et al. (2005) argue, a phenomenographic "hierarchy is not one based on better or worse ways of understanding, but on evidence of some categories being more inclusive of others" (p. 83). Even so, defining this inclusivity is not unproblematic. This study recognises the issue cannot be fully negated and has used two approaches to address the concern. Firstly, the hierarchy that underpins the thesis' outcomes space is based in the participants' own declared values in, and purposes of, enabling education rather than those imposed by the researcher. Secondly, the thesis transparently describes the value propositions drawn on in generating the hierarchy, evidenced with participant quotations.

v. Use of metaphors as category descriptors.

Phenomenography frequently uses metaphors to represent the content of a descriptive category. One such example is Larsson et al's (2003) use of 'professional artist', 'good Samaritan' and 'servant' to represent descriptive categories of anaesthetists, are common in phenomenographic studies. A metaphor is "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase *literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another* [emphasis added] to suggest a likeness or analogy between them" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Although metaphors be can useful in analysing dimensions of complex constructs, they can also be limiting and vague (Pinnegar et al. , 2011; Midgley & Trimmer, 2013). Moreover, metaphors not only create "ways of seeing" but can also "create ways of not

seeing" (Morgan, 2006, p. 338), potentially leading those reading the research to overlook aspects of a descriptive category. Thus, this study did not use metaphorical representation, and instead used descriptors directly derived from, and indicative, of the character of the category.

4.4 PHENOMENOGRAPHY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THIS RESEARCH

The following section draws upon the chapter's discussion of phenomenography to outline the distinctive characteristics that support phenomenography's contribution to the investigation of Enabling Educators' understandings and experiences of their identities and work.

i. Phenomenography is an established research approach. As previously established in this chapter, phenomenography has a well-developed and broad research history with an established presence in researching professionals in a range of contexts. Although originating in Sweden, phenomenography has been used in a variety of countries and a range of research purposes. Moreover, critique and reflection on the conceptual and methodological debates regarding phenomenographic studies have allowed the research methodology to develop and clarify its philosophical and methodological positions. Thus, the use of a well-established, tested and recognised research tradition strengthens the trustworthiness of this study's findings.

ii. Phenomenography can address the research questions. This study investigates Enabling Educators' understandings and experiences of their identity and work. A qualitative methodology was selected as qualitative approaches are suited to investigating the ways people perceive and make meaning of their world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). More specifically,

phenomenography, as an empirical qualitative method was chosen for this study as "phenomenography provides a means through which knowledge about the ways in which people experience phenomena can be revealed" (Yates et al., 2012, p. 101).

Moreover, phenomenography has been extensively used in similar studies investigating variations in experiences and understandings of professional identity. For example, the work of Larsson, Holmström and Rosenqvist exploring professional experiences and identity in the medical field (Larsson & Holmström, 2007; Larsson et al., 2003) has been influential in shaping the study. The body of previous phenomenographic investigation of professional identity contributed an established set of contextualisable research and interview questions that have been already trialled in a range of occupational settings.

iii. Phenomenography values collective, contextualised experience. Capturing a range of Enabling Educators' experiences contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the academics' understandings of themselves, situated in their work context. Phenomenography "aims at description, analysis, and understanding of experiences" (Marton, 1981, p. 180) "in order to make sense of how people handle problems, situations, the world" (Marton and Booth, 1997, p. 111). Thus, one strength and contribution of phenomenography is that it values the Enabling Educators' own descriptions of, and reflections on, their experiences.

Moreover, as phenomenographic research investigates collective experience within specific contexts, phenomenography can provide 'experiential description' that is comprehensive and holistic, with contextualised, theoretical insights (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016; Yates et al., 2012). A phenomenographic research approach, therefore, allows the study to investigate and

capture a breadth of the experience of Enabling Educators, within the context of their profession.

iv. Phenomenography accepts difference. Enabling Educators have differing experiences of, and approaches to, enabling education. As "search for variation has always been at the heart of phenomenography" (Tight, 2016, p. 325), the research tradition is attentive to inclusivity and diversity. However, it is noted that phenomenography's ability to report on individual difference within this diversity is restricted by phenomenography's parsimony in generating descriptive categories. While the ample use of participant quotations can provide extra nuance and description, this limitation cannot be completely compensated for.

v. Phenomenography values participant voice. Enabling Educators are best positioned to select, and give meaning to, the events they choose to draw upon when describing their experiences in pathway programs and identities as academics. Phenomenography preferences data collection methods that support open-ended questions. Although semi-structured interviews are the most common means of data collection in phenomenographic research (Åkerlind, 2005; Marton & Booth, 1997), a range of other data collection methods, such as drawing, participant observation (Tan & Tan, 2020), and open-ended questionnaires (Han & Ellis, 2019) are also used. These data collection methods encourage "participants to self-select aspects of the phenomenon that are most relevant to them" and "share personal experiences of the phenomenon in a certain context and how they made meaning of it" (Rands & Gansemer-Topf, 2016, p. 10).

Moreover, phenomenographic studies also use participant quotations when reporting findings. The use of numerous quotations strengthens the trustworthiness of the research (Stenfors-Hayes et al., 2013), and also adds the participants' own

voices to the reporting. Thus, phenomenography's approach to data collection and reporting both support participants' voices in relating the experience of the phenomenon through self-selected description, words and events.

4.5 CONCLUSION

A research approach that is philosophically congruent with the investigation's aims and values works to unify and strengthen the investigation. Thus, the aim of the chapter (Chapter 4) was, firstly, to provide a theoretical introduction to phenomenography and then offer a justification for using a pure phenomenographic approach for investigating Enabling Educator Identity (EEI).

Philosophically, phenomenography has its origins in epistemology, in seeking to understand "How do we gain knowledge about the world?" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 1). As a research approach phenomenography, therefore, investigates how people make sense of their world through exploring the participants' experiences and understandings of specific phenomena (Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002). Phenomenography emphasises the variations in the ways people conceptualise a phenomenon. These variations are due to the influence of people's differing experiences, values, applications and interactions with, and conceptions of, the phenomenon (Säljö, 1979). Examined together, the various conceptions offer an outcome space that holistically maps collective concepts of the phenomenon being investigated.

A phenomenographic approach provided this study several benefits, as have been outlined in the chapter. Phenomenography has been used effectively in other studies of professionals' understandings of their identities and work (Larsson et al., 2003; Marton & Booth, 1997), providing a proven research approach to investigating the study's research questions. Moreover,

phenomenography was able to support the study's values of privileging participant voice and experience, as well as promoting a level of participant diversity. The methodological implications of adopting a phenomenographic research approach are explored in the following chapter (Chapter 5), which addresses research design.

CHAPTER 5: PHENOMENOGRAPHIC RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research requires an explicit, coherent and methodical approach in which all aspects of the research design are aligned and oriented towards the research questions. To that end, this section, composed of Chapters 4 and 5, clearly outlines the study's systematic approach to four general aspects of research design: philosophy, research approach, research methodology and research methods (Table 5.1). Chapter 4 explored phenomenography as a philosophy and research approach, concluding with a justification for using a pure, or discursive, phenomenographic approach to the research. This chapter (Chapter 5) will translate the phenomenographic research approach into a research methodology with suitable research methods to collect and analysis the data required to answer the thesis' research questions of:

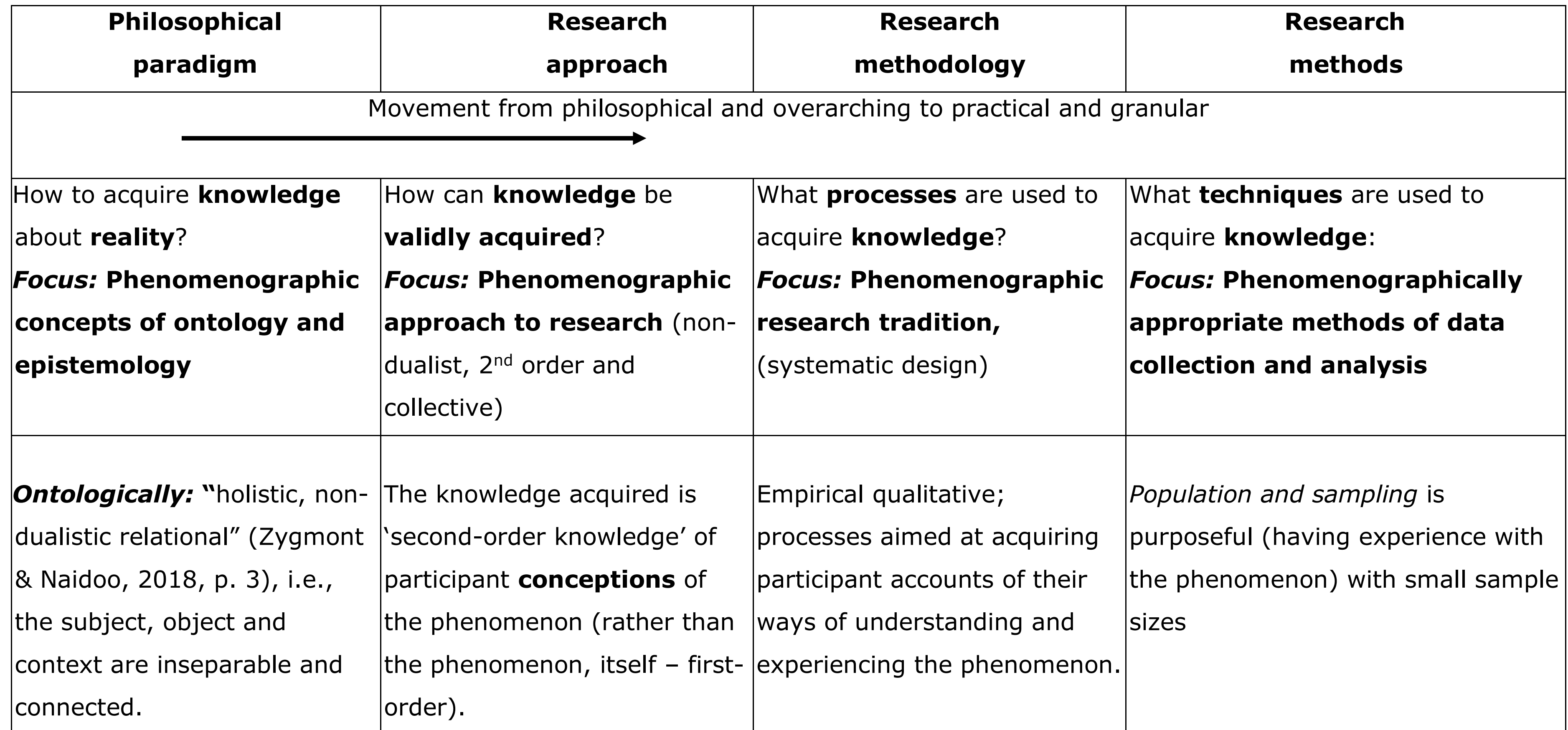
1. What are the different experiences, life events and ideas that Enabling Educators select when describing their work in pathway programs?
2. What are the variations in meanings that Enabling Educators give to these aspects of their work in pathway programs?
3. What conclusions can be drawn about variations in Enabling Educator Identity from the qualitative differences in Enabling Educators' experiences and understandings of their work in pathway programs?

The chapter will, firstly, outline the study's research methodology to demonstrate its alignment with phenomenographic research tradition and suitability to investigate the study's research questions. This will be followed by a discussion of trustworthiness in qualitative research, and the steps taken to confirm the thesis' trustworthiness. Finally, the chapter will provide a detailed account

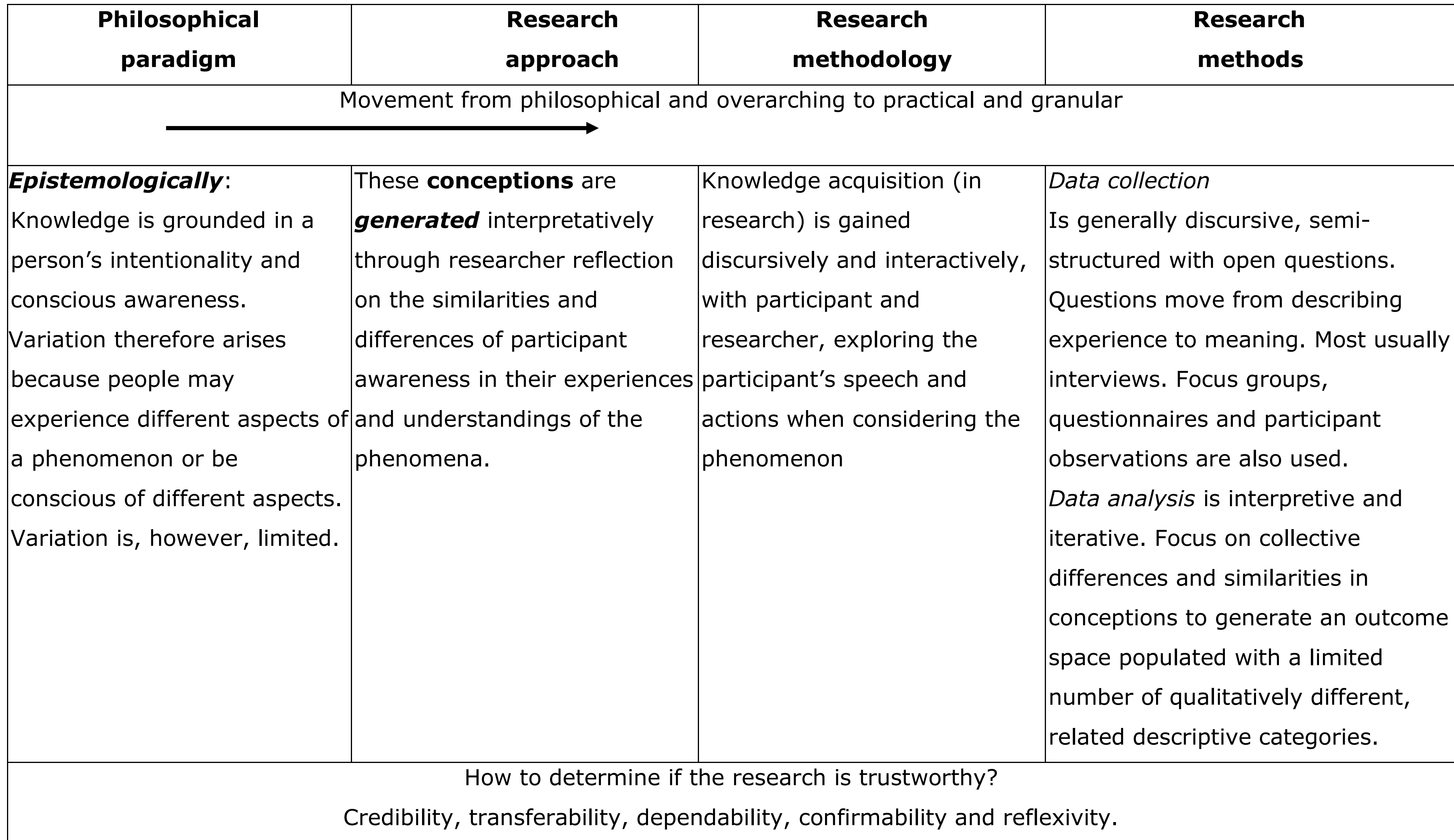
of how the methods of data collection and analysis were designed, piloted and implemented.

Table 5-1

Overview of research design



Philosophical paradigm	**Research approach**	**Research methodology**	**Research methods**
Movement from philosophical and overarching to practical and granular →			
How to acquire **knowledge** about **reality**? ***Focus:*** **Phenomenographic concepts of ontology and epistemology**	How can **knowledge** be **validly acquired**? ***Focus:*** **Phenomenographic approach to research** (non-dualist, 2nd order and collective)	What **processes** are used to acquire **knowledge**? ***Focus:*** **Phenomenographic research tradition,** (systematic design)	What **techniques** are used to acquire **knowledge**: ***Focus:*** **Phenomenographically appropriate methods of data collection and analysis**
Ontologically: **"**holistic, non-dualistic relational" (Zygmont & Naidoo, 2018, p. 3), i.e., the subject, object and context are inseparable and connected.	The knowledge acquired is 'second-order knowledge' of participant **conceptions** of the phenomenon (rather than the phenomenon, itself – first-order).	Empirical qualitative; processes aimed at acquiring participant accounts of their ways of understanding and experiencing the phenomenon.	*Population and sampling* is purposeful (having experience with the phenomenon) with small sample sizes



Philosophical paradigm	Research approach	Research methodology	Research methods
Movement from philosophical and overarching to practical and granular →			
Epistemologically: Knowledge is grounded in a person's intentionality and conscious awareness. Variation therefore arises because people may experience different aspects of a phenomenon or be conscious of different aspects. Variation is, however, limited.	These **conceptions** are ***generated*** interpretatively through researcher reflection on the similarities and differences of participant awareness in their experiences and understandings of the phenomena.	Knowledge acquisition (in research) is gained discursively and interactively, with participant and researcher, exploring the participant's speech and actions when considering the phenomenon	*Data collection* Is generally discursive, semi-structured with open questions. Questions move from describing experience to meaning. Most usually interviews. Focus groups, questionnaires and participant observations are also used. *Data analysis* is interpretive and iterative. Focus on collective differences and similarities in conceptions to generate an outcome space populated with a limited number of qualitatively different, related descriptive categories.
How to determine if the research is trustworthy? Credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and reflexivity.			

5.1 PHENOMENOGRAPHIC RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the systematic design that allows the selection of research methods, congruent with the investigation's philosophical paradigm and its research questions. Research methods are the means by which data is gathered to answer the research questions. An investigation's research methodology is the design that directs the "choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes" (Crotty, 1998, p. 7).

Phenomenography's lack of an agreed methodology requires the researcher to clearly outline and justify a study's methodological approach. Phenomenography does not have a single recognised research methodology (Åkerlind, 2005). Reasons for the variations in research methodology include the lack of precision in early descriptions of methodology (Entwistle, 1997) and the lack of discussion in the literature regarding the nature of phenomenographic research (Åkerlind, 2012). Although the literature does not recognise a single phenomenographic research methodology, there are philosophical and methodological characteristics that define and guide phenomenographic research principles and practices. Therefore, if phenomenography is to be used effectively, there is a need for the researcher to clarify the methodology (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000) by reference to, and alignment with, phenomenography's philosophical stance and commonly accepted guiding principles and practices in the literature. To this end, the chapter will draw on the previous chapter's discussion of phenomenography's philosophical framework and phenomenographic literature to describe the broad tenets that describe phenomenographic research methodology and then note the study's alignment with these tenets.

Philosophical paradigm and research approach. Phenomenographic research approaches hold a particular ontological and epistemological view of reality, experience and knowledge. As discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 4), philosophically, phenomenographic investigations are, firstly, non-dualistic and so are simultaneously objective and subjective (Marton, 2000, p. 105). Next, the investigations take a second-order perspective of the participants' experiences, concepts and understandings of the phenomenon rather than directly studying either the participant or the phenomenon (Larsson & Holmström, 2007). Finally, the aim of phenomenographic research is to study variation in the collective perspective and map qualitatively different but related conceptions of the phenomenon in a holistic outcome space, representative of the group's understanding of the phenomenon (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016).

There are several implications of this philosophical stance that need to align an investigation's research methodology. Firstly, the research questions must be oriented and framed to pose non-dualistic, second-order questions that encourage participants to describe their experience with the phenomenon to explore the meaning they attribute to this experience. Next, the strategy for selecting participants, collecting and analysing data must be suitable for, and oriented towards, answering the research questions. Finally, the strategy for reporting the investigation's findings is via a collective outcome space populated by qualitatively different, but related, descriptive categories. These principles are discussed below.

Research questions that are non-dualistic, second-order, descriptive and collective. As phenomenography is underpinned by a relational approach to the study of the object (the phenomenon) and the subjects (the participants), it holds the research's subject and object to be inseparable (Yates et al.,

2012). The simultaneous and reflexive study of the objective phenomenon and subjective experience of a phenomenon (Marton, 2000; Sandberg, 2000) means that research questions are oriented towards capturing and describing participant experience, as the foundational "unit of phenomenographic research is a way of experiencing" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 111). Thus, phenomenography asks; 'What is the participant's experience and understanding of the phenomenon?' rather than the phenomenological question of; 'What is the phenomenon, as it is?' Moreover, the research questions are formulated to pose questions exploring the 'what' and 'how', of the experience of the phenomenon and emphasise the participant's description of the experience and meaning of the phenomenon. Finally, the research analysis reflects a concern for the collective as "the object of the research is variation in ways of experiencing something" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 111).

The literature provides examples of non-dualistic, second-order, descriptive and collective research questions that have been used in phenomenographic research. For example, Lindquist et al. (2006), in investigating physiotherapy students' professional identity, started each interview with the question "Please tell me about a patient who you have found interesting as a physiotherapist", (p. 271) rather than a more first-order question, such as 'How would you define physiotherapy.' Follow-up questions were then used to "focus interviews and to probe (participants') understanding of their perceptions of role, practice, vision, beliefs and scope of practice as physiotherapists" (Lindquist et al., 2006, p. 271). Other salient examples include research questions by Larsson, Holmström and Rosenqvist (Larsson & Holmström, 2007; Larsson et al., 2003), which have been adapted and contextualised in other investigations (Telenurses' understanding of work:

Kaminsky et al., 2009; Physicians self-perceptions of patient-centredness: Kjeldmand et al., 2006).

i. Small purposive participant sampling. The phenomenographic practice of holistic and simultaneous analysis of the complete data set, practically restricts the number of participants that can be included in the sample. Appropriate numbers of participants vary from 10 to 15 (Åkerlind, 2008; Trigwell, 2000), to 25 to 30 (Green & Bowden, 2009). With a small sample size, participant selection becomes significant. Purposive sampling is the intentional selection of participants who have the necessary experience to elucidate their experience with a study's specific research questions (Robinson, 2014). As phenomenography values both description and variation, strategic participant selection requires, firstly, that participants "be selected based upon their appropriateness to the purpose of the research study, that is, they have experience of the phenomenon being explored" (Yates et al., 2012, p. 103). Secondly, as phenomenographic studies have low numbers of participants, the purposive sampling needs to maximise the diversity of the participants. Thus, strategic participant selection maximises opportunities for variation by the selection of participants who are likely to have differing life experiences and 'variety' of experiences with the phenomenon (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 300).

ii. Data collection methods support non-dualistic, second-order and descriptive inquiry. The quality of the final outcome of the research depends on the quality and focus of participant descriptions. Therefore, phenomenographic research approaches need to consider and select a means of data collection that positions the participant, phenomenon and researcher to obtain descriptive data from a non-dualistic, second-order perspective.

The phenomenographic relationality diagram previously discussed in Chapter 4 (refer to Figure 4.1) is frequently used in the phenomenographic research tradition to relate positioning of the researcher and the research's object and subject. Firstly, data collection needs to focus participant attention on the object of study, which is participant experience with the phenomenon. Researchers should consider the method of data collection that offers the "most appropriate means of obtaining an account" in their research context (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000, p. 300). This is aided by open-end data collection methods and phenomenographic methodology commonly uses semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, drawing and participant observation (Han & Ellis, 2019). In data collection, question sets are also formulated to address the research questions through revealing the participants' "current understandings and experiences of the phenomenon as fully and openly as possible" (Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2018, p. 4).

iii. Data analysis uses participant description. The result of a phenomenographic study is an outcome space that maps the qualitatively different but related conceptions held by a group of participants regarding a particular phenomenon (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016). In phenomenography, individual participants' experiences and understandings of a phenomenon are considered partial and incomplete (Åkerlind, 2005), and so phenomenographic data analysis focuses on exploring variations in the ways participants, collectively, experience and understand the phenomenon being investigated (Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2018). In the analysis, participant responses and descriptions are scrutinised to identify elements that are considered the "most important in a particular subject's answer" (Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002, p. 341). Sjöström and Dahlgren (2002) found that attention to characteristics such as an element's frequency, position in a statement and emphasis could be used to gauge an impression of

importance. Exploring similarities and differences in these elements, across the entire data set, allows the generation of conceptions. Conceptions are the units of description in phenomenographic investigations, and each conception has both a meaning, its referential aspect, and specific features of the concept that have been discerned, its structural aspect (Marton & Pong, 2005). These conceptions are then clustered into descriptive categories representative of qualitatively different ways of understanding phenomena (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016).

Minor differences are found in methods of data analysis in phenomenographic research literature. While not discounting these differences, significant commonalities still remain in phenomenographic analysis practices (Åkerlind, 2012). Differences, in analysis are found in the amount of data being worked with (entire data set, Bowden, 2000: similar sections within the data, Prosser, 2000, and extracted quotations, Marton 1986), in group or individual data analysis and variations in data management and structural elements (Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2018). These differences require the researcher's thoughtful consideration before selecting and transparently describing a chosen, appropriate method.

iv. An outcome space that maps collective experience. A final characteristic of a phenomenographic research approach is the construction of the investigation's outcome space. As individual participant's experiences and understandings of a phenomenon are partial (Åkerlind, 2005), phenomenographic analysis considers collective data, simultaneously and in its entirety, to construct a more comprehensive, holistic outcome space (Åkerlind, 2012; Marton & Booth, 1997). The outcome space maps qualitatively different but related descriptive categories that are representative of the group's understanding of the phenomenon (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016). Marton and Booth (1997) present three primary criteria for judging the quality of a phenomenographic outcome

space. Firstly, each category in the outcome space reveals something distinctive about a way of understanding the phenomenon. Secondly, the categories are logically related, typically as a hierarchy of structurally inclusive relationships, Finally, the outcomes are parsimonious, so that the qualitative variation in experience is represented in as few categories as possible (Åkerlind, 2012).

In summary, these four tenets are characteristic of a phenomenographic research methodology and describe a research strategy that favours the selection of certain research methods, approaches and question content over others. For example, open-ended questionnaires collecting participant description of experience are more suited to phenomenographic studies than Likert-style questionnaires that rate an aspect of the quality of an experience. The practical application of these tenants on research design is addressed, after a discussion of trustworthiness, by describing the study's research methods.

5.2 TRUSTWORTHINESS IN PHENOMENOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Considerations of trustworthiness impact research design. This section, firstly, examines issues of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability in the study's research methodology. Secondly, the section discusses how phenomenographic methodology and trustworthiness were considered in the selection and description of the study's methods of participant section, data collection, analysis and reporting.

Questions of how to evaluate an investigation's integrity and truthfulness are some of the more difficult and complex issues in interpretive research (Schwandt et al., 2007). Quantitative research has long held to the positivist concepts of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity as a means of assessing

research quality and rigour. However, as qualitative and quantitative investigations "have different assumptions of data, and carry out different research processes" (Sin, 2010, p. 306), quantitative means of assessing quality are not applicable to qualitative research. Although defining quality and rigour in qualitative research remains contentious, evaluating quality remains an obligatory responsibility for qualitative researchers (Cope, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1986) posited trustworthiness as analogous to the positivist notion of rigour. They approximated the quantitative notion of rigour, as determined by internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, with questions of an investigation's truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). To this end, Guba and Lincoln (1994) posited parallel criteria for considering qualitative research quality, or trustworthiness, to be: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and reflexivity. These criteria are the most commonly and broadly used criteria in qualitative research (Cope, 2014) and are considered to contribute to an investigation's value and plausibility (Connelly, 2016).

Trustworthiness has been used to evaluate the quality of phenomenographic studies and is considered to also contribute to the wider societal value of research (Collier-Reed et al., 2009). There are a range of strategies phenomenographic researchers can implement that contribute to the trustworthiness of their research (Rands & Gansemer-Topf, 2016). Several of these are discussed in the following section, which briefly describes credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and reflexivity and explains how each is addressed in the study.

i. Credibility. For Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 328) credibility is related to the truth value of the findings. Relevant aspects of credibility considered within the study's research design were:

- ***Prolonged engagement*** supports trustworthiness as the researcher's extended and intensive engagement with the participants and their contexts contributes to the researcher's knowledge of the research area, rapport with participants and ability to design insightful questions.
- ***Persistent observation*** draws on salient elements discovered through the prolonged engagement, rather than more fleeting ideas, considering these elements in greater depth.
- ***Triangulation (cross-checking) of data*** contributes to credibility by comparing the investigation's findings with data from a range of sources, research methods and, where possible, collaborating with co-researchers in the same study.
- ***Member checking*** supports the perception of credibility by asking the investigation's participants to review and offer their thoughts and opinions on the findings of the research they contributed to.
- ***Peer debriefing*** engages individuals who, although not directly involved in the research, have sufficient experience with the topic of research to ask insightful questions, probe where the research lacks clarity and, when necessary, take the role of 'devil's advocate'.

I previously worked as a sessional academic in a pathway program teaching a range of subjects including English, Mathematics and study skills. I then worked with Enabling Educators for a further two years as an educational designer. I still maintain collegial relationships and am undertaking research with several Enabling Educators. These experiences support the claim of my prolonged engagement and observation of Enabling Educators.

Moreover, this experience allowed me to access Enabling Educator colleagues who were able to hold regular peer debriefing conversations. I have also had the opportunity to present my research at my university's pathway program's regular research meetings and at a National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA) research interest group. Updates were provided early on, in the middle of, and in the final stages of my research, allowing feedback on my research by current Enabling Educators. When considering triangulation, the topic being researched is investigated "from (a least) two points of perspectives" (Flick, 2018, p. 529). Low level triangulation has been undertaken through the use of two data collection methods; the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Finally, the study's outcome space and descriptive categories have been discussed with interested participants as a form of member checking.

ii. Transferability. Transferability refers to the extent to which the study's findings can be applied to other contexts or settings. Phenomenography does not attempt to generalise across large populations, nor do the phenomenographic studies purport to be widely transferable. In phenomenographic research, transferability refers to the extent to which the study's findings represent the target population (Sin, 2010), in this case Australian Enabling Educators. In this study, participant sampling from a number of pathway programs from several Australian universities, verification of the findings from Enabling Educators outside the study and a level of alignment with the literature, suggest a considerable level of transferability of the findings within the Australian pathway programs context.

Beyond the context of Australian enabling education, a reader would need to consider contextual similarities and differences in judging levels and areas of transferability. To this end, the accurate and detailed reporting of the methodology and

research design supports trustworthiness by better positioning the reader to form their own context-based conclusions about transferability (Sin, 2010; Walsh, 2000). In its treatment of transferability, the current chapter has outlined, in considerable detail, the study's research design, including the interview questions. This record of research methods, when considered with the participants' opinions recorded in the thesis, allows the reader to make decisions regarding transfer of an investigation's findings.

iii. Dependability. Dependability refers to the "extent to which the researcher provides readers with evidence that the research process has been logical, traceable and clearly documented" (Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2018, p. 7). Dependability is analogous with reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as both also consider the quality and consistency of the data analysis through appropriate methodological procedures. This chapter draws on Cope's (2004) summary of reliability considerations in addressing dependability and providing a transparent account of the study's method (p. 8). Cope argues that the onus is on a researcher to do the following:

1. Acknowledge their background and address the researcher's prior knowledge and experiences with the phenomenon. Such prior experience impacts researcher familiarity and ability to approach the study with an open mind;
2. Describe and justify the means by which the sample was selected;
3. Describe and justify the design of interview questions;
4. Describe and justify strategies used in data collection and analysis, including specifically accounting for how interpretations were made in the analysis.

The current chapter represents, to a large extent, the response to these considerations of dependability.

I have already briefly acknowledged my background and experience as an Enabling Educator. In addition, it is of note that I no longer work with my university's pathway program as my current role is in faculty-based educational design. However, this career experience, both previous and current, places me in a somewhat unique position. My previous work history allows me to be familiar with enabling education, relate well to the participants in interviews and understand much of the work. My current position means that I am removed from a pathway context, limiting conflicts of interest and allowing an open mind about the data.

Regarding the remaining three considerations for dependability, the following section (5.4) is provided to offer the level of description required to allow a reader to determine the dependability of the research. The details and justification for sample selection; the design of the data collection instruments; the strategies used in data collection; and a detailed description of the analysis are provided in the following section.

Accounting for dependability of analytical interpretation is of special concern in doctoral studies because common collaborative research practices, such as paired coding and reliability checks between researchers, are unavailable to doctoral students. However, as Åkerlind (2012) indicates, the considerable number of successful phenomenographic doctoral theses evidence that "high-quality phenomenographic research can be accomplished as an individual researcher working on one's own" (p. 328). Even so, the onus still lies with me as the doctoral researcher to consider and evidence dependability, as has been undertaken in the current chapter.

iv. Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the extent to which a reader can confirm that an investigation's findings are derived from the data. Achieving confirmability requires the

researcher to evidence the process for generating the findings and the findings' relationship to the participant data (Nowell et al., 2017). In phenomenography confirmability is an important aspect of the study's trustworthiness because phenomenographic studies lack the reproducibility of scientific studies. A phenomenographic study's outcome space is generated through the investigator's engagement with the data. It is, therefore, unlikely another person with the same data would reproduce identical descriptions and relationships in their outcome space. However, it is possible for the researcher to detail the analytical process used to generate a study's findings and to further evidence the findings with quotes from the data, so that a reader can be confident of the findings' relationship to the data.

Therefore, Chapters 6 to 12 contribute to the study's confirmability through clear, detailed description of the generation of the outcome space, supported by numerous quotes from the data. Even though the study's findings were generated in line with accepted phenomenographic practice, there is still an obligation to provide evidence that the study's outcome space is firmly grounded in the participant data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that investigators must describe categories in such a way as to evidence their relationship to the data and justify the inclusion of each piece of data within the category. Chapters 6 to 12, in reporting the study's findings, undertake to do just that. These chapters include numerous participant quotations, from both the questionnaires and the interviews, that clearly confirm how each descriptive category was generated and evidence how the descriptive categories are related together in forming the thesis' outcome space.

v. Reflexivity. Reflexivity is concerned with the investigator's open and transparent disclosure and acknowledgment of their background, interests and expectations of

the investigation. In phenomenographic studies, the researcher engages with the data through the analysis to generate findings. The researcher is not an objective bystander, passively observing this process, but intrinsically engaged in the analysis. Thus, reflexivity requires the "turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research" (Berger, 2015, p. 220). Open disclosure and transparency are hallmarks of researchers attending to this aspect of trustworthiness. Openness reassures the reader that due attention has been paid to real and significant concerns in research design and implementation (Cope, 2014).

Disclosing the researcher's interest, background and expectations facilitates the researcher to focus on and being aware of potential presuppositions. For, "In order to understand the participants' experience it is necessary for the researcher to bracket any presuppositions" (Ashworth & Lucas 2000, p. 297). Although phenomenography and phenomenology are distinctly different research approaches, Bruce (1994) outlines three rules of phenomenological reduction that have been found useful in phenomenographic studies. These are:

- The rule of the epoché, or 'phenomenological bracketing', which involves putting aside preconceptions about the phenomenon
- The rule of description focuses on the need to describe, rather than explain experience of the phenomenon
- The rule of horizontalisation involves treating all descriptions or experiences as having equal value or significance (p. 49).

Implementing these three rules supported the acknowledgement and management of my preconceptions, and helped to inform and guide my research.

I began the study with the preconception that I would find a 'trifecta' of identities. My experience with Enabling Educators made me suspect that my research would uncover the two common 'Humboldtian' academic identity types of researcher and educator, in addition to a third identity that centred around a concept of social justice. Phenomenological bracketing supported the acknowledgement of this preconception, transparently recognising the preconception so it could be tested for alignment with the study's data. Moreover, phenomenological bracketing encouraged my exploration of the motives behind considering various interpretations of utterances in the data, posing questions such as, firstly, "Why am I seeing this interpretation?" and, secondly, "Do I see it because it aligns with what I think the participant is articulating, or because it aligns with my expectations or purposes?"

The rule of description grounds the findings in evidence, so that it is the participants' descriptive utterances that provide the basis for the units of meaning. The participants' statements, at times, lacked clarity or exactitude of meaning. The rule of description, to some measure, countered 'seeing' what I expected to see, rather than what is there. Secondly, the rule of description helped counter ignoring what I had not yet considered. To this end, I instigated a practice of taking time to relook at data which either confirmed my expected findings, or that went against and negated my expectations, to ensure I was accurately describing the participant data.

Horizontalisation also informed my decisions in the selection, or laying aside, of topics and thoughts while analysing the data. Although judgements needed to be made regarding what is pursued and how much time is dedicated to any particular idea, the rule of horizontalisation, aided me to not prematurely accept or reject topics based on my research interests and expectations.

Considering reflexivity contributed to the trustworthiness of the study. An awareness of my preconceptions allowed me to:

- cautiously confirm my expectation that enabling work would include references that were educative (descriptive category: *learning and teaching*) and related to equity (descriptive category: *equity*),
- reject my original expectation of research as a descriptive category, and
- create an openness for the findings I did not expect, namely references to preparation for academic success (descriptive category: *student academic development*) and empowerment (descriptive category: *student empowerment*) and care (descriptive category: *student care*).

Thus, the recognition of the three rules of phenomenological reduction improved the quality of the study's design and analysis.

In summary, this section has provided evidence in support of this study's trustworthiness. The section outlined the study's considerations of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and reflexivity and the following section extends this through a detailed description of the research methods.

5.3 RESEARCH METHODS: IMPLEMENTATION OF METHODOLOGY

This research used a phenomenographic research approach to study Enabling Educators' understandings of their work in Australian pathway programs. As a purely phenomenographic study, the study had no hypothesis and was exploratory in nature, using two data collection instruments to capture and map variations in the ways Enabling Educators understand their work and professional identities. The following section offers a detailed

outline of the design, piloting and implementation the data collection instruments, as well as the method of data analysis.

5.3.1 ETHICS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study was conducted with appropriate ethics clearance and in accordance with applicable ethical guidelines. Prior to commencing the recruitment of participants, ethical clearance was requested and granted by the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) ethics review committee (approval number: H18REA250). Participants were only contacted after obtaining ethical clearance. In accordance with the ethics approval granted by USQ ethics committee, the participants:

- were supplied with a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix A: online; B: interview). This meant that all participants were informed about the nature, objectives and requirements of the study.
- completed a Consent Form (Appendix A1: online, A3: interview). Consent was obtained from each of the participants.
- were assured of the principles and practices that governed the confidential collection, storage and use of their data.
- were informed of their right to withdraw from the study and the opportunity to proof their transcript.
- were assigned a number that was used as a reference in both the analysis and in any subsequent use of the data.

On reflection, asking participants to nominate a pseudonym, rather than assigning a number, would have helped to personalise their responses while protecting anonymity. However, this was only considered at the point of recording the findings and, it would have been inappropriate to, without the participants' consent, make the

necessary assumptions about gender identification and ethnicity, required to assign a pseudonym.

5.3.2 DATA COLLECTION

While the most common method of collecting data in phenomenographic studies is semi-structured interviews (Sin, 2010), a range of other means of data collection are possible (Han & Ellis, 2019). This study used an initial online, open-ended questionnaire to develop a provisional outcome space. The questionnaires were followed by semi-structured interviews to consolidate the outcome space, explore any relevant topics that might have emerged from the questionnaire responses and add richness and depth to the questionnaire data. The online questionnaire was completed by 31 participants, with 14 participants participating in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were either conducted in person or via Zoom. The following section addresses the design and implementation of both the questionnaire and interviews.

i. The online questionnaires. This study's initial method of data collection was an online questionnaire that used open-ended question sets to explore its research questions (Appendix 1). Although interviews allow for greater flexibility in questioning, there are inherent strengths in collecting data via written responses. If the participants are comfortable with written expression, writing can be considerably more focused and offer participants time and a "leisure" to reflect on their responses (Bruce, 1994, p. 48). In using an online questionnaire, I assumed that as participants were academics, the participants would be experienced and confident with written expression using online media, such as emails and questionnaires. The use of online questionnaires, as a data collection method, also allowed me to reach a wide and busy audience and allowed the participants

agency and flexibility in choosing when and where to respond. The online questionnaires in this study were configured to allow participants to save and continue responding at a later time, further increasing flexibility. Finally, the questionnaires also included an invitation to participate in a semi-structure interview to allow for a number of interviews, adding richness to the questionnaire data.

Participant recruitment. Phenomenographic studies rely upon the recruitment of participants who have experience with the phenomenon being investigated. In this study, recruitment focused on those who had experience working in pathway programs. In Australia, many Enabling Educators are members of the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA). NAEEA gave me permission to contact its members via an email and the Association sent an invitation email to its members, on my behalf. The email contained an invitation to participate and a link to the questionnaire. Recruiting this way ensured that all participants identified as Enabling Educators and had experience working in a pathway program.

Participant inclusion and sampling. Sampling in phenomenographic studies is purposive and the number of participants is not large. In phenomenographic studies there "is no prescriptive sample size for a phenomenographic study" (Yates et al., 2012, p. 103) and sample sizes are generally small. A study's sample size needs to be limited as phenomenographic analysis requires manageable amounts of data for simultaneous analysis of the entire data set and phenomenographic parsimony means that these studies do not require large data pools to attain saturation (Alsop & Tompsett, 2006). However, the sample size does need to be large enough to allow for the inclusion of participants with a variety of experiences of the phenomenon to maximise variation in conceptions (Bowden, 2005). Phenomenography studies with

sample sizes of 10 to 30 participants are common (Bowden, 2005) and research experience derived from a considerable number of phenomenographic studies demonstrates that 20 participants can be considered an adequate sample size (Holmström et al., 2003; Tight, 2016). Thus, when considering sampling in phenomenographic studies, purposive sampling that considers variation in the experience of the participants may be of more significance than the actual sample size.

In this study, 31 Enabling Educators participated by responding to the questionnaires. These participants, collectively, provided sufficient data for redundancy and represented sufficient variation in their experiences and understandings to generate five qualitatively different descriptive categories (refer to Table 6.1 in Chapter 6 for a list of the five categories). While more data may well produce new categories, this study's sampling of 31 participants was considered appropriate (see Table 5.2 for online survey participant demographics).

Table 5-2

Online survey participant demographics

Years of experience teaching		Discipline area*		Mode of delivery*	
1 to 5 years	9	Study Skills	16	Involved with online modes of delivery	23
6 to 10 years	13	Communication	16		
11 to 15 years	3	Mathematics	3		
16 to 20 years	3	Digital Skills or Digital Literacy	5	Not involved with online modes of delivery	6
21 to 25 years	0	Academic English	10		
Greater than 26 years	1	Other or not applicable	6		
* Several participants identified in multiple fields: n=29 as two participants did not complete this section					

Questionnaire design and piloting. The core questions used in the questionnaire were adapted from previous phenomenographic studies of variations in the ways that professionals understood their work. Several of these previous investigations investigated medical professionals, such as nurses and anaesthetists (Larsson & Holmström, 2007; Larsson et al., 2003). These studies had research questions similar to those posed in this study. Although the success of previous research suggested the suitability of the questions, the previous research was conducted in different professional and cultural contexts. Therefore, prior to use, this study's questions were piloted to test for clarity, intent, and participant response time commitment.

The initial three questions piloted were context-specific adaptations of the core interview questions used in the afore-mentioned studies (Larsson & Holmström, 2007; Larsson et al., 2003). This study began piloting the following three open-ended questions:

1. When do you feel you have been most successful in your work as an Enabling Educator?
2. What is difficult or what hinders you in your work as an Enabling Educator? and
3. What do you believe to be the core work of an Enabling Educator?

Two stages of piloting were conducted. The initial stage piloted the three open-ended questions, asking a small number of Enabling Educators what they thought the questions were asking for, and how they would answer the questions. Participants were allowed to self-define the notions of success, difficulty and core work. This initial piloting led to three changes to the original questions to improve clarity and extend the questions. Firstly, some minor modifications were made to clarify the question wording. Next, additional probing questions were added to each of

the core questions to provide greater depth. Finally, a fourth question was added asking the participants to describe themselves as Enabling Educators. The resultant questions are provided below (Table 5.3).

Table 5-3

Question sets from the first piloting stage

Main question	Probing questions
1. What do you believe to be the core work of an Enabling Educator?	Provide an example of a concrete situation which you believe exemplifies what is central to your work as an Enabling Educator? Please elaborate on why you believe this to be good example of what is central to your work in Enabling Education?
2. When do you feel you have been most successful in your work as an Enabling Educator?	What was your role in making this success occur?
3. Describe a situation or experience you have encountered when your work as an Enabling Educator was difficult?	How did this difficulty impact your ability to be who you are as an Enabling Educator?
4. How would you describe who you are as an Enabling Educator?	What do you feel is your contribution to Enabling Education?

The second stage of piloting placed the four sets of questions in an online survey. A university branded version of Lime Survey was used. This second trial piloted the full questionnaire including the online Participant Information Sheet and consent form, as well as other essential information and directions. The online survey was subjected to several stages of testing before being piloted with the same small group of Enabling Educators. This pilot led to minor

changes in the instructions and guidance provided with the survey. The full set of the questions and accompanying supporting instructions and directions provided in Appendix 1. A link to the online questionnaire was emailed to the members of NAEEA on two separate occasions and eventually resulted in 31 responses being returned.

The questionnaire respondents were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. Fourteen respondents assented to being interviewed and the design and piloting of these semi-structure interviews are described in the following section.

ii. Semi-structured interviews. The aim of a phenomenographic interview is to have the participants reflect on their experiences with the phenomenon, relating the content and meaning of these experiences, so the interviewer and participant gain a mutual understanding of the participants' conception of the phenomenon (McGrath et al., 2019). These interviews can be described as a "conversational partnership" (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000) exploring the relationship between the participant and the object of the research. Therefore, phenomenographic interviews:

- explore variations in the experience and understanding of a phenomenon in the participant's lifeworld,
- are descriptive, qualitative,
- are specific and focused on a theme,
- do not impose a framework or assumptions over the data analysis,
- accept ambiguity and fluidity. (Bruce, 1994).

A phenomenographic interview is "a specialised form of the qualitative research interview" that investigates an aspect of the participant's lifeworld (Bruce, 1994, p. 49).

Phenomenographic interviews are defined by phenomenography's second-order perspective, where the

interviewer's focus is neither explicitly or solely on the phenomenon being examined nor on the participant (Han & Ellis, 2019) but on the participant's experiences with, and understanding of, the phenomenon. Moreover, there is no scepticism in the interviewer's responses, nor is the researcher try to 'get inside the participant's head' (Richardson, 1999). Nevertheless, phenomenographic interview technique requires a going beyond descriptive questions and exploring 'why' questions: "'why did you react that way?', 'why was that important to you?', or 'why did you do that?'" (Zygmont & Naidoo, 2018, p. 8). As such, questions and prompts are used to elicit a deeper understanding of a participant's perspective of their identity and work. In eliciting this deeper understanding, Bowden and Green (2005) suggest the use of questions that are either:

1. neutral, and aimed at getting the participant to expand upon a topic;
2. specific, and ask the participant for greater depth of information about a topic; or
3. reflective, and ask the participant to reflect on relationships between topics.

Also characteristic of phenomenographic interviews is a conversational movement from concrete to abstract. Questions about concrete aspects of the experience of the phenomenon are generally introduced first, as participants often find it easier to account for and describe these aspects of a phenomenon (Dortins, 2002). The next group of questions explore the participants' understanding of the phenomenon; what the phenomenon means to the participants. The "follow-up prompts in a phenomenographic interview are often more important in eliciting underlying meaning than the primary questions" (Åkerlind, 2005, p. 65). In this thesis, the interview questions, along with other interview design elements, were included in a 'run sheet' (McGrath et al., 2019)

(Appendix 4) that was prepared to guide the 14 participant interviews.

Interview design and piloting. The interview design centred around the three central questionnaire questions that explored experiences that represented three aspects of what participants believed to be their core work, when they felt most successful in their work, and when they encountered difficulty. These primary questions were supplemented by questions developed to enrich and clarify the data from the initial online, open-end questionnaire. The question sets began with questions about the content of the participants' experiences in their pathway programs before moving to more open questions that explored the meaning applied to these experiences (Bowden, 2000). The primary questions built on the participants' questionnaire responses, allowing an opportunity for both clarification and expansion on the written questionnaire responses. Beyond the primary questions, additional questions and prompts were added to the interview which, as Bowden (2005) suggested were confined to brief requests for information and encouragement to the participant to further explore or explain a thought that they had raised. Question sets were also added at the start and end of the interview to establish rapport between the interviewer and participant, explore the participant's career development into enabling education and check if the participants had anything to add, clarify or say in conclusion.

The initial interview questions and run sheet were tested and modified through pilot interviews to test for flow, clarity and question validity (McGrath et al., 2019). There was minor, useful feedback regarding the flow of the questions and question clarity. After piloting, minor adjustments were made to the original run sheet to produce the final copy (Appendix 4).

Sampling strategy and recruitment. Interview participants were recruited via the questionnaire. The final question in the questionnaire asked participants if they were interested in being contacted for an interview. Participants who declined the interview were thanked and exited the online questionnaire without recording any identifying information. Participants who indicated an interest in being interviewed were informed that their name and contact details would be collected along with their individual questionnaire responses, allowing their responses to be further explored in their semi-structured interviews. Fourteen of the questionnaire participants indicated an interest in being interviewed. These participants were subsequently contacted to arrange and conduct the interviews.

The interview participants were representative of different universities, teaching disciples and lengths of time working as full-time academics in enabling education (see Table 5.4). The participants had diverse careers prior to enabling education, as such; high school teaching experience, experience teaching in a university disciple or being recent doctoral students. The participants held various roles within their pathway programs, representing of a range of positions, including teaching academics, coordinators of teams or disciplines and heads of pathway programs. The diversity of experience supports the claim to sufficient variation in experience, one of the principles of phenomenographic research.

Table 5-4

Interview survey participant demographics

Years of experience teaching		Discipline area*		Mode of delivery	
1 to 5 years	4	Study Skills	9		11
6 to 10 years	5	Communication	8		

11 to 15 years	2	Mathematics	3	Involved with online modes of delivery	
16 to 20 years	1	Digital Skills or Digital Literacy	2	Not involved with online modes of delivery	3
21 to 25 years	0	Academic English	5		
Greater than 26 years	1	Other or not applicable	4		
* Several participants identified in multiple fields; n=14					

Considerations in conducting the interviews: both face-to-face and online. In conducting interviews, it is important to consider the participants' levels of comfort and liberty to speak freely (Seidman, 2006). The participants were offered the choice of an in-person interview or being interviewed via Zoom. With either option a suitable site was selected that was quiet, allowed for open, confidential discussion and was free of interruption (Seidman, 2006). My experience in a pathways program suggested that Enabling Educators are quite conversant and comfortable expressing themselves on Zoom, and several interviews were conducted via this medium. For these Zoom interviews, I used a private conference room at my university and the participants were in their own private offices. In-person interviews were conducted in a private conference room. The interview style was pitched as a relaxed, collegial style and the interviews were digitally recorded, either through Zoom or a small two-way microphone that was directed towards both the participant and me. Following Doody and Noonan's (2013, p. 31) suggestions, each interview began with:

- an explanation of the purpose and general format of the interview,
- an explicit statement reassuring the participants that there are no correct or incorrect answers, as it is the

participants' own experiences and meanings being discussed,

- the identification of the role of the interviewer, and
- an encouragement for participants to take their time with their responses.

In the interviews, the run sheet became a reference, or checklist of the interview. If the natural flow of conversation explored question sets in a non-sequential order, I simply noted the questions covered, so as to avoid repetition. When a pause occurred, I simply referred to the run sheet and selected the next logical question set. The semi-structured interviews were designed to be of approximately one hour duration. In reality, the interviews ranged between 47 minutes and an 1 hour 39 minutes, with an average interview time of an 1 hour and 9 minutes.

Translation of interview transcripts. Transcription acts as an interface between participant interviews and the written data, as the process of transcription allows researchers to familiarise themselves with the data and creates space for analytical distance (Dortins, 2002). Several protocols were incorporated into the transcription, including obtaining a high-quality digital recording of the interview, an alertness to potential sources of transcription error, and an awareness that utterances may have multiple meanings. Hand-written notes were recorded and used in conjunction with the transcripts to note contextual features in the interview to minimise the risk of misinterpretation (Tessier, 2012). Verbatim transcriptions were made from a transcription service and I reviewed each transcript several times from the audio recordings. I made grammatical and orthographical adjustments to the participants' verbatim utterances only where required to retain anonymity with respect to the participants' university, assure integrity of meaning and allaying any concern of prejudice based

on participants' linguistic errors. Word documents of the final transcripts were used for the analysis.

5.3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Phenomenographic analysis is directed towards identifying and describing the limited number of qualitatively different ways a phenomenon could be understood by a group of participants. As such, the "knowledge interest of phenomenographic research is concerned with revealing variation in human experience and awareness, and to provide experiential descriptions of this variation" (Yates et al., 2012, p. 100). Phenomenographic studies describe "key aspects of the variation of the experience of a phenomenon rather than the richness of individual experiences" (Trigwell, 2000, p. 77). As this study used a phenomenographic approach to data analysis, the analysis was a reductionist (Marton & Booth, 1997), iterative and interpretive process oriented towards discovering and describing qualitatively different categories in an outcome space which described a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Cope, 2014; Walsh, 2000).

A. Contribution of Dahlgren & Fallsberg's (1991) seven-steps to the analysis. There are several methods of phenomenographic data analysis shown in the literature. Dahlgren and Fallsberg's (1991) seven-step analysis is a recognised procedure that has been previously used in phenomenographic research (Jarling et al., 2020; Björk et al., 2021; Widäng et al., 2008). In this study I utilised the seven-step analysis of: familiarisation, condensation, comparison, grouping, articulation, labelling and contrasting as detailed below in Table 5.4.

Data analysis was iterative. As Dahlgren and Fallsberg, themselves note, "there is a constant interplay between the various steps of analysis" as "slavish compliance to the sequence described would be contradictory to the spirit of qualitative analysis

that aims at catching the essence of people's world of thoughts" (p. 152). Initially I began working with the smaller body of questionnaire responses, using multicoloured felt pens and highlighters on printed copies on A3 sized sheets of paper. Once I felt confident with this volume of data, I began using NVivo 12 to analyse and code the whole data set. The data were imported into NVivo and the nodes corresponding to the codes from the initial analysis were created. These nodes were then linked to specific corresponding references in the data. In NVivo I worked iteratively through the data comparing the nodes and references to either confirm the stability of nodes, by the addition of supporting references, or combine nodes to create new nodes that better represented what I was seeing in the data (see Table 5.5). The final set of twelve nodes corresponded to the study's twelve themes.

Table 5-5

Dahlgren & Fallsberg's (1991) seven-step analysis

Stage	Description
1. Familiarisation	Reading the whole set of texts several times.
2. Condensation	Reading again and marking where the participant gave answers to the main interview questions.
3. Comparison	Looking for the focus of the participants' attention and how they are describing their way of working. Making a preliminary description of each participants' predominant way of understanding the work.
4. Grouping	Grouping the descriptions into categories, based on similarities and differences. Formulating categories of description.
5. Articulating	Looking for non-dominant ways of understanding.
6. Labelling	Assigning a descriptor to each category of description Finding a structure in the outcome space.
7. Contrasting	Contrasting the final descriptive categories to ensure they are non-overlapping and qualitatively different.

Note. Adapted from Dahlgren and Fallsberg, 1991 "Phenomenography as a qualitative approach in social pharmacy research," *Journal of Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, p. 152.

i. Familiarisation. In the first stage, time was taken to become familiar with the questionnaire responses, as a whole. The aim in this initial stage was to read the participants' responses several times, with an open mind, to become familiar with and gain

an overall impression of the participants' responses. Preliminary judgements were avoided.

ii. Condensation (identifying meaning units). The second stage involved identifying units of meaning in the participants' responses. The responses were analysed, searching for each of the participants' references to their work as Enabling Educators. In analysis the initial focus was on the *what*. This stage explored the various ways the Enabling Educators referred to and described the direct object of the study, *what* they experienced in their work as Enabling Educators. Next, the responses were reworked with a focus on the meanings the participants attributed to the phenomenon and the relationships that they perceived existing between how they understood their experiences. In this step the focus was on the *how*, the indirect object, and explored how the participants understood their experiences of working in Enabling Education.

Participant conception(s) of their work were extracted from these responses and condensed into meaning units. The emerging units of meaning were checked and evaluated against the wider context of the participant's other responses. At this stage all statements were considered equally (Sandberg, 2000). The word length of the meaning units varied in size (Larsson & Holmström, 2007) as the questionnaire responses were more considered and compact, generally consisting of a phrase or short sentence, while the meaning units from the interviews were frequently longer.

iii. Comparison (meaning units to emerging concepts). The third stage involved exploring substantive similarities and qualitative differences in the participants' responses. Phenomenography explores variations in experience and understanding, and so the third, comparison stage was iterative, moving across the full set of data, comparing and contrasting the meaning units to form an impression of potential groupings based

on similar concepts (Bowden & Green, 2005). The meaning units extracted during condensation were compared in order to note similar and different responses, firstly, horizontally and across responses to the same question and, secondly, within the context of the whole data set. This was facilitated by coding the units of meaning within the unified text, keeping the quote within context of the participant's full response (Stenfors-Hayes et al., 2013). In this stage, aspects of experiences and understandings that were common throughout the data set were set aside.

iv. Grouping (emerging concepts to potential descriptive categories). In the fourth stage the emerging concepts stabilised and these concepts were then grouped together to form comprehensive descriptive categories. Meaning units considered to be representative of emerging concepts were cross-checked against both individual responses and the data, as a whole, until clear and precise concepts of work stabilised. The similar concepts of work were then formed into categories expressing similar ways of understanding work. In this study, two or three interrelated concepts were grouped to form a single descriptive category. In constructing final descriptive categories, phenomenography considers both parsimony and qualitative difference (Åkerlind, 2005). Therefore, the final five descriptive categories that formed the study's outcome space were required to be qualitatively different and non-overlapping. The presence and absence of salient references within the conceptions were considered to ensure that the final descriptive categories formed a limited number for groups, to observe parsimony, and were differentiated and non-overlapping, to observe qualitative difference

v. Articulating. The fifth stage involved assigning descriptors that captured the essential meaning of each of the five categories. These descriptors were developed by completing the

statement: "In this descriptive category Enabling Educators understand and experience their work as …?"

vi. Labelling. This sixth stage involved expressing the core meaning of each descriptive category. The final descriptors, the composite concepts and salient quotations from the participants' responses were used to formulate a statement that expressed the core meaning of the category and explained how each category of work was experienced and understood.

vii. Contrasting. In the final stage, the categories were considered through a contrastive procedure, whereby the categories are described in terms of their individual meanings as well as in terms of what they do not comprise. Contrasting ensured the final descriptive categories were, in fact, non-overlapping and qualitatively different.

B. Contribution of the structure of awareness to the analysis. During the analysis I was also conscious of the previous work of Marton and Booth (1997) on the structure of awareness (see the full articulation of the structure of awareness in Chapter 4, Figure 4.3). Attention to aspects of participants' awareness and the structure of the relationships between these aspects is characteristic of phenomenographic analysis. Of particular interest, in this study's data analysis was Marton and Booth's (1997) attention on the **what** (meaning) and **how** (process) aspects of conceptions of a phenomenon. As a result of the joint influences of Dahlgren & Fallsberg's (1991) seven-step analysis and the structure of awareness, the data analysis coalesced around three key questions, with five sub-questions (Table 5.5).

Table 5-6

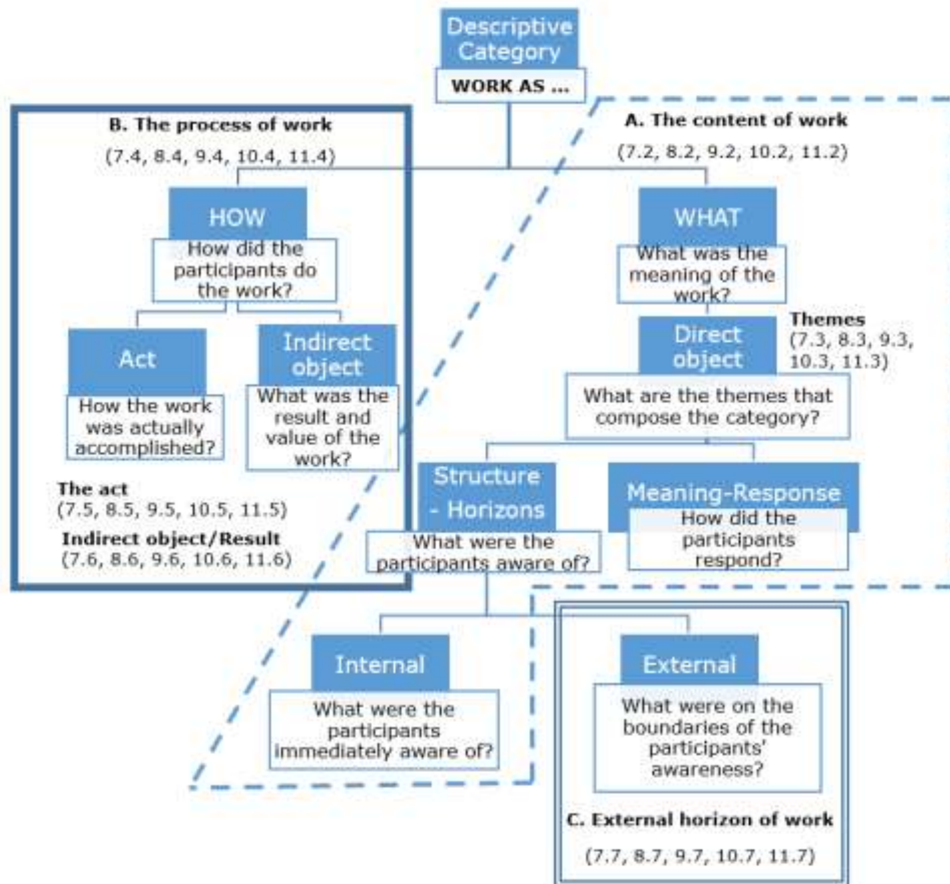
Final set of data analysis questions

A. What meaning did the participants attribute to their work? 1. What were the participants most immediately aware of in their work? 2. What was their response to this awareness?
B. How did the participants undertake their work? 3. How was their work actually accomplished? 4. How were the students positioned in the work? 5. What was the goal and value of this work?
C. What was on the extremity, or marked the boundary of their awareness?

Although the phenomenographic construct of the structure of awareness significantly contributed to the analysis, I found Marton and Booth's (1997) complete articulation (represented in Figure 4.3) to be cumbersome and beyond the requirements and focus of this study. After experimenting with various models of the structure, I eventually chose and adapted the section of the original, complete structure that is represented in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1

Overview of the experiences and understandings of Enabling Educators' work



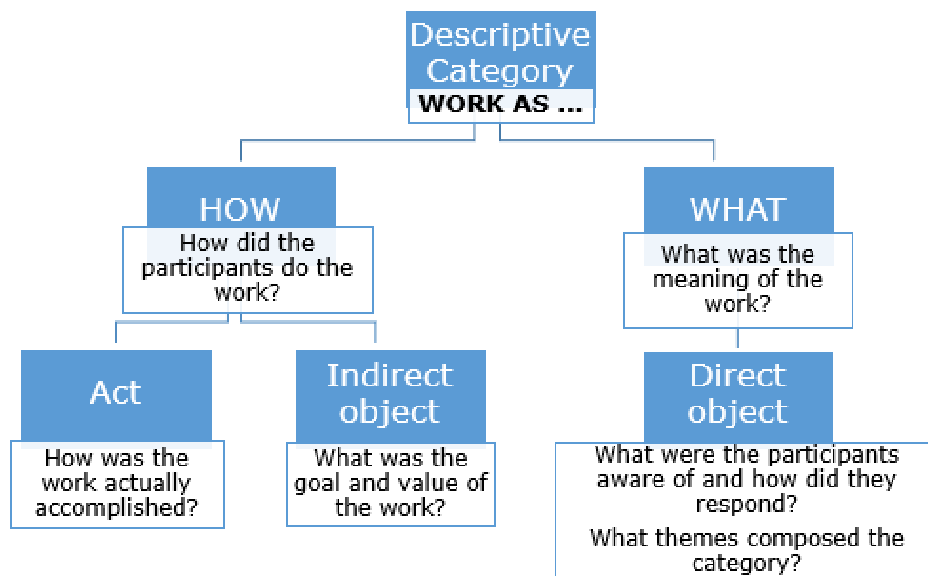
Note: In the diagram, the section labelled A. contains the types of questions examined in considering the **what** aspects, or the content, of each category of work. The section labelled B. contains the types of questions considered in examining the **how** aspects, or the processes the participants drew on when doing their work. The section labelled C examines the external horizon, the boundary or periphery of the participants' awareness. The numbers in parenthesis correspond to the chapter sections in which each set of questions is discussed.

Thus, Figure 5.1 was a contextualised reworking of the structure of awareness that prioritises the examination the participants' understandings and experiences of both the **what** and **how** aspects of their work. This structure best represented the data exposed in response to the research questions.

In reporting on the descriptive categories, the sections A, B and C in Table 5.4 (also represented as A, B and C in Figure 5.1) eventually created the structure of Chapters 7 to 11. Three sections emerged addressing A: the content of the work category, B: the process of work and C: the external horizon, respectively. The questions number 1 to 5, then formed the dimensions of variation within each descriptive category. Figure 5.2 presents the simplified structure for analysing the Enabling Educators' experiences and understandings of work.

Figure 5.2

The simplified diagram for experiences and understandings of Enabling Educators' work



Note: For simplification, this diagram does not include reference to the horizons nor the responses, although they are included in the discussion of each category of work.

In summary, the analysis process described in this section was guided by both Dahlgren & Fallsberg's (1991) seven-step analysis and the Marton and Booth's (1997) structure of awareness. This data analysis generated the study's findings, which are represented in the study's outcome space (see Chapter 6, Table 6.1) and further elaborated in Chapters 6 to 11.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Demonstrating a consideration of research quality, whether expressed as rigour, reliability or trustworthiness, is a researcher's responsibility. In phenomenographic studies, trustworthiness is a common indicator of quality. Trustworthiness is important in phenomenography because it allows a reader to assess the extent to which the findings relate closely to the data. In phenomenography, an investigation's outcome space is the product of the researcher's own analysis of participant experience and understanding of the phenomenon. Although phenomenographic analysis lacks reproducibility, it is both possible and reasonable for a researcher to clearly outline the research methods and the findings with illustrative quotes for the data. Transparency and detailed description allow the reader to ascertain for themselves the trustworthiness of the research. The aim of Chapters 4 and 5 has been to address the responsibility of providing clear, detailed description of the research methods. Next, Chapters 6 to 12 describe and discuss the study's findings and offer sufficient illustrative examples to confirm the trustworthiness of the study's findings.

CHAPTER 6: OUTCOME SPACE

The study's phenomenographic research approach (Chapters 4 and 5) generated the outcome space discussed in this chapter. The outcome space is defined by the relationships between the five descriptive categories, each representative of a qualitatively different way that the participants experienced and understood their work as Enabling Educators. The following chapters (Chapters 7 to 11) explore and discuss the characteristics of the descriptive categories and are supported by numerous, illustrative participant responses that elucidate "the essence of the comments from which the category has been constituted" (Entwistle, 1997, p. 132). Finally, Chapter 12 concludes this section by drawing on the study's outcome space to describe Enabling Educator Identity (EEI).

The aim of this study was to explore variations in Enabling Educators' experiences and understandings of their work and professional identities. This study's outcome space is populated by a small number of related, qualitatively distinct descriptive categories, which are: *work as equity in university participation, work as student academic development, work as student empowerment, work as student care* and *work as quality learning and teaching*. These five descriptive categories were formed from 12 themes that emerged from the data and represented variations in the ways the participants described and attributed meaning to their work as Enabling Educators (see Table 6.1). In the following chapters, references to the five descriptive categories are italicised to differentiate the words and phrases used in the descriptive categories from alternate uses within the thesis. For example, a reference to the category of *work as equity in university participation*, or its abbreviated form of *equity*, would be italicised.

However, a reference to the principle of equity would not be italicised.

Table 6.1

Descriptive categories and themes

Descriptive category	***Themes***
Work as equity in university participation *(equity)*	Principles of social justice
	Access for non-traditional students
	Inclusivity of diverse students
Work as student academic development *(student academic development)*	Development of student academic capabilities
	Acculturation into university culture
	Development of a student identity
Work as student empowerment *(student empowerment)*	Empowerment as positioning
	Empowerment as learning experiences
Work as student care *(student care)*	Empathy
	Management of stress and self-confidence
Work as quality learning and teaching *(learning and teaching)*	Facilitation of student learning
	Development of quality curriculum

In discussing the outcome space, this chapter initially addresses how the principles of parsimony, qualitative difference and relatedness have been considered in the generation of the outcome space, as well as the implications of the interpretive and collective nature of the data analysis. Next, the hierarchical structure of the outcome space is described, along with a brief description of the relationships between the five descriptive categories. Finally, some concluding comments are offered to segue to the chapters individually dedicated to the descriptive categories (Chapters 7 to 11).

6.1 GENERATING THE OUTCOME SPACE

Due to the nature of phenomenographic analysis, this study's outcome space is an interpretive construct, which is my representation of the various ways the Enabling Educator participants experienced and understood their work in pathway programs. Therefore, although grounded in the participant data, this study's collective outcome space does not represent, nor directly correspond to, individual Enabling Educators' conceptions of their work.

In this study, the outcome space was generated interpretively, from participant data, using phenomenographic principles of parsimony, qualitative difference and relatedness both to generate categories representative of the participants' collective understanding and experience of working as an Enabling Educator. Thus, four provisions accompany the study's outcome space. The provisions are that the outcome space represents:

i. A researcher-generated outcome space
ii. A limited number of descriptive categories
iii. A collective rather than individual representation
iv. A comprehensive response to equity in university participation.

Each of these provisions are discussed with brief comments on the nature of the provision and its implications on the understanding and applications of the outcome space.

i. A researcher-generated outcome space: interpretive nature of phenomenographic analysis. The interpretive, second-order nature of phenomenographic analysis means that this study's outcome space should not be considered to directly equate to the participants' own mental conceptions of their work as Enabling Educators. Phenomenography holds a non-dualist perspective in which participant's conceptions of a phenomenon are considered the resultant interaction of subjective experience

and the objective reality of the phenomenon. Participant conceptions, although grounded in their experiences, are invisible, intangible and implicit, and cannot be directly studied (Collier-Reed & Ingerman, 2013). In this study the questionnaires and interview questions elicited participants' experiences and understandings, allowing the Enabling Educators to articulate and make more explicit their concepts of working in a pathway program. Then, following the phenomenographic analysis approach described in Chapter 5 (5.3.3), I drew on participant experiences, ideas and perceptions of work in the data to generate themes that captured variations in the ways the Enabling Educators experienced and understood their work. Thus, my second-order, interpretivist role in the analysis of the participant data means that the generated descriptive categories in the outcome space are my representation of the different ways Enabling Educators experienced and understood their work, rather than being a direct representation of the Enabling Educators' own conceptions of their work.

ii. A limited number of descriptive categories: principles of parsimony and qualitative distinctiveness. In this study, balancing parsimony and qualitative distinctiveness allowed me to generate a concise outcome space, albeit at the expense of nuance and individual detail. The final number of descriptive categories in the outcome was directly influenced by balancing parsimony with qualitative difference. Parsimony, the phenomenographic principle of limiting the number of descriptive categories, was balanced against qualitative difference, the principle of generating new categories to accommodate distinct variations. This meant that new descriptive categories were only generated when data could not be subsumed into an existing category. The balancing of parsimony with qualitative difference resulted in the outcome space being constituted by the minimum number of discrete descriptive categories required to holistically

capture the participants’ conceptions of their work in Enabling Education. As the number of descriptive categories frequently ranges from two to six categories (Larsson & Holmström, 2007), the five descriptive categories found in this study evidences an appropriate level of parsimony. Moreover, the distinct nature of these five categories is also evident in Table 6.2, which provides a comparison table of the descriptive categories.

Table 6-2

Overview of descriptive categories

Category	1	2	3	4	5
Work as …	**Work as equity in university participation**	**Work as student academic development**	**Work as student empowerment**	**Work as student care**	**Work as quality learning and teaching**
Described	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapter 9	Chapter 10	Chapter 11
Illustrative comment	*"So widening participation is a fundamental social justice principle, you know … widening participation obviously is about helping people get into university who wouldn't otherwise get in."* (Transcript 1)	*"To assist students in realising the strengths and knowledge they bring into their educational journey and facilitate their further development of academic knowledge, skills and practices, which will ease their transition throughout an undergraduate degree."* (Questionnaire 14)	*"I like the whole notion of self-authorship. Because at the end of it it's "how do you propel yourself and you place yourself and identify yourself?"* (Transcript 2)	*"I believe our role is to encourage students to believe in themselves. Many of our students have not had good educational experiences in the past and need that extra encouragement to change their self-doubt.* (Questionnaire 10)	"*To me it's not the role of an Enabling Educator, I think it's the role of any educator… I don't believe in the dichotomy. What any educator needs to do is basically be there as the conduit. Facilitate, provide feedback and through feedback encouragement*." (Transcript 2)

Category	1	2	3	4	5
A. WHAT - content & meaning					
Awareness	Access to university was not equitable for non-traditional students (including students in equity groups)	Non-traditional students can be underprepared for study at university, and find university culture and requirements confusing and alienating	Non-traditional students already had agency, but could lack self-awareness and experience with agency in decision-making	Non-traditional students can experience high levels of anxiety and low levels of self-confidence, and their lives and educational histories can be quite complex	Non-traditional students are adult students and, collectively, benefit from a range of specific and general educational approaches
Response	Increasing non-traditional student participation in higher education	Strengthening students' pre-existing academic capabilities to better position them for academic success	Providing students with the skills and information they needed, so they could make their own choices about their studies	Being empathetic and supporting to increase self-confidence and self-efficacy	Delivering well-designed and executed curriculum (process or discipline specific), adult pedagogy
Component themes	• Principles of social justice • Access for non-traditional students • Inclusivity of diverse students	• Development of student academic capabilities • Acculturation into university culture • Development of a student identity	• Empowerment as positioning • Empowerment as learning experiences	• Empathy • Management of stress and self-confidence	• Facilitation of student learning • Development of quality curriculum

Category	1	2	3	4	5
B. HOW – process and result					
How the work is accomplished	Through and by pathway programs	Through teaching and experiential learning of key academic capabilities	Through supporting skill development and providing information	Through scaffolding development of self-confidence	Through effective adult general educational practices
How are students positioned	Within the context of pathway programs as 'second-chance' learners in transition	As students 'not yet, but becoming, undergraduate degree students	As students already with agency and capable of greater self-awareness and agency	As students who experience varying levels of adversity and complexity in their lives	As adult students
	Strengths-based				
What success looks like	Measurable demographic change in university enrolments, positive change to student lives	Students successfully articulating from pathway programs (short term) and graduation from degree programs (longer-term)	Students with agency making decisions about their studies (including positive attrition or leaving to return at a better time)	Students demonstrating incremental development of confidence and efficacy in their studies	Quality adult pedagogy and curriculum, students learning
Value of work	Impact on individual students, their families and communities	Enables students to attain academic success & life goals	Allows students agency in their decisions about their studies	Allows students to continue pathway and undergraduate studies	Develops students' confidence and their ability to learn
C. External horizon					
What impacts work?	Wider social inequity and the complexity of student's lives	Levels of student basic skill, and type and amount of support required	Complexity of their lives, choices and, at times limited options – real-world decision-making	Limits to support. Educators may experience emotional 'toil'. Educators not 'saviours'	The general field of education provides the wider context and external horizon

iii. A collective rather than individual representation: collective nature of an outcome space. The collective nature of phenomenographic analysis means that this study's outcome space should not be considered to directly correlate to the views of individual participants. In phenomenographic studies, individual participants' experiences are considered partial and incomplete. Therefore, this study used the individual participants' perspectives in constructing a collective outcome space (Åkerlind, 2012; Stenfors-Hayes et al., 2013) that captured a more complete and comprehensive representation of the variations in the ways the participants experienced and perceived their work as Enabling Educators. Thus, the descriptive categories represent a collective perspective on five distinctly different expressions of participants' understandings and experiences of their work, rather than representing five distinctly different types of Enabling Educator.

iv. A comprehensive response to equity in university participation: the principle of relatedness. The principle of relatedness means that although the categories are quantitatively different, they still "represent different breadths or complexities of awareness and are thereby hierarchically inclusive in their relationship" (Stenfors-Hayes et al., 2013, p. 263). In this study the five categories are related through their distinct, complimentary contributions to equity in higher education. For example, the principle of qualitative distinctiveness was observed as *work as quality learning and teaching*, focused on designing and implementing curriculum and pedagogy for quality student learning outcomes, and so was qualitatively distinct from *work as equity in university participation*, which focused on ensuring students have equitable access to higher education. Although distinct, these two descriptive categories are related as *quality learning and teaching* necessarily underpins and enables *equity in university participation*. Also, although *work as student academic*

development and *work as student care* have distinctly different foci, both are related in their joint contribution to student support. Individually, each descriptive category represents a key essential contribution to widening university participation. Collectively, the set of descriptive categories in this study's outcome space, offers a considerably richer and more comprehensive view of what is required to improve equity in university outcomes for non-traditional students.

This section has established the nature of the study's outcome space as a concise, collective, second-order description of five distinct and related ways that Enabling Educators understand and experience their work in pathway programs. In this study the outcome space does not purport to have applications at the level of individual Enabling Educators' conceptions, nor is it representative of five discrete types of Enabling Educator. The outcome space should be understood as capturing and describing five interrelated aspects of the participants' collective understandings and experiences of their work in pathway programs and is representative of my perception of their collective approach to equity in university participation.

6.2 THE OUTCOME SPACE AND COMPRISING DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORIES

Phenomenographic studies produce an outcome space populated by descriptive categories which, although qualitatively distinct, are related. Relationships in such outcome spaces are frequently hierarchical. This section explores the overall relatedness and hierarchical positioning of this study's five categories (Figure 6.1). The relationships between the descriptive categories recognises three equally important layers, or perspectives, of the Enabling Educators' understandings and experiences of their work: work that contributes to equity in

university participation (Layer 1); work that supports students who are preparing for university studies (Layer 2); and work that prepares and delivers quality learning and teaching (Layer 3). The hierarchical structure of the relationships is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1

Diagrammatic representation of the outcome space

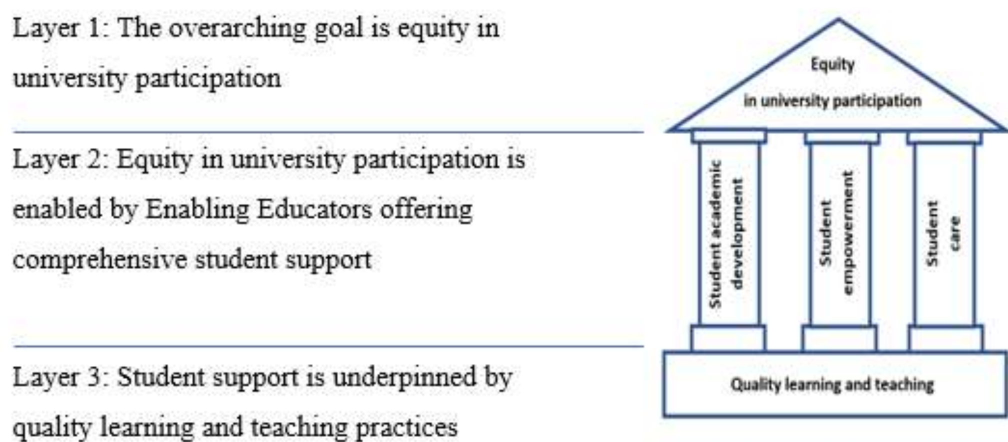


Figure 6.1 provides a diagrammatic representation of the hierarchical layers in the outcome space. The three-layer outcome space is described in greater detail in the following three short sections, which each describe an individual layer.

Layer 1: Equity in university participation. In Figure 6.1, *equity in university participation* is represented as the highest layer of the hierarchy as equity was considered the goal of the participants' work. The remaining two layers are composed of descriptive categories of work that contribute to the overarching goal of greater equity in university participation.

Equity in university participation, or simply, *equity*, was informed by notions of equality and social justice. The participants recognised the inequity of university participation experienced by

non-traditional students. In response, the participants perceived their work as contributing to socially just outcomes through appropriate access and support for diverse students. This latter understanding was further developed in the following layer related to student support.

Layer 2: Student support. In Figure 6.1, the middle layer is composed of three descriptive categories representative of broad areas of student support that contribute to *equity*. These descriptive categories are: *student academic development, student empowerment* and *student care*. In adopting a strengths-based approach, the participants considered their students to be capable individuals who were at various stages of preparedness in becoming university students. In this context, the participants were aware that university presented a range of challenges to the students. These challenges meant that any practical notion of *equity* required students to have access to a range of appropriate support. The types of support that the participants considered to be appropriate were captured in the categories of; *student academic development* (strengthening of academic capabilities), *student empowerment* (strengthening self-determination & self-autonomy) and *student care* (stress management and strengthening self-efficacy).

Although qualitatively distinct, these three descriptive categories are also related. Several participants noted that an improvement in any one category is likely to have a positive flow-on in other categories. Moreover, pathway students represent a diverse student cohort who require markedly different types and levels of support, including no support at all. Thus, the comprehensive range of support offered by these three categories collectively, supplies a multifaceted approach to student support that can be both offered to the entire student cohort and nuanced for individual students.

Layer 3: Quality learning and teaching practices. In the foundational layer the participants focused on pedagogy and curriculum. In this category, the participants' experience and understanding of their work in *learning and teaching* was foundational but not an end in itself. *Learning and teaching* both enabled and underpinned student development and the enactment of *student academic development, student empowerment* and *student care*.

The collective perspective offered by the outcome space. Tinto (2014) asserts that "access without support is not opportunity," insisting that "without support, academic, social, and financial, too many students do not complete their programmes of study" (p. 6). Tinto's statement affirms the relationship between notions of access and support. Although this study did not overtly apply a pre-existing lens to the analysis of its data, nonetheless, the practicality of Tinto's statement is reflected in the outcome space and the relationships between the descriptive categories.

6.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the study's outcome space, mapping five related descriptive categories in three hierarchical layers that capture the participants' common experience and understanding of what is required of their work if they are to widen university participation.

Phenomenographic studies focus on "describing things as they appear to and are experienced by people" and so provide holistic insights into the ways people understand and engage with a phenomenon (Yates et al., 2012, p. 97). This research studied how work as an Enabling Educator was understood and experienced by the participants. Exploring variations in the participants' conceptions and ways of engaging in this work generated an outcome space that supplied a comprehensive

picture of how these participants understood their work. Firstly, the collective study found that Enabling Educators understood *equity* to be the fundamental reason and motivation for their work. Secondly, *equity*, required non-traditional students to have access to support that enabled university participation. In the participants' experience, student participation was enabled by the educators attending to developing students' academic competencies (*student academic development*), fostering self-authorship and self-determination (*student empowerment*) and nurturing self-efficacy (*student care*). Thirdly, *equity* also demanded the careful design and implementation of lessons and learning experiences (*learning and teaching*) to maximise the impact of the three categories of student support. The following chapters explore each of the five descriptive categories of work, in turn, starting with *work as equity in university participation*.

CHAPTER 7: WORK AS EQUITY IN UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION (*EQUITY*)

The chapter begins with an introduction providing a broad overview of the descriptive category of *work as equity in university participation*. The second section describes what *work as equity in university participation* (abbreviated to *equity*) is and explains the category's meaning and content, exploring participant awareness of inequity and their responses to such inequity. The section also includes a description of the themes that compose the descriptive category: principles of social justice, access for non-traditional students, and inclusivity. Next, the chapter explores how the participants accomplished *equity* and what they attended to when increasing *equity* in university participation. The chapter finally discusses the category's boundary or limits, before offering concluding comments.

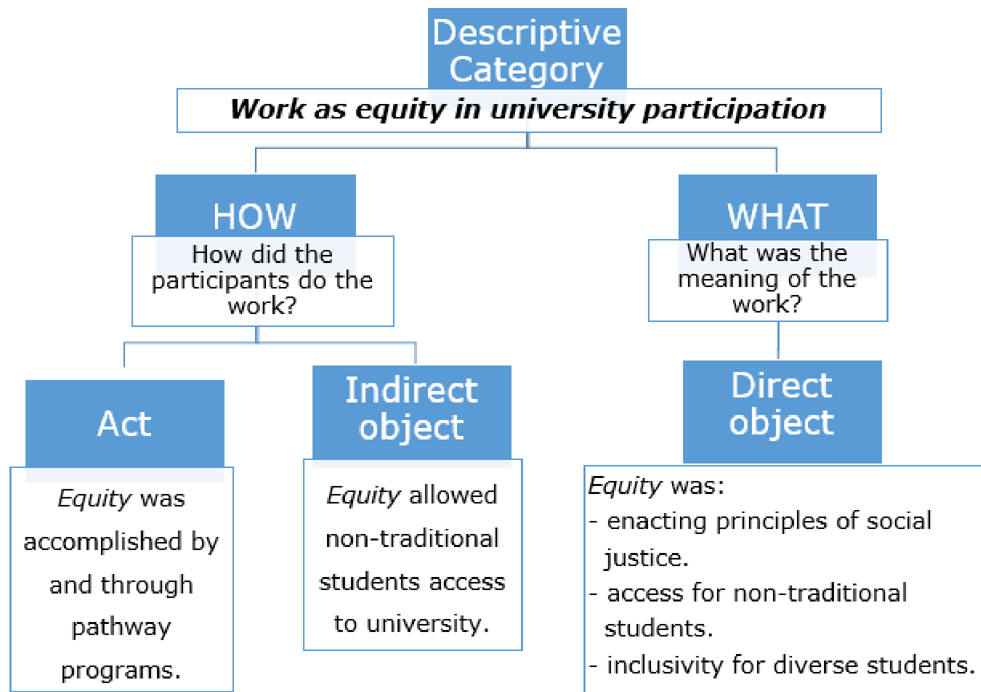
7.1 OVERVIEW OF THE DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORY

Work as equity in university participation captured the participants' overarching and guiding understanding of their work. Within the category there was an awareness that access to university was not equitable and that without targeted actions, educational inequalities would remain for many non-traditional students. Thus, *equity* (refer to Figure 7.1) was understood as a response to inequality through increasing non-traditional student participation and success in higher education. The experience of *equity* was articulated through expressions referencing notions of social justice, equity in university access and the inclusion of diverse students. *Work as equity in university participation* was facilitated simultaneously by and through the Enabling Educators' work in various pathway programs. When experiencing *equity*, participants noted that their work directly contributed to student articulation into undergraduate programs, thereby measurably

altering the diversity of student demographics in university participation.

Figure 7.1

Experience and understanding of work as equity in university participation (equity)



7.2 THE CONTENT OF WORK AS EQUITY IN UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION (*EQUITY*)

In phenomenography, the 'what' aspect of the descriptive category refers to the content of the category and its overall or global meaning. The phenomenographic meaning of a category, captures the participants' experience and understanding of the phenomenon. The descriptive category, *work as equity in university participation*, referred fundamentally to the participants' experience of work as increasing underrepresented students' participation in higher education. As one participant asserted;

> *… widening participation is a fundamental social justice principle, you know … widening participation obviously is about helping people get into university who wouldn't otherwise get in.* (Transcript 1)

The content of the category was captured in participants' awareness of inequity in university participation, and their response through attentiveness to principles of social justice; provision of access and support; and being inclusive within the diverse student cohorts, inherently created through widening participation.

Awareness: Inequity exists in university participation. Within *equity*, the meaning attributed to work was shaped by the specific awareness that Australian society was not equitable, that *"in the context of what [Enabling Educators] do, equity has a larger context. A sort of social equity, you know: poverty, lack of English… humanitarian visa students… being a carer…"* (Transcript 8). Moreover, the participants understood that a range of societal, socioeconomic and geographic factors perpetuated the exclusion of particular student groups from higher education access.

The reality of inequity in higher education is evidenced statistically through demographic data that compare the representation of various societal categories in wider society with their representation in higher education (see Chapter 2). Comparisons demonstrate that various equity groups, such as Indigenous students and low SES students are statistically underrepresented in higher education demographics. The following view was indicative of one participant's understanding of the statistical underrepresentation of equity students. The participant specifically referred to the equity group of Indigenous students in drawing attention to the gaps that still exist in higher education student demographics.

> *There are recognisable gaps. Like the proportion of Indigenous students in higher education is very small … You know, it's 1.1% of students and that's smaller than the proportion of Indigenous Australians in the wider population … I think it is important we think perhaps in those bigger terms because there are unrepresented groups.* (Transcript 10)

The participants' awareness of underrepresentation was key to understanding their experience of work. The focus on underrepresented equity categories was important because,

> *… there are underrepresented groups at university and if we didn't actually think coherently and in a targeted way about particular equity groups, then … that historic trend would continue.* (Transcript 10)

Recognition of the need for a targeted and practical, corrective response to underrepresentation was indicative of the awareness that informed equity's response.

Response: Work as equity in university participation. In this category, *work as equity in university participation* was understood as a response to persistent traditional inequities in higher education participation. The questionnaire responses gave succinct insights into the meaning of equity. The opening questions directly asked participants what they perceived to be the core work of an Enabling Educator. Responses regularly described their core work with reference to equity and work that enabled excluded students access to, and support for, higher education.

> *Allowing students to have equal opportunity to further their education.* (Questionnaire 31)

> *The core work of an enabling educator is to provide those who are or who have been disadvantaged, or prevented in some way, with the educational means to advance into higher education.* (Questionnaire 19)

Other responses elaborated the nature and content of the participants' core work, offering insights into the ways in which *equity* was enacted for students who might *"otherwise not gain access to university study"* (Questionnaire 23). For example, the following comment illustrates one participant's response to underrepresentation and inequality in higher education.

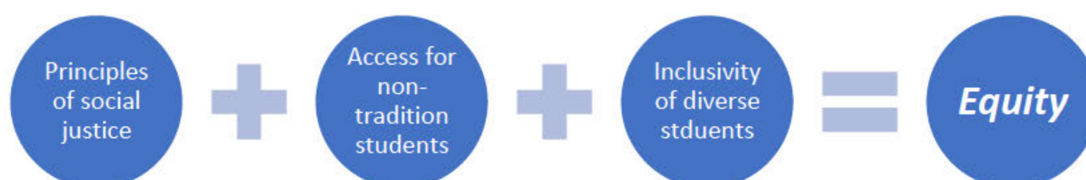
> *The core work of an enabling educator is to address inequity in higher education (and society) by empowering and scaffolding the abilities of students from underrepresented sectors of society, so that they can succeed in their higher education aspirations.* (Questionnaire 4)

The content of *work as equity in university participation* captured the participants' awareness of inequity in the underrepresentation of non-traditional students in higher education. The participants thus understood their work to be, at its core, a direct socially just response to this inequity. The participants' response was more fully explored through the following themes.

7.3 THEMES

Figure 7.2

Themes of work as equity in university participation



The qualitative distinctiveness of the descriptive category of *equity* could be further elucidated by describing the three interrelated component themes of: principles of social justice, access for non-tradition students and inclusivity of diverse students.

7.3.1 THEME 1: PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

In the descriptive category of *equity*, principles of equity and social justice factored strongly in the participants' understandings of their work. Several participants emphasised the need to *"recognise that some groups of society are more disadvantaged than others and do what we can to assist those groups"* (Transcript 7). Concern for inequity was a key insight as these participants experienced and understood their work as a response to inequity and underrepresentation in higher education.

Proactive effort in *equity* was to provide opportunity, a notion clearly expressed by a participant in stating:

> *… it's about opportunities, right? It's about giving people the opportunity to see if further education, or higher education or whatever educational avenue they are wanting to pursue, to have that opportunity.* (Transcript 7)

Such educational opportunities were enabled through the participants' work in pathway programs which, in general do not incur fees nor do they require entrance tests because such financial and educational barriers can exacerbate disadvantage. In response to reversing exclusion, the fee-free and open-access nature of pathway programs was considered fundamental to *equity*. The relationship between social justice and inclusion contextualises the participants' work within the pathway, or enabling, program.

> *So, it's a fundamental social justice principle as far as I'm concerned. Yep. So, people shouldn't be, you know, excluded on the basis of anything really… That's the beauty of an enabling program in that, you know, all people can come … you know, of helping people achieve their dreams and goals. And you know, that is one of the joys of being an Enabling Educator.* (Transcript 1)

The participants' comments that generated this theme included numerous references in which participants drew on principles of social justice and equity, principles they identified with and that attracted them to the work.

7.3.2 THEME 2: ACCESS FOR NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

The descriptive category of *equity* also included a theme capturing participant references to providing non-traditional students with access to, and support to succeed at, university. Several participants expressed the *"belief that students are entitled to access education and have the opportunities and support to be successful"* (Questionnaire 7). As one participant stated, the core work of Enabling Educators was *"Developing the academic readiness, confidence, and connectivity of individuals in our community who would otherwise not gain access to university study. These are often individuals from identified equity groups in*

our society: from low SES, remote and regional areas of Australia, as well as being the first in family to study." (Questionnaire 23).

The participants' work in their pathway programs was the means by which non-traditional, underrepresented students could gain access to university. As one participant explained, their work was

> *developing the academic readiness, confidence, and connectivity of individuals in our community who would otherwise not gain access to university study. These are often individuals from identified equity groups in our society: from low SES, remote and regional areas of Australia, as well as being the first in family to study.* (Questionnaire 31)

Other participants offered examples of their understanding of work in a pathway program through personal anecdotes or vignettes.

> *I was walking to the refectory a while ago and ran into a student from a pathways program I taught. The student had just finished his first year studying Engineering. This particular student had been a refugee and had been unable to study much in the refugee camps that he and his family had been in. On coming to Australia, the short amount of time that he had studied at high school here meant that his results were poor and so he was unable to a enter university directly from school. His Guidance Counsellor suggested taking the pathways course, which he did. The student commented that the pathways program had provided both skills and the opportunity to succeed in his first semester of study.* (Questionnaire 7)

Thus, the theme of access for non-traditional students captured participants' understandings and experiences of providing

non-traditional students with both access to university and support in their studies.

7.3.3 THEME 3: INCLUSIVITY OF DIVERSE STUDENTS

The third theme in the descriptive category of *equity* was the inclusion of diverse students. In this theme the participants considered diversity as offering a *"richness"* and being *"positive for the students"* and for Enabling Educators (Transcript 13). Comments in this theme went beyond a simple awareness of diversity, expressing the understanding that the work of Enabling Educators required a conscious effort to ensure students felt included and valued. Inclusion of diversity was widely acknowledged as important within the data. The participants recognised that Enabling Educators have to be *"very accepting of diversity. Very supportive of the individual regardless of their circumstances. Non-judgmental."* (Questionnaire 11) and *"empathetic to students and understanding of the diversity of student cohorts"* (Transcript 6).

Several participants described diversity by drawing on what could be regarded as broad and general descriptive categories. The following expression recognises the diversity of students' background, using descriptors referencing ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation.

> *… we always talk about having a diverse student cohort. Or at least at our university we talk about that. In terms of diversity: different religious affiliations, different sexual orientations, different cultural backgrounds, English as a second language students …* (Transcript 13)

Other participants recognised a diversity of educational backgrounds, as indicated by the following quote

> *… I think there's a range of backgrounds … some of them have finished at year 8, year 9, year 11 and 12. So their previous study experience can vary widely.* (Transcript 11)

Participants also described their work with diverse students by reference to various enabling categories, such as; *"low SES, remote and regional areas of Australia, as well as being the first in family to study"* (Questionnaire 23).

Although the inclusion of students from diverse categories was supported, several participants expressed a degree of caution with the use of categories in defining and describing students. Such caution recognised the individual and complex nature of diversity. As one participant posed the question:

> *… [can I] classify diversity, because I can say are they Indigenous? Are they LGBTIQ? Are they first in family and so forth? But underneath that, does diversity mean, are they the carer? Are they the translator for the family? Are they in a situation of domestic violence, are they traumatized? So… we can classify but the classifications will only get us so far and underneath that there are going to be so many myriad factors that define diversity.* (Transcript 10)

Of further concern was that the various categories had potential to *"lead to deficit discourses that students can't do things or that some students are inherently more likely to be unsuccessful"* (Transcript 6). Thus, caution in not *"plac(ing) too much emphasis upon the identification of disadvantage by the broad-brush categories"* represents an important consideration in ensuring *"that no one is excluded because of those parameters"* (Transcript 7). Ensuring that one is included defines the theme of inclusivity of diverse students.

In summary, the content and meaning of *work as equity in university participation* was drawn from the participants' experiences and understandings of their work in pathway programs. The descriptive category of *work as equity in university participation,* was work which embodied principles of socially just representation in university participation informed by notions of equity of access and inclusivity of a diverse student demographic. The next section describes the process by which the participants sought to increase equity in university participation.

7.4 THE PROCESS OF WORK AS EQUITY IN UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION (*EQUITY*)

Figure 7.3

Process of work as equity in university participation

The process of *work as equity in university participation* discusses how Enabling Educators discerned and attended to work in response to the question posed in this section 'How did the participants contribute to equity in university participation?'

Dimensions of variation: In the following sections four key considerations are used to capture and describe the participants' understandings and experience of the process for attaining equity. These same four considerations are considered in each of the other descriptive categories. Firstly, in this next section (7.5) the act of *equity* is examined by considering the questions: 'How was *equity* accomplished?' and 'How were students positioned?' Secondly, in

the following section (7.6) the results of *equity* is examined by considering questions of "What constituted success in *equity*?" and "What was the value of *equity*?".

7.5 THE ACT OF EQUITY

The first aspect of the process of *work as equity in university participation,* describes how the participants sought to accomplish *equity*. The act of *equity* was explored through, firstly, what the participants did to address inequality of universities' participation and, secondly, how the participants positioned the students when undertaking this work.

i. How was equity accomplished? *Work as increasing equity in university participation* was accomplished by and through the participants' respective pathway programs, which provided non-traditional students with both an alternate pathway into university and with academic and non-academic support for their studies. As the existence of the pathway programs was predicated on the work of Enabling Educators, the access and support that undergirds the descriptive category of *equity* was afforded by the participants and their pathway programs in two ways. Firstly, the participants' work in pathway programs provided universities with an alternate access mechanism to enrol non-traditional students into university. Secondly, their work in pathway programs provided universities with a vehicle to provide resources for academic and non-academic support for non-traditional students. The following illustrations link *equity* of their work with students and the work of their pathway program.

> *… my work in a pathway program offers access to university and support of their academic & non-academic abilities, both of which contribute to these students' opportunity to attain their goals in higher education. This not only benefits*

individual students but benefits and contributes to a more equitable society. (Questionnaire 31)

Many students in enabling categories have lacked opportunity and access to the benefits of higher education. This is a good example of how my work in a pathway program offers access to university and support of their academic & non-academic abilities, both of which contribute to these students' opportunity to attain their goals in higher education. (Questionnaire 4)

Equity was also inclusive of diverse, non-traditional students. There was a recognition that the work accomplished through pathway programs needed to be both fee-free and open-access to avoid discrimination on the basis of economic status nor educational background.

… people shouldn't be… excluded on the basis of anything really… You know, at the moment it's fee free so you can come into an enabling program, you can get encouragement, you can get guidance. You've just got to turn up and put the effort in. (Transcript 1)

Well, I think that, it's about opportunities, right? … In other words, an opportunity to test their skills, to test their interests in the particular subject area or particular qualification area. (Transcript 7)

ii. How were students positioned? In *work as equity in university participation,* the students were considered within the context of the participants' respective pathway programs, positioning them as non-traditional students, who for various reasons were 'second-chance' learners, transitioning through a pathway program to gain entry to an undergraduate degree.

… most of our students … definitely don't have that entry requirement … and you know, often through no fault of their own ... So this gives them a second chance to actually have the education that they've always wanted … that is one of the joys of being an Enabling Educator … we can provide the support and the materials and the scaffolding to get them there. (Transcript 1)

I love being able to help students on the journey of getting back into education … and it has a real social justice aspect … (Transcript 4)

Secondly, the participants held a realistic view of their students. The students were understood to be bring both beneficial *"experiences and life skills … to the learning environment"* (Questionnaire 27) as well as "*baggage of difficult family/social/financial circumstances"* (Questionnaire 23).

To be honest ... the teaching and the consulting with students in enabling is very time consuming, which is not, by any means, a criticism. It is just the reality, that nothing is straight forward. (Transcript 10)

The students were positioned as being resilient students, returning to study to pursue their aspirations, often in the face of significant difficulty.

7.6 THE RESULT OF EQUITY

The second aspect of the process of work as *equity* in university participation, describes what the participants believed their work accomplished. The result of *equity* was explored through the following two brief discussions, firstly of what the participants understood as success and, secondly as the value that the participants attributed to their work.

i. What constituted success in equity? This section explores how the participants understood and described success or the successful outcomes of their work in *equity*. Within the category, success was experienced when the participants' work in, and through, their pathway programs resulted in university participation being widened. In this descriptive category results of success in *equity* were evidenced by reference to both positive statistical changes in student demographics and changes in the lives of individuals:

> *… as widening participation agendas have taken hold, the idea of a traditional student really doesn't exist anymore…, I work in an institution where 20-25% of the undergraduate cohort actually come from an enabling pathway.'* (Transcript 6)

The following vignette is illustrative of another participant's perspective of the impact of a pathway program on an individual student's educational journey.

> *Seeing a young Indigenous man, from a regional town in [a state] which is considered a low SES region, come through the program thinking he did not belong at university and after a lifetime of being told he did not have what it takes to succeed in school, go on to great academic success. Complete a Bachelor, gain admission to postgraduate study and go on to gain a … Scholarship to study abroad in his chosen field. How transformative for that individual, but also I hope inspirational for his community.* (Questionnaire 23)

ii. What was the value of equity? The participants' value statements tended to draw on notions of equity, both in widening participation at universities and in the wider community. Here, the participants' work in and through their pathway programs had

value because it actively impacted historic trends of exclusion and attrition.

> *… (students) in our programs they are actually more successful than their counterparts who haven't done our program and they stay in the program, the retention is higher. And that is over a number of years. So, we have the data, we have the evidence.* (Transcript 1)

Moreover, the participants valued *equity* for its impact on individual students as well as their families and communities.

> *… it's important that we offer these opportunities to people. Whether they had them at school or they didn't work at school. You know, people mature and they come back [to education] and it gives them an opportunity. I think also that you're not only dealing with a person, if you can lift their expectations, their knowledge, their background, and they go on, you affect their families and the people that they interact with.* (Transcript 11)

Thus, *equity* was accomplished by the participants' work in their pathway programs. The pathway program provided both the context for the participant-student interaction and the means by which university could be accessed. *Equity* was valued due to its immediate positive impact on students as well as the potential for wider societal impact.

7.7 EXTERNAL HORIZON

The external horizon records what was on the boundary or limits of the participants' experiences and responses to *equity*. In this section, the external horizon describes the periphery of the participants' awareness and forms the broader context in which the descriptive category lies. In *equity*, the participants mainly

experienced limitations in their work due to the complexity and disadvantage faced by many of their students.

Limits presented by the students' circumstances. Several participants expressed their awareness of the complexity and extent of challenges that permeated the social contexts and lives of their students.

> *When I first started in enabling it was remarkable to me how many students in that cohort had come to me to declare adverse circumstances relating to extensions for assessment. And all of them were very valid. But I realised when I was looking at the class, virtually every person there had disclosed to me some very serious issue. Health, caring responsibilities, whatever. And I guess it struck me for the first time … how underrecognised the complexity of a students' lives actually are.* (Transcript 6)

The participants acknowledged that these challenges were, at times, overwhelming and impacted students' ability to study effectively.

> *As an enabling educator I have worked with students who have been particularly at risk and require additional support, often beyond the realm of what an academic is qualified or able to help with, for example, students with severe mental health issues, those experiencing domestic violence, or those experiencing financial hardship such that their educational participation is difficult.* (Questionnaire 14)

> *Like people here are poor. Very poor. [The pathway students] don't necessarily have computers. They don't all have computers. They don't all have transport … it takes them two hours by public transport to get here.* (Transcript 8)

It was of note, when considering the financial challenges faced by many students, that the fee-free nature of pathway programs was considered influential in enabling students' access to university. Several of the participants suggested that any form of fee may create barriers that discourage or prove prohibitive for students. As one participant commented,

> *(The university) did a survey … and the question was very simple. Would you have enrolled in an enabling course if you had been charged a fee? And overwhelmingly students responded, no, they wouldn't have. I do think a lack of fees is incredibly important among a cohort of students who are genuinely uncertain of their pathway, who are risk averse to debt. I think it's really, really important that enabling remains free.* (Transcript 6)

Limits presented by the wider socio-political context. The participants also recognised that the wider social contexts in which enabling education was enacted made it impossible to fully address equity. The awareness of limitations was exemplified by the following quote.

> *So, in the context of what we do, equity has a larger context. Sort of social equity, you know, poverty, lack of English skills I think you talked about, humanitarian visa students, etcetera, being a carer. So there's … they still have those things to contend with, we can only do so much.* (Transcript 8)

Thus, within *work as equity in university participation*, the participants recognised that,

> *… there are going to be huge numbers of case-by-case complexities and challenges that is going to mean that there*

> *are so many profoundly significant individual issues that come through every day through people's inboxes or in class.* (Transcript 10)

However, ultimately, as one participant stated, *"Enabling has limits — and teachers are not saviours or miracle workers"* (Questionnaire 14).

Limits presented by mode of course delivery. Participant discussions of online course delivery suggested a level of ambiguity regarding this mode. The participants suggested two general categories of advantage offered by online course delivery. Firstly, online study modes offered access to pathway programs for students who were excluded due to barriers of distance from a university campus, such as students in the equity category of regional and remote students. Secondly, online study modes offered flexible access for students who were excluded due to time commitments such as those who had carer duties or who could not afford to take time off work to study. The following brief perspective captured the advantages for both categories.

> *… the real advantage is that online provision does enable much greater access from wherever you are, whenever you want to study, it's there and accessible.* (Transcript 7)

However, there was a level of ambivalence among the participants who expressed concerns about online course delivery in the equity space.

> *… the advantages are accessibility is much enhanced … the disadvantage is that it becomes a less personalised, less humanised activity. I think that that is a disadvantage for many people.* (Transcript 7)

> *Well, we should know that very few students are sitting at a desk with a word processor on that desk. You know, that's our world … Many students have actually tried to study off their phones because they have no other choice. Students are still using public libraries because they don't have any other access to computers … online [study] is vastly problematic for a large number of people because its costs, its access and its ability.* (Transcript 10)

Thus, while online course delivery offers advantages to *equity*, these advantages may be limited by the social contexts and educational needs of non-traditional students.

7.8 CONCLUSION

Given the participants' engagement in programs established to provide pathways into higher education for non-traditional students, it was not surprising that the overarching descriptive category in this study was *work as equity in university participation*. *Equity* was understood as a proactive response to traditional educational inequalities through work that drew upon notions of social justice to include and provide access for diverse, excluded students. Moreover, *equity* was the preeminent hierarchical category in the study's outcome space. *Work as equity in university participation*, provides context and guidance for the other four categories within the study. For the participants, *equity* was social justice, access for non-traditional students and inclusivity. *Equity* was accomplished through the participants' simultaneous attendance to their work, in a pathway program, and the pathway programs themselves. Although the participants believed that their *work as equity in university participation* did promote greater diversity in university participation for non-traditional students, *equity* was limited by social factors and the complexities of the students' own lives.

CHAPTER 8: WORK AS STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT (*STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT*)

This chapter begins by providing a broad overview of the descriptive category of *work as student academic development*. Next, a section addresses the *meaning of work as student academic development* (abbreviated to *student academic development*), describing that which was central and unique to the understanding of work within the descriptive category. This section further explores the participants' experiences with, and understandings of the category by discussing the three component themes of work: developing student academic capabilities, acculturating students to university culture and developing a student identity. An exploration follows of how *student academic development* was accomplished and what participants were attending to when developing student academic capacity. The chapter finishes with a description which lay at the boundary of awareness in the category and a short concluding summary.

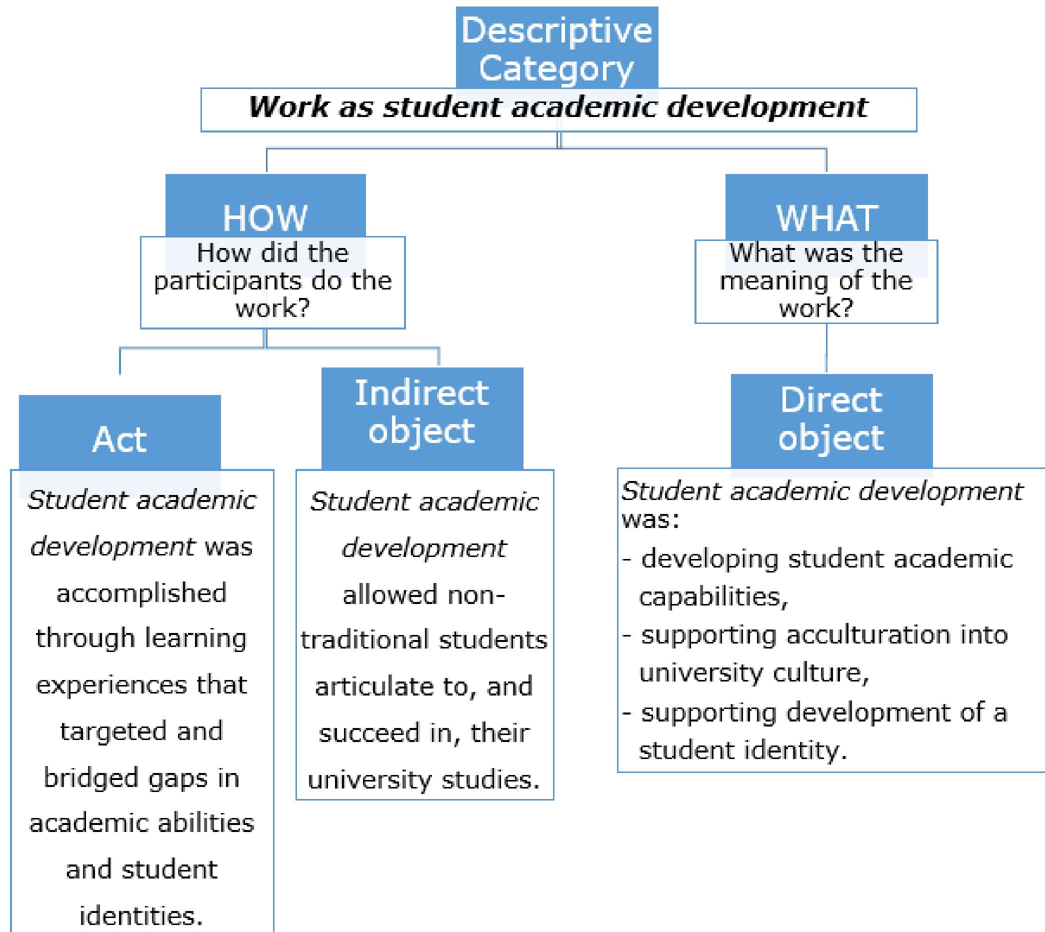
8.1 OVERVIEW OF THE DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORY

For *equity* in university participation to be realised, non-traditional students require both access to alternate pathways into higher education and appropriate academic support structures. *Work as student academic development*, through preparing pathway students for their academic studies, represented one such academic support structure. Within the category of *student academic development* there was an awareness that non-traditional students can be underprepared for university studies and that the culture and requirements of university could be confusing and alienating for these students. Thus, *student academic development* (refer to Figure 8.1), captured the

participants’ response through strengthening students’ requisite academic skills, supporting student acculturation into the university environment and assisting students in developing a student identity. *Work as student academic development* was accomplished, within the context of the participants’ pathway programs, using a strengths-based approach to partner with and support students in the development of academic capacities. *Student academic development* ultimately contributed to student success and retention, allowing students to graduate and improve their career and life circumstances. The participants’ work in *student academic development* appeared to be limited to the capacities that the participants considered were academic in nature and extended to student need.

Figure 8.1

Experience and understanding of work as student academic development (student academic development)



8.2 THE CONTENT OF WORK AS STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT *(STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT*)

In this descriptive category, the 'what' aspect referred to the category's meaning and content, the unique contribution of *student academic development* to the participants' collective experiences and understandings of their work as Enabling Educators. *Student academic development* was taken to mean work that contributed to student academic success, specifically through developing requisite academic skills, demystifying academic culture and supporting student capacity and confidence in developing a student identity.

This understanding of work was strengths-based and recognised that pathway students enter their enabling studies with pre-existing knowledge and a range of experiences that provided a foundation for academic success.

i. Awareness: Student unfamiliarity with academic culture. The meaning attributed to *work as student academic development* was shaped by an awareness that non-traditional students often face several challenges when transitioning into university. As one participant observed, *"They are 'not yet' fully fledged students, if they were ready to go into their degree, they wouldn't require the enabling pathway."* (Transcript 10). Participants were aware of the potential for non-traditional students to be underprepared for the academic requirements of an undergraduate program. For the participants, this lack of preparedness, as well as an unfamiliarity with academic culture and requirements, contributed to student experiences of confusion and a sense of alienation during their studies.

> *For a lot of these people, you know, they might be first in the family, university is a very foreign concept, it's not part of their identity, it's not part of, you know, their family or friends, they haven't seen other people go to university.* (Transcript 1)

Although the participants were aware that the students were in transition, they generally viewed the students as being unfamiliar with, or underprepared for higher education, rather than being deficient or incapable. As one participant stated,

> *I don't like to think of it as deficiency. … I think of it more as how can you possibly know that if you've never been told? … So, it's probably more about trying to fill in the gaps rather than address deficiencies.* (Transcript 14)

Thus, the general approach adopted by the participants was a strengths-based approach, that assumed students entering pathways courses already had a range of abilities, skills and experiences that could be leveraged for, and adapted to, academic success. As one participant pointed out *"[The students] are actually coming with a whole wealth of skills and knowledge and experience and that we are going to build on all that and translate it into an academic context"* (Transcript 1). The strengths-based approach to *student academic development* offers a key insight into the participants' understanding of work as *student academic development.* This work is explored in the following section.

ii. Response: Student academic development. The participants' response to students' unpreparedness and lack of familiarity with academic contexts, was work that offered support to develop students' academic capabilities. As another participant expressed it,

> *… it's not just getting people into uni and they'll be right … They're not this new thing to throw all this academic stuff at, tick a box, 'you'll be right'. It doesn't work like that.* (Transcript 12)

The questionnaire responses provided concise insights into the way the participants fundamentally experienced and understood *student academic development*.

> *The core work of an enabling educator is to facilitate student learning so they are prepared for their undergraduate studies. For instance, our [course has] a core unit, that literally teaches students how to be a student and teaches important skills such as research, note-taking, stress-management etc.* (Questionnaire 29)

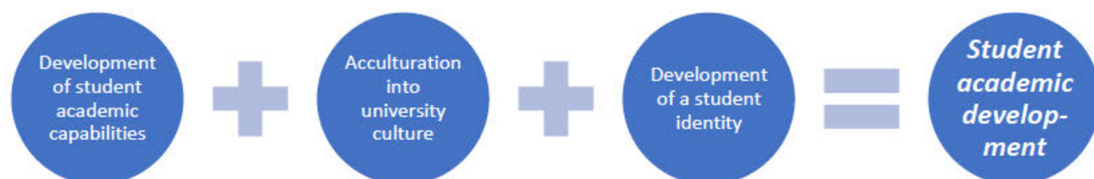
Core work was "*To assist students in realising the strengths and knowledge they bring into their educational journey and facilitate their further development of academic knowledge, skills and practices, which will ease their transition throughout an undergraduate degree."* (Questionnaire 14)

The previous quotes affirmed the role the participants considered they played in developing academic capabilities. The ways in which the participants experienced *student academic development* were more fully described in the following themes.

8.3 THEMES

Figure 8.2

Themes of student academic development



The qualitative distinctive and defining characteristics of *student academic development* were further described in the three composite themes: development of academic capabilities, acculturation into university culture and the development of a student identity. Participant data suggested that the three components were interrelated and supportive. For example, success in developing more effective academic skills contributed to students feeling more confident in their ability to understand the academic environment and to belong at university. Although interconnected, the themes are individually described and explained in this section.

8.3.1 THEME 1: DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC CAPABILITIES

The participants considered academic success to be dependent on students' experience with general academic capabilities in the areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes. However, the participants were aware that non-traditional students could lack experience with academic capabilities which detrimentally impacted students' academic success. Thus, this theme, development of student academic capabilities, was understood as a response to students' lack of experience, by *"(supporting) students to master the skills required for completing a university degree"* (Questionnaire 24).

The skills or capabilities students needed to complete their degrees were variously referred to by the participants. The following two responses are representative of participants who expressed their understanding of *student academic development* by reference to developing broad, comprehensive capabilities aimed at student success in higher education.

> Core work: *"Provision of the knowledge, skills and affective attitudes to ensure a student is well prepared to succeed in higher education studies."* (Questionnaire 11)

> *The core work of an enabling educator is to build the skills, knowledge and understandings that will lead a student to be prepared and successful in their higher education studies.* (Questionnaire 24)

Other participants expressed their experiences and understandings of developing specific academic capabilities by reference to:

> Core work: *"Preparing students for entry into HE … we get them ready and in a position so they can meet course*

> *prerequisites of maths and English, study skills and other requirements dependent on course/program needs.* (Questionnaire 20)

> *Helping students develop their skills in academic writing - understanding the conventions of academic writing so that they can confidently complete their assessment tasks.* (Questionnaire 24)

In this theme, academic capabilities also includes the development of attitudes and behaviours that support success.

> *From an effective attitude point of view, (the student is) developing a positive outlook on the whole process of learning … if the person's attitude is such that they are really committed to what they're doing and, you know, it's their ultimate goal, is to achieve those sort of qualification outcomes, then that sort of attitude is likely to carry them through to fruition.* (Transcript 7)

The previous observation illustrates the value participants placed on the development of attitudes that foster student resilience, focus and, ultimately, capacity for academic success.

8.3.2 THEME 2: ACCULTURATION INTO UNIVERSITY CULTURE

The participants also understood the impact of familiarity with academic culture on student success and believed that uncertainty adversely impacted students' academic success. Thus, work in this theme, acculturation into university culture, was a response to a lack of experience and familiarity with university culture, *"to demystify"* academic expectations and culture (Transcript 10).

The participants recognised that for many pathway students, university culture could be unfamiliar and intimidating.

> *I think as academics … we forget how daunting and alienating the whole process can be. … it takes a huge leap for somebody to think of themselves as being capable of doing something that nobody in their family has ever done before ...* (Transcript 9)

One source of student confusion was a lack of experience with the requirements of university culture. The two comments below highlight students' lack of experience with the common practices of research and forum posting.

> *Most students have never seen an academic journal before, and are not aware of what 'research' is. It is very exciting to see the very early beginnings of an understanding of academic study and to assist students to 'come on in'.* (Questionnaire 18)

> *… we have for example our social forums and assessment forums and so forth. A lot of students actually find it quite intimidating to have to post in those and have their name next to a comment that will be there forever. It is really a very intimidating thing and it's not like making a Facebook post. I mean there's no crossover in experience there at all, they know it's different.* (Transcript 10)

Another source of the feelings of alienation occurred either from previous negative educational experiences or the amount of time since they last studied.

> *I think is especially acute in the case of enabling education where a lot of the students would have had a bad experience*

> *with education somewhere along the way or have been away from higher education or even secondary education for a very long time.* (Transcript 10)

Thus, this theme captured work that responded to student unfamiliarity and confusion by demystifying the university experience and helping students acculturate to the new environment of university. As one participant commented, their work was to *"help students' transitioning, it helps students to become oriented to university practices and I think that helps retain them"* (Transcript 6).

The questionnaire responses provided concise insights into the participants' understandings and experiences of work in supporting student acculturation.

> *It's pretty simple. It's the breaking down of barriers so that the student feels comfortable in interacting with the university environment.* (Questionnaire 12)

> *My core work as an Enabling Educator is to offer encouragement to students … and to decode and demystify the university environment so that students are able to confidently explore their potential for academic study.* (Questionnaire 18)

The theme of acculturation into university culture captured the participants' awareness that universities could be alienating and intimidating for inexperienced, non-traditional students. The participants proactively introduced and demystified the culture and expectations of university.

8.3.3 THEME 3: DEVELOPMENT OF A STUDENT IDENTITY

The participants were aware that while having a student identity and sense of belonging at university could positively

influence academic success for a pathway, *"university is a very foreign concept, it's not part of their identity"* (Transcript 1). Thus, there was the tendency for pathway students to feel like imposters. As one participant noted, a significant number of their pathway students entertained the *"idea that, 'these are the people who go to university, this is what they look like. I don't look like that so I don't belong here'"* (Transcript 14).

The participants noted several reasons their students might struggle to develop a positive student identity and a sense of belonging at university, such as negative experiences of being *"told that they weren't smart enough to go to school or university"* (Transcript 4).

> *I think is especially acute in the case of enabling education where a lot of the students would have had a bad experience with education somewhere along the way or have been away from higher education or even secondary education for a very long time. The notion of 'do I really belong at university?' would be acutely felt in their lives.*
> (Transcript 10)

Moreover, the complexity and conflicting priorities in many pathway students' lives worked against establishing and maintaining a strong student identity.

> *I also think that with many students, it's very important to bear in mind, that they are very often a parent first and then maybe an employee and maybe student third or fourth somewhere down the list … student identity, in general, is a complex thing simply because, understandably, in a hierarchy of priorities, [being a] student doesn't come first.*
> (Transcript 10)

Therefore, participants recognised that developing a sense of identity and belonging required consistent and strategic work by Enabling Educators.

> *… it's really developing that learning identity and strategies to do that and to reframe that and mould that. … To be able, to move into or to multiply an identity. You know, 'I am a university student'.* (Transcript 12)

> *... we talk about imposter syndrome … in classes as well. Especially at the start of the year. … It's about understanding where [the feelings of being an imposter] come from and how you can overcome them, tips to manage them.* (Transcript 4)

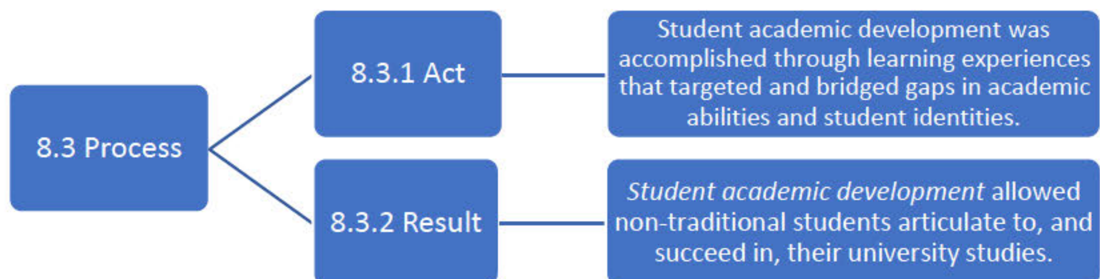
In this theme, work was understood as supporting student development of a positive student identity and a sense of belonging through *"creating an environment whether on campus or online where people do feel that they belong"* (Transcript 10).

In summary, *work as student academic development*, drew on participant experiences of supporting student development of academic capabilities, and acculturation into and identification with university through their respective pathway programs. These themes were interrelated in their contribution to non-traditional students' ability to succeed and establish a student identity and sense of belonging at university. The next section describes the way in which the participants worked to develop student academic capability.

8.4 THE PROCESS OF WORK AS STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT (*STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT*)

Figure 8.3

Process of work as student development



Experiencing work as the academic preparation of students, participants were aware that students are better positioned for success in higher education when they possess a range of academic and associated skills, as well as a familiarity with university culture and expectations. The act of *student academic development* captured what participants attended to when seeking to develop students' academic capacities. In developing academic competencies, the participants simultaneously attended to the gap between their students' current academic capabilities and the academic requirements of undergraduate study by familiarising students with academic expectations and supporting students in building a student identity. The following example indicates how participants attended to a potential gap in the academic skill of essay writing.

> *... we prepare them for undergrad ... sometimes you will moderate and say, 'is this student prepared for undergrad? Can they write an essay?' You know, 'would they be ready in*

undergrad?' … I guess we want to bridge that gap.
(Transcript 13)

The following section examines how the academics attended to and worked to bridge gaps in student academic capabilities.

8.4.1 THE ACT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

In this section, the process aspects describe how the participants developed student academic capacity. Firstly, it explores the act of *academic development*, and examines what the Enabling Educators most immediately discerned and attended to when doing *work as student academic development*. Secondly, this section explores the desired outcomes and value of their work in developing student academic capabilities. Finally, the section concludes by examining the boundary of *student academic development.*

i. How was student academic development accomplished? In *student academic development*, work was achieved within the context of the participants' various pathway programs, by *"supporting students to master the skills required for completing a university degree"* (Questionnaire 16). Participants enacted support by targeting specific academic capabilities through teaching and providing students with practical learning experiences. As one participant commented, *"telling them about it, isn't enough. They need opportunities to develop those skills"* (Transcript 5).

They also drew upon notions of teaching academic capabilities being attentive to *"enabling practices, pedagogies and philosophies"* that "*help students' transitioning*" and familiarised students with university expectations *"to become oriented to university practices"* (Transcript 6). The data contained articulations, such as the example below, that openly used the

verb ‘teaching,’ to articulate this aspect of their work in *student academic development*.

> *We are teaching them how to have a study schedule, all that kind of thing. So, it seems … a lot of it seems quite obvious but you see the students giving comments at the end talking about how useful it was … I guess it’s just all those practical skills and … as a student you will need this, you will need that.* (Transcript 13)

Such examples clearly indicate that teaching was part of the process by which these Enabling Educators supported student development of successful academic capacities.

The participants also referred to providing learning experiences and assessment tasks that targeted specific knowledge gaps, as in these two examples:

> *Offering individual assistance to students as they negotiate the library environment to search for relevant sources to use in their first assessment task (an Annotated Bibliography) and explaining Harvard Referencing, and how to take good, useful notes is a concrete example of what is most important in my role.* (Questionnaire 18).

> *You know there’s a different topic, different topic each week that addresses an element of student life ... So it’s practical. Let’s introduce you to the uni. A little bit on notetaking, a little bit on referencing. Not much but then we take it up in essay writing and tech writing, academic writing subjects.* (Transcript 13)

The participants were also open to acknowledging student-initiated concerns and questions, as illustrated in the following observation in which the participant actively demystified university

culture by encouraging students to ask questions about the university.

> *And you know, for the first little bit of my classes either at the start of a new semester or the start of the year, is me saying, "okay, what do you want to know about the uni?" Like, "what has come up in the first three weeks of your degree that you don't understand or that you need clarification on?* (Transcript 4)

ii. How were students positioned? Within this descriptive category students were understood to be in transition, as they were becoming university students. Although Enabling Educators were aware that students often positioned themselves as outsiders and imposters in higher education, the participants adopted a positive, strengths-based approach.

> *Because with some of them, they feel like, 'I'm dumb, I didn't finish high school.' Or, 'I'm dumb because I only did the VET subjects.' But we try to push that they are, they are already students. They are already people with a lot of skills … We're helping to build upon the skills they already have.* (Transcript 13)

Participants encouraged students within a strength-based approach by identifying that their life experience and skills can be leveraged within the university environment to develop academic competencies, confidence, and a viable academic identity. As one participant commented,

> *That they're not a blank slate, that they're not deficient in some way … a lot of the skills that [the students] need at university, they are already using in their everyday life or in their work life. So we can help them to identify what their*

skills are and then how they can be translated into an academic context. (Transcript 1)

8.4.2 THE RESULT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

The second aspect of the process of work describes the result, the indirect object of work as *student academic development*. It was explored by examining firstly, the results of the participants' work and secondly, by the value participants attributed to their work.

i. What constituted success in student academic development? For the participants, successful academic development had both an immediate and a longer-term focus. In *student academic development*, the more immediate feelings of success were focused on their pathway programs. The participants felt successful when they noted student progress in three component areas of developing academic skills, namely gaining confidence in their ability to navigate the university environment, and developing a positive student identity.

The questionnaire directly asked participants to express when they experienced success, and the view below is illustrative of a response that included reference to students' experience of academic success, confidence in navigating their studies and their feeling of connection and belonging.

> *Students complete and pass courses. Students are confident in decision making for study and career purposes. Students feel connected to [the pathway program]. Students feel welcomed at [the university] and supported (if required).* (Questionnaire 20)

Participants also expressed a longer-term understanding of successful *student academic development* which was experienced when participants reconnected with past pathway students who

had transitioned into an undergraduate program. They felt successful when *"seeing students on campus successfully completing their first and second years of their degree"* (Questionnaire 16).

ii. What was the value of student academic development? The value the participants placed on *work as student academic development* was most immediately recognised in the ability through work to equip students for their studies. The participant below drew attention to the presence of assumed skills and knowledge, and the value of their work in their specific discipline to teach such skills and knowledge.

> *… we often say to our students, you know, at uni you will learn to do this. However, we never actually teach students how to do that. And I think through the subject matter in [the pathway course] … provide(s) our students with what they need to go onto any degree … it is more so about teaching them skills that they need.* (Transcript 4)

The following comment addressed the value of supporting academic capability, drawing attention to the value of developing the specific skill of referencing.

> *I don't think, you know, many people will shed too many tears if they never have to see a referencing guide again but their careers can be affected by the very fact that they haven't. You know, they lost 15% of their marks because they haven't done this correctly.* (Transcript 9)

Moreover, the participants recognised that *student academic development* had potential value in supporting students in attaining their life goals. A general expression of the value of academic development was offered by a participant who

commented that their work provided opportunity of "*improving life chances through academic-type skills"* (Questionnaire 20).

8.5 EXTERNAL HORIZON

The external horizon described what was on the periphery of the participants' responses, and so marked the boundary of awareness. The boundary in *student academic development* described two factors that defined the limits of the participants' ability to develop academic competencies. Pathway programs, by their inclusive nature, generally do not have entry requirements, creating the potential for students to enter these programs before they are ready. The inadequate preparation of students presented a dual issue for Enabling Educators. Firstly, the content and nature of 'academic development' raised questions about the boundaries or limits of what work was *student academic developmen*t. In this category, the participants articulated a clear responsibility to facilitate student development when students lacked academic skills. However, less clear was the participants' responsibility and response to students who lacked basic knowledge and competencies. Secondly, considering the amount to support participants could commit to developing individual students' academic skills raised questions of boundaries or limits of the support Enabling Educators can offer students.

Level of student skill as a boundary (academic skills rather than foundational skills). The Enabling Educators expressed an awareness that foundational knowledge and a range of basic skills underpinned academic success. Examples of such general capabilities included *"basic skills and knowledge, you know, how to write and … a level of mathematics"* (Transcript 7). Another Enabling Educator suggested the necessity of already having learned *"background concepts*" and *"basic skills with computers"* as *"there's a presumption in the education here at the*

university that students already come with those skills" (Transcript 9). Thus, the participants offered no apparent response to the lack of such capabilities, as the participants assumed that students should already have such general capabilities, before entering a pathway program. As one participant empathetically stated,

> *How do you tell someone who has spent most of their life in a refugee camp that they are only semi-literate and that is what's causing the difficulties they are encountering, and no matter how much they are in class, they will struggle with comprehension and making those connections because their understanding of the language and their ability to respond is nowhere near a preparatory/pathway level?*
> (Questionnaire 9)

Thus, a boundary existed between academic capabilities that the participants attended to and the more general capabilities to which they did not attend.

Level of support as a boundary. Limits to the amount of academic support the participants were able to offer marked a second boundary of *student academic development*. Participants' comments clearly implied a limit to the support Enabling Educators could provide. As one participant commented "*I'm [told] you're just supporting them too much. They've got to actually want it more than you do"* (Transcript 5). The following quote also expressed this notion and suggested the need to alter students' expectations.

> *But I guess sometimes you've got to be careful we don't support them too much, obviously. … Like some of these students finished high school in grade 8 or grade 9. And then they're trying to get into university. So we can't be expecting the same level.* (Transcript 13)

Although both opinions recognised the notion of 'too much' support, neither quantified what the appropriate amount of support was. However, comments such as these indicate that the participants had a limit or boundary to the type of support and the amount of academic support that Enabling Educators could offer.

8.6 CONCLUSION

The descriptive category of work as *student academic development* captured the participants' awareness that non-traditional students could be underprepared for, and alienated by, the requirements of a university undergraduate program. Thus, *student academic development* was the development of academic capabilities, acculturation into the university context and the development of a functional academic identity. In achieving *student academic development*, the participants were attentive to the gaps that existed between the students' current academic capabilities, familiarity with university expectations and student identities, as well as the means by which the gaps could be addressed. The means for reducing the gaps centred around an interconnected approach that used teaching practices and experiential learning with academic-type activities. The result of *student academic development* was most notably the attainment of appropriate levels of the various academic capacities, evidenced by the successful articulation into, and eventual attainment of, an undergraduate degree program. *Student academic development* was limited to capabilities deemed to be academic in nature and limited by the participants' time and capacity to provide student support.

CHAPTER 9: WORK AS STUDENT EMPOWERMENT (*STUDENT EMPOWERMENT*)

This chapter begins with an overview of the descriptive category of *work as student empowerment*. This is followed a section describing the meaning and student content of *work as student empowerment* (abbreviated to *student empowerment*). This section also addresses factors unique to the participants' understanding of work that empowers students through the interrelated themes of empowering through positioning and empowering through learning experiences. Next, how the participants accomplished *student empowerment* and what participants were attending to when developing student agency are explored. Finally, the boundary of the participants' awareness, and several factors that impacted *student empowerment* are discussed, before offering concluding remarks.

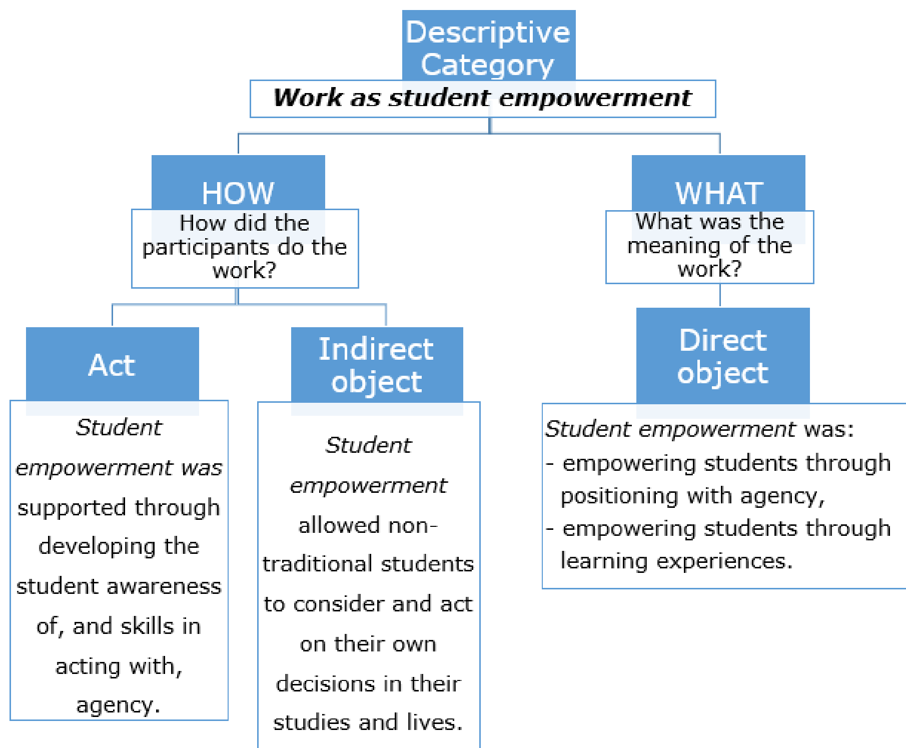
9.1 OVERVIEW OF THE DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORY

Equity in university participation is enhanced when non-traditional students become increasingly empowered as informed, self-reflective and autonomous students. The descriptive category of *work as student empowerment* captured the participants' experiences and understandings of empowering students in their pathway programs. Within this category, the participants' approach to student empowerment was strengths-based, acknowledging that students enter their pathway studies as self-determining individuals, best situated to make ongoing choices about their studies. The participants were aware that the life and educational journeys of non-traditional students meant that these students may have lacked exposure to, experiences of, and skills that supported, agency and informed decision-making, particularly

within educational contexts. Thus, *student empowerment* (refer to Figure 9.1) described the work of facilitating student choice and agency through firstly, positioning and engaging with students as agentic learners and secondly, as facilitating information and skills that encouraged self-reflection and self-authorship. Beyond the pathway content, the participants also indicated that *student empowerment* had impact in encouraging and enabling greater agency in the students' wider life choices. Finally, the participants recognised that their *work as student empowerment* was limited by the complexity of the students' lives and a variety of factors which could impact and limit the students' range of options.

Figure 9.1

Experience and understanding of work as student empowerment (student empowerment)



9.2 THE CONTENT OF WORK AS STUDENT EMPOWERMENT (*STUDENT EMPOWERMENT*)

This category captures the participants' understanding of the autonomous, student-centred nature of agency and what was required for non-traditional students to be empowered. The participants understood that many pathway students were *"… first generation students, low SES and have had unpleasant past experiences with education,"* and, therefore, central to the participant's role was supporting students to become *"empowered, confident, motivated and have a plan on how to reach their next level goal"* (Questionnaire 25).

The category of *student empowerment* captured notions of work for which the term empowerment or associated concepts were used by the participants to include supporting student agency, self-responsibility and self-authorship thereby leading to the generation of the descriptive category. Thus, participants' references to *student empowerment* included examples and vignettes such as the following, which expresses empowerment through the notion of the students creating their own narratives.

> *… it's all about you (the student) creating your own narrative ... ultimately it's all based on your choices and your decisions. So, you either, you choose to act or you choose not to act. So, there's agency regardless.* (Transcript 2)

Using *student empowerment* as a descriptive category allowed the representation of a complex and rich theme of work, and contributed insight into a significant aspect of the participants' experiences and understandings of their work.

i. Awareness: The value and locus of student self-awareness and agency. The participants' awareness of the locus of student empowerment was important. The participants acknowledged that agency, as self-empowerment was the

responsibility of the students themselves. The participants, therefore recognised that they could only facilitate students to empower themselves, as captured in the following comment:

> *I think this is where we have to be careful ... each student needs to be able to come to their own understanding of why they're participating and what the benefits are for them in that participation … we need to be sure that we're not enforcing our own particular set of ideals and values upon those students but rather giving them the tools and the mechanisms and the access.* (Transcript 9)

Secondly, the participants were aware of the importance of student agency and self-responsibility in empowering students' own decision-making. The participants recognised that self-awareness, such as *"Knowing self as learner"* (Questionnaire 27), was key to students being agentic in their studies. Student self-awareness promoted student "*sense making*" and enabled students to be better *"attuned to … understand and engage with (their) environment"* (Transcript 2). However, the participants acknowledged the potential for some non-traditional students to struggle with aspects of the levels of self-awareness and self-regulation required for empowerment. As one participant expressed it, students "*self-sabotage*" and *the "old hang-ups from previous education experiences"* could lead to failure and attrition (Transcript 5). Even though students may make errors of judgement, in the category of *student empowerment*, the students were considered still to be in the best position to make decisions about their own lives.

ii. Response: Facilitating student empowerment. Awareness of student self-responsibility for self-empowerment framed the participants response as fundamentally one of supporting student development of self-awareness and agency.

This supportive role was expressed in different ways such as being focused on "*Facilitating students to be self-directed and to take control of their learning*" (Questionnaire 10).

The data highlighted two approaches to facilitating *student empowerment*. Firstly, the participants empowered their students through positioning the students with agency and supporting students to consider and address issues with their studies. Secondly, the participants empowered their students through the provision of targeted learning experiences that provided the students with essential knowledge and skills that supported autonomous, informed decision-making. These two approaches to developing student agency are elaborated in the following two themes of empowering by positioning and empowering through learning experiences.

9.3 THEMES

Figure 9.2

Themes of work as student empowerment

Empowerment as positioning and empowerment as learning experiences provide further description and definition of the participants' experience and understanding of *work as student empowerment*. The two component themes in *student empowerment* are interrelated, as the participants' positioning of students with agency also informed their pedagogical approach and choice of learning experiences. Although interconnected, the two

themes are individually described and explained so as to give each attention in turn.

9.3.1 THEME 1: EMPOWERMENT AS POSITIONING

One approach to facilitating student empowerment was the intentional centring of the students in their own decision-making processes by acknowledging self-determination and then supporting the students to consider, make and act upon their own decisions about their studies. In explaining the importance of student self-determination, one participant stated, *"I like the whole notion of self-authorship. Because at the end of it it's "how do you propel yourself and you place yourself and identify yourself?"* (Transcript 2).

In this category, *student empowerment* was understood to be work that empowered student agency in their studies. Therefore, when students were solving life problems or working through issues with their study behaviours, the participants did not simply excuse or ignore the students' issues. In empowering the student, the participants chose to affirm student agency and help students navigate obstacles and resolve problems. In this approach the participants understood themselves to be supporting students by reinforcing and promoting student self-awareness and agency.

In the interview data, examples of the participants supporting student agency in this way were generally lengthy and related as vignettes. Therefore, a single representative example is provided in this section. This illustrative example was part of a discussion in which the participant was explaining how they managed students who submitted late assignments. The participant explained that their approach was *"treating [students' late assignment submission] as a space for them to learn."* This participant stated they rejected an easy *"you fail, you come to me, I'll bail you out"* solution because *"waiv[ing] the late penalties for*

the week" reduced student self-responsibility and allowed the student to be *"continually misbehaving?"* (Transcript 5). The participant further elucidated how they positioned the student as agentic by explaining:

> *So when they come to you and say they are struggling with the workload, you can say, … it's your responsibility ... what are we going to learn from this? What are we going to do next?' ... 'Can I help you with some more advice on how I would prioritise that? … in terms of time management, prioritisation' … I always talk about what is in our control and out of our control. So, if it's out of our control, accept it as a fact, now look at what's in our control, what can we do here to mitigate this. It's talking them through the thought process.* (Transcript 5)

The participants' clear and intentional preference was to empower the student in taking greater control of their studies by *"talking them through the thought process."* This act of holding students accountable for their decisions and actions, working with students to enhance self-awareness and self-autonomy in their studies, represents a key insight into the theme of empowerment as positioning.

Student empowerment also included empowering student agency when considering future studies. Positioning students as agentic was also apparent in the participants' approach to students considering the future direction of their studies. The following comments are illustrative of the participants' acknowledgment of student agency and role in supporting students, regardless of whether the student chose to continue or discontinue their studies.

> *Our role is to instil in our students the confidence and fundamental skills that will enable them to manage university*

studies, whether they go on to do so or not. (Questionnaire 29)

> *I think people have to find their own way … opportunities need to be made available to people to follow and taste, get a taste for whatever path they would like to pursue. And that might be, 'yes they're on the right track' … On the other hand, it might be three weeks into whatever they're doing, 'hey, this is not for me, I should have done something else.'* (Transcript 7)

Thus, the participants recognised that despite the value that they attributed to pathway programs or a university education, an undergraduate degree may not be suitable or necessary for every student. The participants therefore recognised that students needed the agency to make their own informed, educational decisions either to leave their pathway program permanently, or to leave and return at a better stage in their lives.

> *Positive attrition is the realisation that … an educational path that you were on is not necessarily the right path for you. So, you make the positive decision to withdraw from that path and pursue another avenue … That is positive attrition as I see it. Being able to make an informed decision, that whatever educational path you are on is the right or wrong or not the correct path for you at this time.* (Transcript 7).

Thus, almost counter-intuitively, empowerment as positioning was exemplified in cases of positive attrition.

9.3.2 THEME 2: EMPOWERMENT AS LEARNING EXPERIENCES

A second approach to facilitating *student empowerment* was captured in the theme of empowerment as learning experiences. This theme builds upon the participants awareness of student

agency and considers Enabling Educators' work in developing and extending student agency through intentionally planned learning experiences.

In this second theme, empowerment was considered to be dependent on access to essential knowledge and experience with fundamental skills, such as critical and reflective thinking. From this perspective, *"empowerment is basically having fundamental skills. If you've got these basic skills, you are then empowered to move forward"* (Transcript 14). In their work context, the participants were aware that non-traditional students benefited from access to information, experiences and skills that developed agency in their studies. Therefore, an important aspect of *work as student empowerment* was the participants' provision of learning experiences and opportunities that intentionally facilitated students developing agency in their studies.

> *It's a large part of their studies, being independent, they are supposed to be self-managing, self-drive, self-propelling, they have to do all of those things themselves. Telling them about it isn't enough. They need opportunities to develop those skills*. (Transcript 5)

Moreover, the participants considered this work to have a wider impact. Enabling Educator core work included planning learning experiences to facilitate student development in skills that, although *"required … for successful completion of an undergraduate degree"* also empowered students to *"become independent and critical thinkers in their everyday world."* (Questionnaire 22).

This dual impact was apparent when considering the value of providing students with learning experiences in critical thinking skills.

> *… you want students to be able to think. That's how they're going to become independent learners… I think it's absolutely vital … Everybody needs to be able to have a process of thinking independently. How can you go forward and successfully do a degree or be a successful person in Australia unless you're able to analyse??"* (Transcript 11)

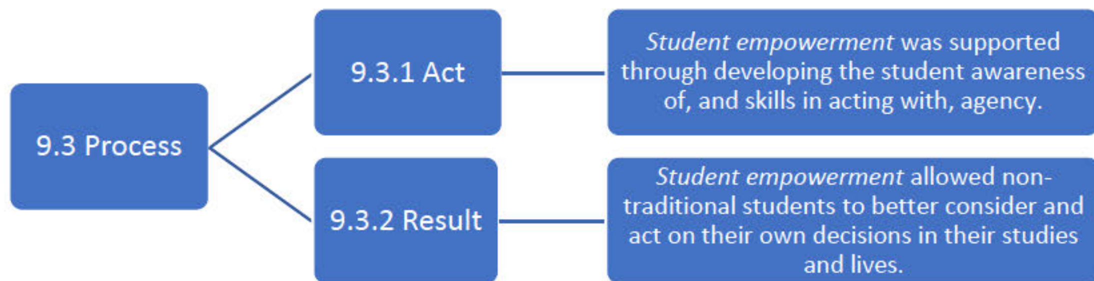
Thus, in this theme *student empowerment* is distinct from *student academic development* as the aim of the work that empowers through learning experience is to *"assist students in the development of skills … not just in a narrow academic sense, but in a life skills/self-conceptualising skills sense as well"* (Questionnaire 9).

In summary, *student empowerment*, firstly, meant that the students were inherently agentic. The inherent agency meant that the participants asserted that their students, even when experiencing difficulty, were not powerless nor incapable. Secondly, *student empowerment* meant supporting the student agency through helping students develop and use their agency when considering their own study plans and overcoming obstacles. The next section will describe the process by which the participants supported student empowerment.

9.4 THE PROCESS OF WORK AS STUDENT EMPOWERMENT (*STUDENT EMPOWERMENT*)

Figure 9.3

Process of work as student empowerment



When experiencing *work as student empowerment*, participants were aware that students already possessed agency that could be empowered by access to essential knowledge and the development of skills, such as reflective and critical thinking skills. In this descriptive category the participants' response to this awareness of agency was represented in two themes, empowerment as positioning and empowerment as learning experiences, that describe what *student empowerment* is. In this descriptive category, the process of *student empowerment* summarised how the participants empowered the students.

9.4.1 THE ACT OF STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

The act of *student empowerment* now considers what the participants attended to and did when empowering students. This section, firstly, explores the act of *student empowerment*, and describes what the Enabling Educators most immediately discerned and attended to when empowering students and how the students were positioned. Secondly, the section examines the results and

value the participants attributed to their work before, finally, discussing the boundary of *student empowerment*.

i. How was student empowerment accomplished? *Work as student empowerment* was fundamentally experienced when the participants were engaged in actions that supported students in developing their own self-awareness in, and responsibility for, their studies. *Student empowerment* was achieved within the context of the participants' various pathway programs. The work was done through planned learning experiences *"giving (the students) the tools and the mechanisms and the access so that they can make … choices"* (Transcript 9).

Work as *student empowerment* was experienced when the participants acted in ways that accorded students agency and facilitated students in taking responsibility for their decisions and planning appropriate responses. For example, helping to facilitate student self-refection, so that the *"student understands why they have made a mistake – not just how – and can then begin the path of challenging that error"* (Questionnaire 9).

The participants also offered several examples of such learning experiences. One example of work that support students being agentic, focused on supporting student time management. As one participant commented, part of their work was, "*helping [students] break down tasks into manageable chunks, setting realistic time frames"* and so incorporated *"assessment that requires students to make their own weekly and session planner so that they can be aware of their commitments and work with them rather than see them as barriers" (*Questionnaire 13). Such study management and planning activities were common inclusions in pathway programs (Questionnaire 11, Transcript 11). Other examples included low-stakes early assessment (Transcript 1) and reflective activities (Questionnaire 17, Questionnaire 24).

ii. How were students positioned? Within this descriptive category the students were positioned as agentic and at the centre of their own narrative. As one participant asserted *"(the students) themselves are ultimately responsible for what they learn and their sense of legitimacy in being a student"* (Questionnaire 13). The centrality of the student in their own empowerment meant that Enabling Educators' work in *student empowerment* was one of support and facilitation.

The relative positioning of the student, as the central agent of change, and Enabling Educator as facilitator, was apparent in the data. In the following comments, the participant states that core to Enabling Educators' work is facilitating student understanding that *"they themselves are ultimately responsible for what they learn"* (Questionnaire 12), because,

> *active engagement through participation and personal decisions is what makes the difference and that taking that responsibility is what this is about. Recognising it is often difficult, but this, to me, is the key to being a successful student in life and not just university.* (Questionnaire 12)

The viewpoint was indicative of the participants' engagement with students on the basis of student agency and with the assumption that the students were in the best position to be self-reflective and make decisions about their studies.

9.4.2 THE RESULT OF STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

The second aspect of the process of work described the result, the indirect object of *student empowerment* explored through, firstly, the result of *work as student empowerment* and, secondly, the value that the participants attributed to their work.

i. What constituted success in student empowerment? Success in *student empowerment* was experienced when students

made informed choices about their studies, in the first instance, and in the wider context of their lives. The following heavily edited vignette was an account of a student taking responsibility and action that exemplified this understanding of success. Accounts of this nature were common in the interviews and provided a useful insight into the ways the participants interacted with the students.

> *… a student rang me yesterday again, for about the third time this term … She's been really struggling. She's cried, you know, on the phone, she's saying, 'I've got two kids I thought now that school holidays are on, I'd be able to get more done.' She's doing two units… I spoke to her about it yesterday at length … Like she needed to decide what to do, I gave her all the options. You know if you do drop one it's not the end of the world either. You know, she said, 'I don't want to.' But she sounded so stressed, really, her kids had got sick. And this morning I look at my email, she's dropped one of the two subjects.* (Transcript 13)

Woven through the account were aspects of the participant's response and understanding of success. The participant was available and attentive, offered information and options as well as facilitated a process that empowered the student to make an informed decision.

Moreover, the participants experienced success when students were empowered to act with greater thought and self-determination in their life contexts. Inherent in *student empowerment* was its applications beyond the educational context. A clear example of such a success was related in the account below,

> *Before an election, a former (pathways) student asked me for a summary of the political parties and what they*

*represented. I directed her to the ABC election page. Previously she had voted based on candidates looks and thought now she was an undergraduate student she should be more aware of the policies. (*Questionnaire 30).

The participants were aware of the value of empowerment and understood it to be part of their role.

ii. What was the value of student empowerment? The participants valued the influence of *student empowerment* on student self-awareness. Greater self-awareness positively impacted student identity in the narrower context of their studies and the wider context of their lives, as captured in the following quote, in which the participant explained the value and empowering nature of reflective learning activities in their pathway program.

> *… when a student has opportunities to learn more about themselves as a learner it can help them reflect on and deconstruct negative learning experiences and see them for what they were. Negative learning experiences can scar a person for a long time, and the opportunity to reflect on and transform their perception of such experiences can be very empowering, allowing students to move on with a new story about themselves.* (Questionnaire 27)

The participants also placed value on the impact that their work had on student opinions and world views. As one participant stated, it was *"the responsibility that we have as educators to turn our students into thinkers and individuals who are capable of dealing with the culture and the society that we are living in"* (Transcript 9). The following quote offered a good example of the value of pathways course materials in challenging and expanding a student's world view.

> *I remember one student … at the end of semester, she said to me, 'I found the content on Indigenous Australian life in colonial Australia, really challenging. But I was driving and I was thinking about what the countryside I was driving through meant to people who were of an Indigenous background.' Like she was thinking about this in her own life and discussing it with her kids and I was like, 'Gee, I think I've done my job.'* (Transcript 6)

The participant's final comment, *'I think I've done my job'* was significant as it affirmed the professional fulfilment and value the participant placed on empowering the student in this way.

9.5 EXTERNAL HORIZON

The external horizon defines the outer boundary of the participants' influence and awareness when experiencing *work as student empowerment.* The external horizon indicated the participants' recognition of the limiting factors in their work to empower students. The participants recognised that Enabling Educators' actions were limited, in that they could not extrinsically nor directly improve student agency. Improving students' agency was an intrinsic activity for which the students needed to be self-responsible. However, the participants were aware that Enabling Educators could indirectly improve student agency through establishing learning environments that supported student self-exploration of agency. As one participant concluded,

> *We are here to render assistance to students. I think we have to keep that within limits. It would be presumptuous to say we are here to change their lives. That's their responsibility. We are not here to wave a magic wand and get everything better because that would be a very arrogant approach to take.* (Transcript 10)

Thus, for the participants, the external horizon in the category was informed by the very nature of agency, that no-one can be agentic for another.

The complexity of student life circumstances. The participants were aware of the wide-ranging impact of the complexities and difficulties experienced by non-traditional students, and the potential for these issues to impact student choices and ability to study. In this context, the participants were aware that student agency was not complete, that there were real constraints and limits to what the students could actually do, for example financial constraints reduce agency for data use and the purchase of a computer.

> *… sometimes you have to pull yourself up, like a student might ask you a question, you think, 'ah, I discussed that in the online class, why haven't they watched the online class?' Well maybe because their phone's out of credit. And I'm, you know, probably wouldn't be much fun trying to listen to a 45-minute online class on your mobile phone. Or in the public library if you don't have headphones.* (Transcript 10)

Another participant also reflected on the compounding nature of difficulty and disadvantage, and noted,

> *No matter what their struggle is, whether it's personal, whether it's academic, whether it's social factors, any of those elements ripple through everything … All of those tiny little things that can make or break them, whether they can do it or they can't or whether they want to do it and they don't. That's really important.* (Transcript 5)

The participant's comments of, firstly, *"whether they can do it or they can't"* and, secondly, *"whether they want to do it and they don't"*, indicated awareness of both areas of limitation; the

practical limitations created when students don't have access to resources and limitations created when students choose not to engage, respectively.

Limitations of what Enabling Educators could achieve. The participants were aware that the students themselves faced barriers to their own academic success. The participants recognised that not every student was ready to reflect on or engage in more proactive, self-aware and autonomous behaviours. *Student empowerment*, with its locus in the students' own journeys was understood as part of the inherent nature of student agency. However, the participants were aware that students' agency did not always lead to a positive outcome. When encountering these negative outcomes, the participants struggled at times with accepting their

> *… role within the greater context – When a student has potential, but not able/willing to enact, or follow through. Wanting more for the student, than the student. E.g. Intrinsic motivation, self management, extenuating factors, self discipline, self sabotage, inability/reluctance to persevere/work at it.* (Questionnaire 7)

Thus, although the participants recognised and respected student agency, they were aware of students making problematic choices and these choices were source of concern and tension at times.

9.6 CONCLUSION

Work as student empowerment responded to the participants' awareness that student success, in their studies and their lives, was positively impacted by students being self-aware and autonomous. However, *student empowerment* was, in its essence, an internal process and a journey. Thus, in achieving

student empowerment, the participants were simultaneously attentive to positioning the students as individuals who inherently possessed agency, while at the same time seeking to provide learning experiences which provided opportunities for further development of self-awareness and self-determination. The desired outcome of *student empowerment* was students being increasingly self-reflective and empowered to make informed decisions. Thus, *student empowerment* was evidenced in students making decisions about their studies and lives. *Student empowerment* embraced proactive, informed decisions that could range from students making decisions on practices that improve their academic success to making decisions to leave their pathway program in pursuit of another goal (positive attrition). Finally, the participants recognised their limits, as *student empowerment* was dependent on the students' own individual journeys and development as well as being influenced by their life circumstances.

CHAPTER 10: WORK AS STUDENT CARE (*STUDENT CARE*)

The chapter begins with a broad overview of the descriptive category of *work as student care.* The next section addresses the meaning of the descriptive category *work as student care* (abbreviated to *student care*), describing what is at the core of the participants' experience of this aspect of their work. The section explores the participants' understanding of *student care*, by discussing the two interrelated themes of being empathetic, and supporting students' stress management and self-confidence. Next, the chapter discusses how *student care* is accomplished and what participants are attending to when supporting students in overcoming anxiety and low self-confidence. It also describes the outcomes of, and value the participants place on, work as *student care.* The chapter finishes with a section describing the boundary of awareness in *student care* and a conclusion that summarises and offers closing remarks.

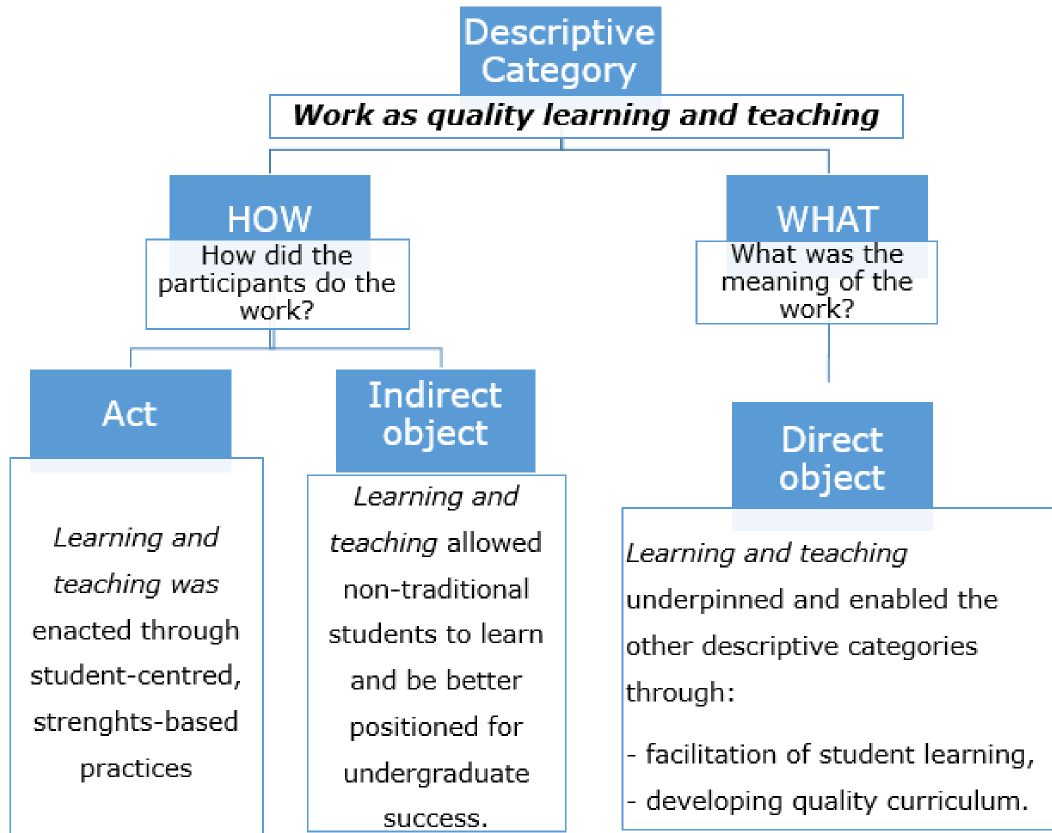
10.1 OVERVIEW OF THE DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORY

For *equity* in university participation to be achieved, non-traditional students can benefit from support of their wellbeing and confidence in academic contexts. The adverse educational experiences of many non-traditional university students expose them to issues of anxiety and low self-confidence in academic contexts. Thus, work undertaken out of concern for student wellbeing, incorporating stress management and building self-confidence, contributes to *equity* through enabling students to better engage with their studies. The descriptive category of *student care* captures the participants' concern and care for student wellbeing. Within the category of *student care* there was an awareness by Enabling Educators of non-traditional students' past experiences, particularly those within educational contexts,

that could lead to high levels of student stress, anxiety and self-doubt about their ability to succeed at university. *Student care* (refer to Figure 10.1) details the participants' response through the interconnected approaches of empathetic care and support with stress management and self-confidence. *Student care* was accomplished by the participants, from a strengths-based perspective, through both caring interactions with their students and planned learning experiences in the participants' pathway programs. Success in *student care* was experienced by the participants when their students improved their stress management and self-confidence, leading to improved achievement in their studies and lives. *Student care* appeared to be limited by the severity and complexity of the students' situations and levels of anxiety, as well as the participants' capacity to support students requiring specialised or professional support.

Figure 10.1

Experience and understanding of work as student care (student care)



10.2 THE CONTENT OF WORK AS STUDENT CARE (*STUDENT CARE*)

The 'what' of *student care* captures the content and meaning of the descriptive category which uniquely represents the participants' experiences and understandings of caring for the students in their pathway programs. *Student care* was an empathetic response to student adversity and the work was understood to contribute to *equity* through supportive student wellbeing and development of greater self-confidence in academic contexts. The participants adopted a strengths-based approach to *student care*, recognising that although pathway students have

experienced adversity and negative educational experiences, they are capable and have potential to achieve academically.

i. Awareness: Student experiences of stress and low self-confidence. The participants were aware of their students' wellbeing and the levels of anxiety and apprehension non-traditional students may experience in academic contexts. Non-traditional students may have complex and disrupted educational histories due to financial barriers, negative educational experiences at school, illness or anxiety. Participants encountered *"mature aged students who have either not completed year 12 at school and who have been away from school for some time"* (Questionnaire 22).

Entering a pathway program may evoke feelings of disorientation and anxiety for non-traditional students from their past negative educational and life experiences. A participant captured awareness of the feelings of confusion and stress when noting that pathway programs *"attract people who are in a process already of a transformational journey"* such that students often enrol *"at a critical juncture in their lives"* when experiencing a *"disorienting dilemma"* (Transcript 6). Another participant recognised that, *"fear and anxiety can sometimes be the elephants in the room at university"* (Questionnaire 5).

> *I'd say a very high proportion of our students come through with a high level of anxiety about whether they are actually capable of being at uni... that lack of confidence has come through being told … that they're not academic enough to do uni … In general, their confidence is not high.* (Transcript 1)

Moreover, the participants were aware that students *"are often full of self-doubt about their own capabilities and wonder if they belong at University"* (Questionnaire 18). There were several references in the data acknowledging that although students had ability, they still benefited from support in building their self-

confidence. The following succinct questionnaire quotation was one such reference.

> Core work: *I believe our role is to encourage students to believe in themselves. Many of our students have not had good educational experiences in the past and need that extra encouragement to change their self-doubt.*
> (Questionnaire 10)

Of note also, when discussing their students, several participants mentioned that they identified with non-traditional students because their own life experiences aligned with one or more of the enabling categories. Empathy and self-identification were evident when the participants discussed their own university experiences.

> *The students I really identified strongly with, you know, I was a first in family to university … I, myself as a student, would have fallen into the many equity categories … So I sort of felt, a kinship with the types of students who were returning on their journey.* (Transcript 6)

It was the connection and the genuine concern for student wellbeing, as opposed to a focus on academic skills or empowerment, that qualitatively separates *student care* from *student academic development* and *student empowerment*, respectively. Thus, the awareness and recognition of empathetic connection, of *"… putting [oneself] in the role of student"* so *"there can then be a common connection"* (Transcript 5) was both an important and unique aspect of *work as student care*.

Response: Student care. In the category of *work as student care* the response to student experiences of stress and low confidence was an empathetic engagement with the students. The participants recognised that, compared to their undergraduate

academic colleagues, Enabling Educators were *"a lot more student focused,"* and tended to *"… spend a lot more face to face time or time talking, contacting students"* (Transcript 4). Enabling Educators' consideration for student wellbeing was clearly articulated in the follow quotation in which the participant describes their contribution to enabling education.

> *I enjoy being more attuned to the wellbeing of the students. I have a penchant for face-to-face teaching, and engage with the students as people, to gain a better understanding of their individual circumstances, and try and impact their lives with more care.* (Questionnaire 19)

The following brief remarks provide insight into the way the participants fundamentally experienced and understood *student care*.

> *I think it's that pastoral care and holistic attitude towards students that really marks Enabling Educators as distinct.* (Transcript 6)

> Core work: *I believe our role is to encourage students to believe in themselves. Many of our students have not had good educational experiences in the past and need that extra encouragement to change their self-doubt.*
> (Questionnaire 10)

Responding to student disorientation and confusion requires a level of empathy for the students and a concern for student wellbeing. The empathetic, personal connection between the participants and their students is drawn upon, in more depth, when discussing this chapter's themes.

10.3 THEMES

Figure 10.2

Themes of work as student care

The high levels of genuine care and concern, apparent in *student care* embodied the qualitative difference that makes the category representative of this third response to *equity. Student care* can be captured in two themes. The first, being empathic, was a personal response that represents the participants' empathetic concern, encouragement and personal interest in their students. The second theme, building self-confidence, was focused on providing learning opportunities that support student stress management and development of self-confidence. The ways in which *student care* was experienced and understood are more fully described in the following themes.

10.3.1 THEME 1: EMPATHY

The participants recognised the emotional and personal impact that negative experiences, particularly negative educational experiences had on their students' studies and lives. The participants noted that many of their students experienced negative emotional responses to study, a reaction that *"...impedes … their ability to take on new information"* (Transcript 8). Thus, these emotions required a response from the participants that *"recognises and acknowledges the doubts that new enabling students have"* (Questionnaire 5), engaging with empathy and concern for their wellbeing. In the data, *student care* was

frequently captured in reference to notions of empathy and care. Care was considered a defining characteristic of Enabling Educators. As one participant expressed it, *"I think a good Enabling Educator is characterised by being student centred, by being empathetic to students" (*Transcript 6).

Moreover, the participants used their own experiences to respond empathically when guiding and reassuring their students. The empathetic use of the participants' own experiences of uncertainty was exemplified by a participant who described themself as *"compassionate, patient and kind"* because they "*never forget what it feels like to not know something,"* and so sought to use their experience to help students to *"fill in the gaps"* (Questionnaire 28). Thus, understanding the participants' empathy and identification with student stress and anxiety were key to the participants' experience of *student care*.

The importance of empathy, and being empathetic, appeared in the questionnaire data where several participants self-identified as being: *"passionate, empathetic"* (Questionnaire 13), *"empathetic and positive"* (Questionnaire 2) and *"Supportive, empathetic individual"* (Questionnaire 20). The following more explanatory comments further elucidate how the participants understood empathy.

> *They drive me crazy but they are also the reason that I love it. It's just a rollercoaster, it's not like anything else. I really like it. And it's that, when you're talking to them, it's the real connection and going deeper and understanding their stories and knowing them … I'm cheerleading them on, I'm their biggest supporter.* (Transcript 5)

> *I am empathetic. I try to make a connection with the student; it almost feels like attaching a string that I use to gently pull and lift them. I try to identify with the problems*

they are having … I am genuinely interested in people and I think it shows. (Questionnaire 5)

These insights into the types of response that empathy evokes, demonstrate how the participants related and connected with the students.

A second related expression of *work as student care* was the notion of work as caring for students. On the questionnaire, the self-description question led several participants to reference the concept of care. Examples included; *"… modelling behaviour that is a mixture of patience and respect, and care"* (Questionnaire 21), being *"… caring, respectful"* (Questionnaire 16), *"… approachable, invested, supportive, caring, motivator"* (Questionnaire 7). Others drew on the concept of pastoral care, in comments that pathway education; *"is all about the pastoral care" (Transcript 5)* and that pathway education was both *"… both academic and pastoral care"* (Questionnaire 25).

Thus, *work as student care* that contains elements of empathic care were considered *"integral" to enabling education but, "… not always recognised or valued"* (Questionnaire 14).

10.3.2 THEME 2: MANAGEMENT OF STRESS AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

The participants were aware that the life and educational histories of pathway students could lead to lack of confidence in their ability to succeed at university. As one of the participants noted, *"…in general, their confidence is not high. So, we need to bust that myth about not being good enough for uni"* (Transcript 1). Thus, the participants understood that *student care* required work that strategically supported students in managing stress and building self-confidence in the academic context, "*Because a lot of our students haven't succeeded in that past … they need somebody*

else to affirm that, and you know, feel confident that they're in the right place and that they're going forward" (Transcript 3).

The theme of management of stress and self-confidence captures reference to work that supported students in managing their stress. The participants recognised the negative and debilitating impacts of stress and anxiety on students.

> *Instances where stressed students contact me are frequent. The answer is often quite simple but, because the student is a novice, they are not sure what to do. For example, students are often stressed because they cannot submit an assignment on time. If they contact me, I assure them that they can have an extension … If they do not contact me, I send a follow-up email … I believe this approach calms stressed students by reassuring them and giving them some extra time at the beginning of their studies … I find that getting students through their first assignment generally gives them confidence to continue.* (Questionnaire 2)

Of note was the extra effort and care the participant took to reach out to their students and recognition of the impact of their care on student confidence and retention. The participants considered supporting student stress management to be a necessary component of their work.

Moreover, *work as student care* could also be expressed as building self-confidence. The data contained several references to work that involved supporting students in developing greater self-confidence. The two brief questionnaire responses below supply insight of how the participants experienced and understood work as building confidence.

Core work: *"to build confidence in students so that they reach their potential; help students move through adversity and complete the course"* (Questionnaire 13)

Core work: *"reassurance, support, and feedback to become confident/competent and believe/know they can be successful"* (Questionnaire 7)

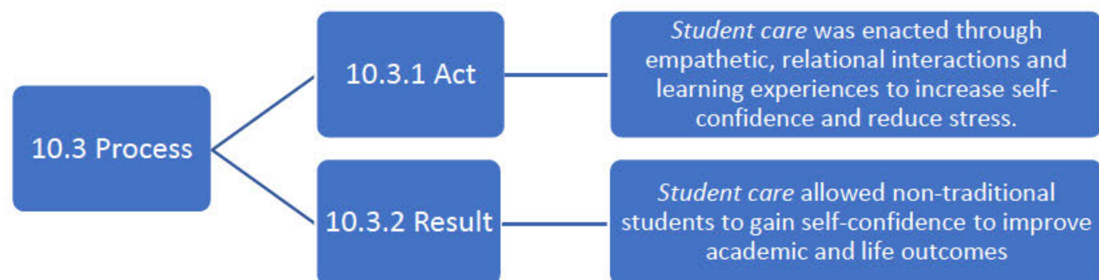
This work in developing self-confidence sought to *"... encourage, support and facilitate the learning of someone who doubts their ability to complete tertiary education ... to meet them where they are, and lift them to the point that they can succeed at university"* (Questionnaire 5). In fact, developing students' self-confidence was considered integral to the role of Enabling Educators.

In summary, *work as student care* captures the participants' awareness of student anxiety and self-confidence. Thus, *student care,* as drawn from the participants' responses, means empathy, students managing their stress, and developing self-confidence. The following section describes how the participants worked to care for their students.

10.4 THE PROCESS OF WORK AS STUDENT CARE (*STUDENT CARE*)

Figure 10.3

Process of work as student care



When experiencing *work as student care*, participants were aware that anxiety and low efficacy can negatively affect student success at university. Thus, the participants understood their

support of student stress management and self-confidence as embodying the 'what' of *student care*. The act of *student care* captures what the participants attended to when caring for students and looking to support student self-confidence. *Student care* was considered integral to the work of enabling education, a core or central concern, as exemplified by a participant *"Helping to remove tangible barriers, reducing confusion and building confidence and capacity is central to my day-to-day work"* (Questionnaire 18).

10.4.1 THE ACT OF STUDENT CARE

In *work as student care*, the process aspects describe how the participants supported and cared for their students. This section explores the act of *student care*, how the work was actually undertaken and how the students are positioned. The following section explores the results and value of *student care*, before finally discussing the boundary of participant awareness in caring for students.

i. How was student care accomplished? *Work as student care* was experienced when the participants, aware of student wellbeing, intentionally planned and undertook work in their pathway programs to reduce "*undue or necessary stress/emotional collateral" (*Questionnaire 7) and increase student confidence.

The data referenced the use of experiential learning activities designed to raise self-confidence and support stress management. Such learning activities included "*early assessments to assist with confidence building"* and *"strategies to manage stress"* (Questionnaire 13) and low-stakes assessment as a means of enacting academic learning experiences that targeted building self-confidence, as explained in the following illustration:

> *… confidence boosting activities are very much embedded in the curriculum and they are also embedded in the*

> *assessment tasks ... we have low stake assessment tasks in week 2. So, they're very much about boosting confidence so they can see 'Yes, I can do this. Yes, I can understand this.'* (Transcript 1)

Student care was also carried out through specifically designed learning experiences that addressed student apprehensions and stress. For example, one pathway course included a core course with the topic of stress management, which included presentations and involvement from the counselling department (Transcript 13).

Moreover, the participants' care and concern for their students often went beyond the immediate teaching context and curriculum. The interviews held several examples of participants going 'above and beyond' to engage and care for their students. Examples included reaching out to students (Questionnaires 2 and 25), meeting students to offer support (Transcript 12) and even organising child-minding services (Transcript 6). These actions were considered part of the participants' *work as student care*. As one participant commented, *"I believe that the 'normal' classroom teaching and learning is important, but it is also the going 'above and beyond' like calling students and discussing their essay topics … or helping a student in distress"* (Questionnaire 29).

The participants provided several vignettes of student support outside of the curriculum and the following single, heavily edited vignette has provided an illustration:

> *I'll give you an example. There's a lady … she has chronic anxiety. I think it's been pretty tough but she wants to [study] and … you had to apply … (We) helped her with that. She signed in and I know she can do it but I think she absolutely failed … I didn't see (her) for a long time. And I thought, I'll send a smiley face … and then it's like, oh 'yeah*

can I come in and buy you a coffee?' … (I) find out that … she owes money to the university … and she says, I'm ashamed, I couldn't tell anybody … it's not what we would consider a huge amount of money but (for her) it may as well be a couple of million. So, I said, 'Okay, is that why you haven't come back?' It's like, 'Yeah.' 'Well, let's go sort it out.' So then, you know, we phone up and do a payment plan. She was like, 'you've given me hope and I'm going to come in and I'm going to finish that (course). (Transcript 12)

The participant concluded the story asserting the value of such care, in stating; *"I know that's sort of hard stuff to follow because it sits outside traditional responsibilities of what you should do and should look like. But … I think that's what's required. It's the care"* (Transcript 12).

ii. How were students positioned? Within *student care*, the students' position was informed by a strengths-based perspective that asserted that students were able to adapt and learn. The students were welcomed, accepted *"for who they were"* and encouraged to *"develop the confidence"* to succeed (Questionnaire 27). The students were considered from a strengths-based perspective as being able to grow in confidence and learn how to manage stress. One participant, specifically indicating use of what they referred to as *"ableist language"* (Transcript 9), highlighted the growth potential of their students in stating,

… learning is a process of understanding that what you know needs to change. That you need more. That you need to grow whatever it is that you have, you need to challenge whatever it is that you have. So hopefully the process of enabling education gives the students the self-confidence

and the sense of capability, ableness, it's using ableist language. (Transcript 9)

Thus, the students were positioned as being capable of growing in confidence and capacity to overcome the adversity and anxiety associated with study.

10.4.2 THE RESULT OF STUDENT CARE

The second aspect of the process of the participants' work describes the indirect object of *student care*. The results of *student care* are explored through examining when the participants experienced success, and the value they placed on *work as student care.*

i. What constitutes success in student care? Successful *student care* was experienced by the participants when they noticed students growing in confidence, a growth that was noted within the context of the students' studies, as well as in their lives. As one participant commented, they felt particularly successful when *"… I catch up with previous students who have now successfully completed an undergraduate degree. Such students show a remarkable degree of self confidence in comparison to how they presented at the start of their enabling studies"* (Questionnaire 22).

Another participant stated that a significant component of their core work was to *"encourage students to believe in themselves"* as many students *"need that extra encouragement to change their self-doubt"* (Questionnaire 10). The participant further recounted the following success story from the student's perspective in an email correspondence.

> *I was thinking about my start at (the university), and how you helped me with the practice (course) exams when I was so anxious … that I almost pulled out! I am happy to say that*

> *I gradually became less anxious as I passed more exams, and that first step has led to the point where I started a PhD … I just wanted to thank you for your help back then – without it, I might have quit.* (Questionnaire 10)

ii. What was the value of student care? The participants valued *student care* because its empathetic approach to student stress and adversity was transformational. The valuing of caring for students was expressed as 'joy' by the following participant.

> *Our students have immense adversity. You have no idea the different kinds of extreme circumstances they face. And you know, that's one of the joys that I have, is that I can talk them through things, I can calm them down.* (Transcript 1)

The participants demonstrated a genuine concern for the students and valued the opportunity to support them. *Student care* was intrinsically valued as well as being valued for its contribution to the students' studies and lives.

Firstly, *student care* was intrinsically valued as the participants highly regarded the contribution such care made to self-confidence, and ultimately to student wellbeing, as one participant claimed:

> *I've been most successful when I've been able to help older people understand that they are not dumb. I have a past student who always thought he was dumb. Now he is a published author, and he credits me with helping him get there.* (Questionnaire 28)

Participants considered concern for student wellbeing to be central to enabling education, which was "*all about the pastoral care"* and the student *"contact"* (Transcript 5).

Secondly, the participants recognised the contribution that *student care* made to student academic success. Empathetic approaches were valued by the participants because of the potential contributions that reducing stress and increasing confidence could make to student academic growth. As one participant commented, working with pathway students can be *"challenging, it can be really crazy"* because the students *"come with a lot of life experience but they also come with a lot of trauma"* (Transcript 12). However, working with students in *"developing confidence, self-efficacy"* was core Enabling Educator work and allowed the participants *"to prepare [the students] for undergraduate study"* (Questionnaire 17).

Finally, the participants understood that increased self-confidence could make an immediate impact on the students' lives and employability. The impact of self-confidence was exemplified in the following example in which the participant comments that they have *"… seen many cases where students have finished or not even finished,"* however, because *"… their confidence levels are up … Their boss has promoted them or given them different duties based on this upskilling"* (Transcript 13).

Thus, *student care* was valued by the participants because it supported students, personally, to *"feel confident that they're in the right place and that they're going forward"* (Transcript 3), becoming more *"confident in decision making for study and career purposes"* (Questionnaire 10).

10.5 EXTERNAL HORIZON

The external horizon describes the extent of the limits of the care the participants gave, defining the boundary marked by the participants' awareness and ability to influence. The caring nature of Enabling Educators provided the participants with an awareness of their students' experiences and journeys.

> *I have worked with students who have been particularly at risk and require additional support … for example, students with severe mental health issues, those experiencing domestic violence, or those experiencing financial hardship, such that their educational participation is difficult. I have received emails threatening self-harm and other serious mental health issues.* (Questionnaire 14)

The previous example indicates an awareness that, at times, students in pathway programs encountered severe or extreme difficulties. In *student care*, the participants acknowledged that their professional capabilities and training had limits They recognised that in such situations, *student care* involved referring students to specific support services.

The boundary between professional support and student care: knowing when to reach out. Although the participants demonstrated a genuine concern for their students, they also recognised that there were circumstances when the level of student difficulty and anxiety were beyond their expertise and ability to support. *Student care* could not replace professional care. As one participant noted,

> *… what I really notice is the difficulty, there are students who need more support than what we can give them … We have students who I know are suicidal or you know, cutting injuries and … students that we know that are going through a really hard time … we are really quite powerless in those situations. It's not within my breadth of knowledge … I'm not trained in that … I also don't have the resources to help them.* (Transcript 14)

The observation that the difficulties presented by students' circumstances could exceed the participant's expertise was further

stressed by a participant, who in the context of *"serious health or mental health issues,"* noted that such conditions present

> *… challenges to the professional boundaries that you can have with students. When you're trying to provide levels of pastoral care and recognising when what a student requires of you is going beyond your expertise and going beyond what you can reasonably provide to them.* (Transcript 6)

Therefore, the external horizon marks the point at which the participants looked to specialist support structures, such as professional counsellors and medical services, and the financial and student services within their institutions. In such circumstances, *student care* requires a proactive response that entails the participants' reaching out for specialist support. The awareness of limitations was well articulated by a participant who asserted that Enabling Educators need to

> *…know their limitations and that's important. Because if you're dealing with somebody who's got severe, you know, whatever it is, you know, there are limitations. You know, people aren't trained for all of those things. So, we have other people at the university who are trained, you know, in mental health or depression or anxiety, whatever it is. So we've got a suite of support services that we need to refer these students on to and not try and deal with it all ourselves. (*Transcript 1)

Thus, this descriptive category acknowledged that at times *student care* required that, when required by more extreme student circumstances, the participants engage appropriate health support and professional structures.

10.6 CONCLUSION

Work as student care captured the participants' genuine care and concern for their students. The category equates to authentic concern and empathetic response to student hardship and anxiety, marked by respect and an appreciation for pathway students and their resilience, innate abilities and growth potential. When considering *student care*, the participants were aware that the complex educational histories of their students created the potential for high levels of stress and anxiety as well as low self-confidence in academic contexts. Thus, *student care* was primarily focused on allaying fears and supporting confidence with the desired outcome of better positioning students to succeed in their studies, as well as their employment and life contexts. Finally, the participants recognised that appropriate *student care* required an awareness of their limits and that the more severe student situations required reaching out and connecting students to other professional support and health care services.

CHAPTER 11: QUALITY LEARNING AND TEACHING (*LEARNING AND TEACHING*)

This chapter begins with an overview of *work as quality learning and teaching* and introduces the meaning and the process aspects of the descriptive category. The second section describes what *work as quality learning and teaching* (abbreviated to *learning and teaching*) was and explains the category's meaning and content. The content of *work as quality learning and teaching* was described by the two component themes that formed the category: facilitation of student learning and the development of quality programs and curriculum. Next the chapter explores how *work as quality learning and teaching* was accomplished and discusses how Enabling Educators attend to and accomplish *learning and teaching* in their respective pathway programs. A final section explores the outcome of *learning and teaching* and its boundary or limits, before the chapter's conclusion.

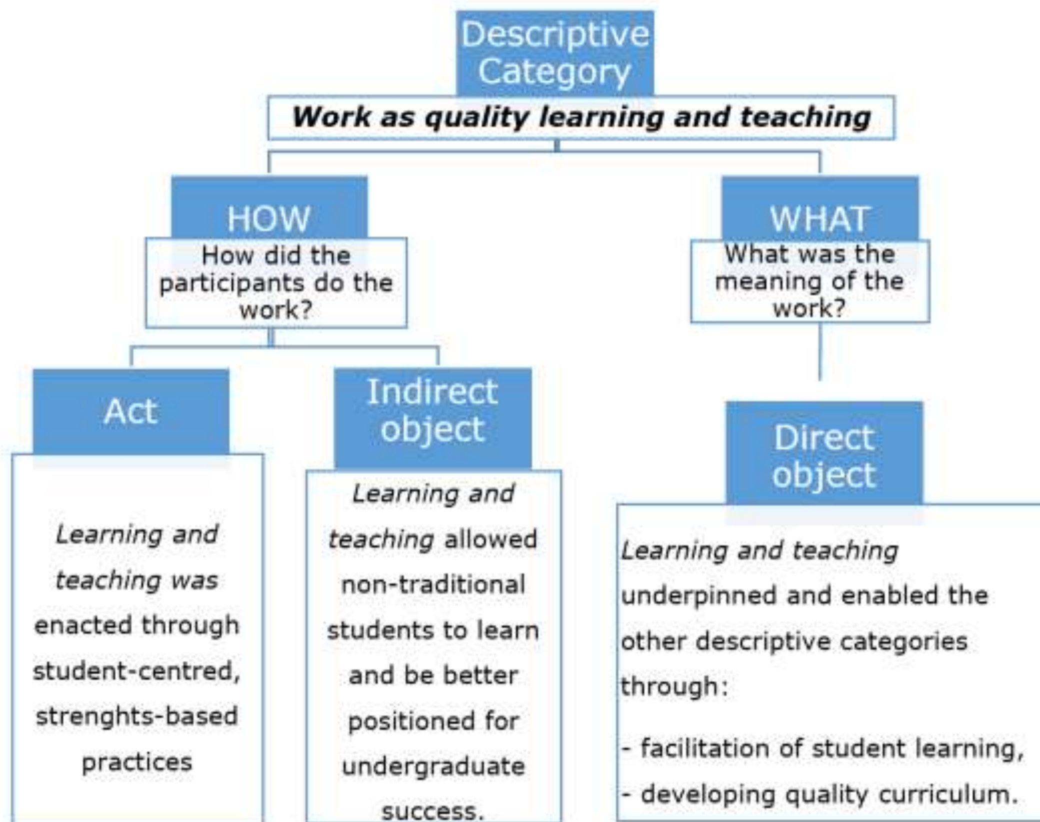
11.1 OVERVIEW OF THE DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORY

Equity in university participation is supported by quality curriculum and student-centred teaching practices that facilitate students transitioning into undergraduate programs. The descriptive category of *learning and teaching* captures the participants' work in curriculum design and pedagogical practices. *Learning and teaching* underpinned and enabled *equity* through planning of learning experiences that bolstered the work of the three descriptive categories, which are *student academic development, student empowerment* and *student care*. Within the category there was an awareness that non-traditional students can be underprepared for their university and so benefited from learning experiences and teaching approaches that considered the nature of these students and their specific educational requirements. The experience of *work as quality learning and*

teaching was articulated through expressions reflecting on adult teaching practices, in particular the facilitation of learning and curriculum design. *Learning and teaching* was simultaneously facilitated by and through the Enabling Educators' various pathway programs. When experiencing *learning and teaching*, participants considered that their work directly contributed to student development and widening university participation.

Figure 11.1

Experience and understanding of work as quality learning and teaching (learning and teaching)



11.2 THE CONTENT OF WORK AS QUALITY LEARNING AND TEACHING (*LEARNING AND TEACHING*)

The 'what' aspect of *learning and teaching* referred to the descriptive category's meaning, the unique way the category captured the participants' experiences and understandings of

learning and teaching within the content of a pathway program. In this sense the category should be understood as ***descriptive*** and representative of the participants' lived experience, rather than a ***prescriptive*** description of what quality in enabling education should be.

Work as quality learning and teaching fundamentally referred to the participants' teaching within their respective pathway programs. As indicated in the previous chapters (Chapters 8, 9 and 10), participants understood that the life journeys and educational experiences of non-traditional students had potential to leave these students unfamiliar with and underprepared for university studies. The previous chapters also indicated that the participants understood they could have a proactive role in supporting student development through the design and delivery of a range of learning experiences. Thus, the descriptive category of *learning and teaching* supported *equity*, through enabling student *academic development, student empowerment* and *student care*. However, it was also evident from the data that the participants' experience of *learning and teaching* represented a qualitatively distinct descriptive category, which had a focus on teaching practices and student learning. Common themes in the descriptive category of *work as quality learning and teaching* included facilitating student learning and the development of effective learning experiences and programs.

i. Awareness: Enabling education was not 'one size fits all'. Firstly, there was an awareness that students needed and benefited from the participants' teaching support and facilitation of learning. The participants recognised that the students' presence in a pathway program, in contrast to direct entry into an undergraduate degree, was indicative of an educational need. When considering educational needs, the participants rejected

deficit notions that positioned their students as incapable and, rather, taught their students from a strengths-based approach.

> *… the student is here, they need to be there, so clearly something has to happen. You know, there must be something missing otherwise they would be enrolling immediately into their undergraduate degree, and seeing it in that light, it's very hard not to say we are trending in a deficit direction … But that's why I stress, it is dealing with existing capacities ... You have skills, we're going to amplify them but not create, not build something in their absence.* *(*Transcript 10)

Facilitation of student learning was central to the participants' work with students. As one participant expressed it, an Enabling Educators' core work was to *"… encourage, support and facilitate the learning of someone who doubts their ability to complete tertiary education. We try to meet them where they are and lift them to the point that they can succeed at university"* (Questionnaire 5).

Secondly, the participants were aware that the individuality of student life and educational experiences meant that each student had unique educational strengths and requirements.

> *I feel that I can help students on their paths. Not necessarily equally because they don't need it equally. But meaningfully and meaning will be different for each student.* (Transcript 9)

Thus, as *equity* requires students to receive both the access and support they require, the students needed access to a range of support structures, embedded in their learning contexts. Meaningful learning environments, therefore, provided various types of, and avenues for providing, support allowing the

participants to provide nuanced and tailored learning experiences for individual students.

ii. Response: Work that provides quality pedagogy and curriculum. The participants understood that the students benefited from well-designed and adaptable learning experiences, effective curriculum and student-centred facilitation of learning.

> *The core work of an enabling educator is to facilitate student learning so they are prepared for their undergraduate studies. For instance, our [pathway program] has a core unit … that literally teaches students how to be a student and teaches important skills such as research, note-taking, stress-management etc.* (Questionnaire 29)

> *"My role is being clear about the course concepts, pitching it at the correct level and providing a comfortable space for students to explore [the course].* (Questionnaire 15)

Thus, the content of *learning and teaching* captured both the participants' awareness of their students' needs as learners and their response as educators. The participants' response is more fully explored in the following section.

11.3 THEMES

Figure 11.2

Themes of work as quality learning and teaching

Two themes provided greater explanation of the participants' experience and understanding of work as *quality learning and teaching*. Work as learning and teaching was understood, firstly, through participants' positioning of themselves as facilitators of student learning and, secondly, in the participants' concern for effective curriculum. The two component themes captured the participants' approach to curriculum and pedagogy. These two themes are elucidated in the following section.

11.3.1 THEME 1: FACILITATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

Quality *learning and teaching* was assisted by teaching approaches that incorporated appropriate scaffolding and guidance, opportunities for students to practice what they were learning, and freedom to experiment with and express their ideas. Although the participants were aware of the diversity of student educational needs there was a recognition that either too little support or too much support (sometimes expressed as 'hand holding') were best avoided. The theme of facilitation of student learning captured the participants' balancing of student responsibility and agency with support and structured teaching.

> *I guess what I mean about facilitation is not telling students what to think about material … the very first lecture is about*

'as long as there's evidence to support your opinion, [the course] is about your discovery and passion for the material.' (Transcript 6)

The participants were aware that as adults, pathway students required a balanced approach to support, needing to be taught and guided to develop foundational academic capacities. As one participant expressed it, *"… you are still teaching because that's what they prefer. They do want somebody to show them the way… They do want the structure"* (Transcript 3). However, the same participant noted that support needed to be *"done in such a way that it's more as if you were a tutor, I suppose, a friend trying to show them how something works. And so you're just trying to work through it with them to get them to understand"* (Transcript 3).

The theme of facilitation of student learning represented Enabling Educators' work to *"facilitate (student) further development of academic knowledge, skills and practices, which will ease their transition throughout an undergraduate degree"* (Questionnaire 14). The participants generally expressed their understanding of their work as either facilitating or teaching. The questionnaire responses provided concise insights into the participants' experiences and understandings of work that facilitates student learning.

I would say that enabling educators are genuine facilitators of learning … Facilitating students to be self-directed and to take control of their learning. (Questionnaire 10)

In this theme the participants also described their work by reference to teaching.

I am mostly a teacher. I am interested in teaching course content in a way that encourages and supports students' ability to analyse, evaluate and think critically. However, I

am aware that methods of effective teaching can vary both with different student cohorts and over time with changes in technology. (Questionnaire 22)

… quality teaching practices that facilitate and support targeted skill/behaviour/attitude development … opportunities to experience, practice and develop and refine the skills/behaviours. (Questionnaire 7)

This theme incorporated a small number of other terms associated with teaching, terms such as: coaching (Transcript 5), guiding or 'being a guide on the side' (Questionnaires 4, 9 and Transcript 12) and lecturing (Questionnaires 6, 29).

11.3.2 THEME 2: DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY CURRICULUM

When considering *work as quality learning and teaching*, the participants were aware that pathway students benefited from a well-designed and effective curriculum. The participants were aware of the contribution their courses made to student learning and, therefore, designed curriculum that targeted essential academic and non-academic capabilities (see Chapters 8, 9 and 10). A pathway curriculum was based on undergraduate skills or disciplines, however, in a pathway program *"the courses are that much simpler and directed. You know, the whole program is geared towards helping them"* (Transcript 3).

Developing appropriate curricula was foundational to the participants' work. They invested time, energy and professional expertise in planning and delivering quality programs, course and learning experiences.

I build a strong foundation for my students, in both their knowledge and their self-confidence. I design my classes to be fun and relaxed and welcoming. (Questionnaire 5)

So I feel that we are all part of an enabling team because we are all student-centred educators. And I feel that working collaboratively with that broad suite of people, helps us develop educational curriculum that's most meaningful to students. (Transcript 6)

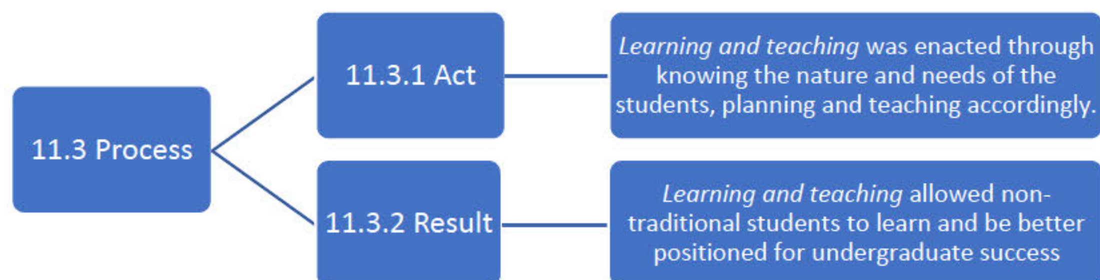
This theme of developing quality curriculum underpinned and enabled *student academic development, empowerment* and *care*.

In summary, the meaning of *work as quality learning and teaching*, as drawn from the participants' reported experience, was the facilitation of student learning and planning of quality curriculum. The following section describes the process of learning and teaching, how the participants enacted this category of work.

11.4 THE PROCESS OF WORK AS QUALITY LEARNING AND TEACHING (*LEARNING AND TEACHING*)

Figure 11.3

Process of quality learning and teaching



When experiencing *work as quality learning and teaching*, participants were aware that their students benefited from quality learning experiences and effective teaching practices. In this descriptive category, the process described how the participants developed their curriculum and facilitated learning. As one participant explained it, "*I think it's unrealistic to expect that*

people are just going to pick this stuff up" (Transcript 14) and so the participants intentionally planned learning experiences to *"facilitate opportunities for (students) to engage with their learning in the most meaningful way possible"* (Questionnaire 14).

11.4.1 THE ACT OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

This section describes what the participants most immediately discerned and attended to when experiencing *learning and teaching*. The following section explores the results of, and value that participants attributed to, *work as quality learning and teaching.* The boundary of participant awareness in planning for and facilitating student learning is also discussed.

The act of *learning and teaching* captures the participants' attention to the learning requirements of their students as well as to the subsequent planning and facilitation of learning. *Work as quality learning and teaching* was considered integral to the work of enabling education. As one participant committed, *"Providing information and learning materials and opportunity to apply and get practice"* was central to *"…(getting) them ready and in a position so they can meet course prerequisites of maths and English, study skills and other requirements dependent on course/program needs"* (Questionnaire 20). Thus, learning and teaching was the foundational professional activity that supported and fulfilled the participants' work in pathway programs.

i. How was learning and teaching accomplished? *Work as quality learning and teaching* was the most straightforward of the categories and was fundamentally experienced when the participants engaged in planning and facilitating educational experiences in support of student learning. One participant characterised *"the nuts and bolts ...[of] ... day to day teaching ... You know the … all your learning outcomes, you've got all your teaching strategies, you've got all your group work … All the little*

latest theories and things that work in the class" (Transcript 13). For the participants, their *work as learning and teaching* was achieved within the context of the various pathway programs, as participants adapted their course planning and facilitated learning experiences to cater for their students' specific content and needs.

> *My role in making this success occur was, firstly, in being part of program that offered an alternate pathway into university. Secondly, in role as an educator, I was able to support the student by providing learning experiences that allowed him to acquire and improve the academic and non-academic skills he required to transition successfully into his undergraduate studies.* (Questionnaire 4)

Quality learning and teaching was informed and focused by the participants' awareness of the nature of their student cohorts. Knowing their students and how they learned, informed the participants' teaching practices. It was *"important for enabling education to be in-tune with their classrooms"* because *"If the educator is not in-tune with their students then they cannot determine how the students are going with the course concepts"* (Questionnaire 15). Thus, the participants did not consider enabling education to be a standardised approach to student deficit, but as an approach that required the participants to be constantly *"catering for diverse needs in the class"* (Questionnaire 20) via adapting and adjusting pedagogical approaches and curriculum to be most beneficial to their students.

> *The question then becomes, what is the right type of support? … It is not a one size fits all thing. And students stand to lose … if we continue to see support as being something that can be standardised.* (Transcript 9)

> *I am aware that methods of effective teaching can vary both with different student cohorts and over time with changes in technology.* (Questionnaire 22)

Planning appropriate, quality curriculum was an intentional focus of the participants. *Quality learning and teaching* required conscious thought in *"getting that curriculum just right"* (Transcript 2) through the *"careful selection of material"* (Transcript 8). Thus, one aspect of *work as quality learning and teaching* was the participants' work in designing the pathway programs, specific courses and the learning experiences within these courses. The participants considered that designing and adjusting curriculum was *"sort of never-ending as you always try to improve"* (Transcript 13). This ongoing improvement was in line with university practices of accreditation and the participants' desire to adapt and improve courses.

> *I would like to think that our course does not remain dormant and that I am constantly looking at ways to better improve the educational outcomes for our students and provide as many resources as we can to help them to achieve their goals.* (Questionnaire 25)

A further core activity that the participants engaged in was facilitating student learning. As one participant described it, the Enabling Educator's role was to facilitate students to *"make sense of what it means"* through advice like, *"'this is what you need to do with it.' 'This is how we do it' … 'The perfect example is...' (as facilitators of learning) we do all of this."* (Transcript 5). The actual strategies and approaches drawn upon to facilitate student learning varied across a range of common teaching practices, such as explicit teaching (Transcript 14), forums (Transcript 13), Zoom sessions, (Questionnaire 10), reflection activities (Questionnaire

17) providing feedback (Transcript 2) and 'hands-on' activities (Questionnaire 1). The participants understood their facilitation of well-designed curriculum as embodying the 'what' of *learning and teaching*. Thus, the participants were aware of the value of having a range of strategies to draw upon. As one participant explained it, *"I try to be a creative and innovative teacher who utilises various teaching strategies"* (Questionnaire 29).

ii. How were students positioned? Within the category of *learning and teaching*, students are centrally positioned. The centrality of the student was a defining characteristic of Enabling Educators as the participants considered that *"despite disciplinary differences or pedagogical differences or diversity in practice, Enabling Educators are united by a commitment to students that is very genuine"* (Transcript 6). Moreover, student focus was seen as a point of difference to undergraduate academic participants.

> *However, I have always had a really student-centred focus on everything that I have done which the Faculties, you know, don't always have.* (Transcript 4)

The students were also positioned as adult learners, as *"(pathway) students have so much more to offer… adult students who have, you know, incredible life knowledge"* (Transcript 14). As another participant explained:

> *I describe myself as a teacher who draws upon the skills adult learners already have, and help them build upon these skills in order to be prepared for their undergraduate studies.* (Questionnaire 29)

Moreover, the participants positioned the students as having a range of strengths that contributed to their success. The participants, therefore, undertook

> *… work first and foremost from a strengths basis with students, aren't working from an idea that students are somehow deficit … They are working from an idea that our classrooms are already rich, our students are already capable and our students already have aspiration.* (Transcript 6)

Finally, the participants also acknowledged that their students were diverse learners. However, rather than diversity being seen negatively, the participants valued the *"richness that comes from these diverse equity groups"* (Transcript 13). Positioning the students as diverse was recognised in the participants *"providing diverse learning opportunities … my courses provide a range of events and topics and perspectives and students can sort of choose their own way to navigate through that"* (Transcript 6). This, the participants recognised that part of their work was to *"balance the needs of everyone, which can be diverse"* (Questionnaire 14).

11.4.2 THE RESULT OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The result of *learning and teaching* explored the participants' experiences of what constituted successful *learning and teaching* and why the participants valued their work in *learning and teaching*.

i. What constituted success in learning and teaching?

Participant experiences of success were articulated through references either to student learning or to their own teaching practice. The participants placed students centrally, whether reflecting on student learning, or on their own teaching practice. They articulated success in similar terms, as improved student engagement, development and results.

Firstly, and most significantly, the participants experienced feelings of success in *learning and teaching* when they were able to

observe reactions that the participants believed indicated student engagement with learning.

> *I feel that I have been most successful in my work when I have noticed that students have improved in their relationship with the material in some way, whether that be developing a different perspective, talking in class for the first time, or improving their mark.* (Questionnaire 14)

> *The successes are the "aha" moments when in class or in discussions, you can 'see' comprehension leading to an increase of connections as a result of the activities/work/encouragement.* (Questionnaire 9)

Secondly, the participants experienced feelings of success in *learning and teaching* when they believed that their courses were well planned and effective. The participants considered their teaching practice and facilitation of learning to be of value and so experienced success in *learning and teaching* when they felt, in their own evaluation, that their *"programs and courses are well designed to support, teach and assess fairly in relation to their aims (for students and for the University)"* (Questionnaire 8).

> *I feel that I have been most successful in my work when students who face seemingly insurmountable difficulties are able to succeed in their (pathway) programs and move onto university study. I feel that it is not just having good programs and systems, but also about having staff who care enough to make sure those systems and programs are working for individuals.* (Questionnaire 18)

The participants were, however, aware that pathway programs were not universally considered to be successful. Participants noted that pathway programs tend to experience

higher failure and attrition rates than undergraduate courses. These participants were aware that their institutions' measure of success was based on retention and grade data, and they were cognisant that their programs were not always perceived as successful. However, the participants held a different, student-centred concept of success and as such could allow that student agentic, positive attrition could actually be considered a successful outcome from the student's perspective.

> *Institutions' observations of 'success equals 'outputs/results' do not mirror effort/quality or program/ energy and investment in individual students/cohort demands and needs.* (Questionnaire 7)

> *… data shows that our students, that are successful in our program, they outperform in the first year. But … you go to a staff meeting, what they show, attrition and retention rates and you get named and shamed for your terrible results … and that's really tough.* (Transcript 5)

For the participants, success in learning and teaching was therefore experienced when the participants felt their curriculum development and delivery was effective and resulted in perceptible evidence of student development and learning.

ii. What was the value of learning and teaching? The participants valued learning and teaching for its ability to support student development and widen participation initiatives, as well as for the personal satisfaction teaching provided. Firstly, the participants valued the positive impact *work as quality learning and teaching* had on student outcomes. The participants recognised that their work in *learning and teaching* led to a range of positive student outcomes. One account that exemplifies this recorded both students and undergraduate lecturer responses to pathway

students enrolled in first semester in their undergraduate studies. The participant reported that for the students,

> *"they're like … 'I know I'm better, I know all about it and I'm fine.' And the (undergraduate teaching) staff that we do talk to … talk about how our students are more confident, they value their learning, they have a whole different approach.* (Transcript 5).

Secondly, the participants valued *learning and teaching* for its contribution to widening university participation. The participants *"value education and opportunities it provides"* and believed that *"students are entitled to access education and have the opportunities and support to be successful"* (Questionnaire 7). The participants valued learning and teaching because it was the foundational means by which they could support and facilitate student academic development, empowerment and self-confidence. The research data display numerous references to teaching or facilitating learning in the context of supporting descriptive categories 2, 3 and 4, with the ultimate aim of *equity*.

> *As an Enabling Educator, I am a guide or facilitator that supports and encourages students as they adapt and strengthen their current experiences and abilities to succeed in an academic environment so they can access the holistic benefits higher education offers.* (Questionnaire 4)

> *I think anything that strengthens a program or a course will always strengthen the participation, widening participation, developing support, discussing what support is going to be most useful.* (Transcript 11)

Finally, the participants valued *work as quality learning* and teaching for the fulfilment and enjoyment it bought them as

participants. It was of note that the participants found their work engaging and generally satisfying. As one participant stated, *"I enjoy teaching. I particularly enjoy the face-to-face teaching"* (Transcript 11).

> *Leaving the lecture/tutorial room with a smile on my face is a concrete situation which exemplifies my work. This is because, if I feel good leaving the room, I know that the students have engaged with the course concepts and with me.* (Questionnaire 15)

The participants valued their work in enabling education as they believed their work in their pathway programs was significant. As such, the participants advocated for the *"the value of these programs to my institution and my community",* believing *"that they make invaluable contributions to our society"* (Questionnaire 11).

11.5 EXTERNAL HORIZON

The external horizon defines the outer boundary of the participants' influence and awareness when experiencing *work as quality learning and teaching*. The external horizon indicated the participants' recognition of the limiting factors in their work in planning for and facilitating student learning. The limits raised by the participants were encountered in two main areas; the students' context, in particular limited student resources, and the mode of course delivery, in particular concerns about online courses.

The student context. As previously discussed, non-traditional students have a greater propensity to experience financial hardship, anxiety and educational barriers (Chapter 2). The participants recognised the impact of those complexities on student learning.

> *As our students are not required to demonstrate academic proficiency before starting our courses, we will occasionally get students who are vastly under-prepared, disruptive or struggling with mental health issues. There is not a lot of support in the classroom for this, and it can be hard to know how to respond.* (Questionnaire 5)

Another participant reported being "*unable to help (a) student with their circumstances (factors beyond the student, or my control)"* which caused them to be *"struggling to accept the enabling 'field of play' – complex lives, student qualities that are part of the enabling cohort, do not disappear when they start"* and *"Questioning own ability/effectiveness as an educator"* (Questionnaire 7). Thus, seemingly intractable complexities in student learning and tension this created for Enabling Educators, marked one boundary for the participants.

The teaching context. The participants also recognised that their teaching contexts could impact the effectiveness of *learning and teaching*. Two specific concerns were class size and mode of course delivery.

Firstly, the participants expressed concerns regarding limitations imposed by large class sizes. The number of students enrolled in the various pathway courses ranged in size and there was a perception among the participants that student numbers impacted the quality of *learning and teaching*. One participant who had classes with large numbers of students explained it as follows, when commenting on effective student engagement,

> *… in reality it's not something we can do efficiently with our student numbers … it's not doable if you've got a class of three or four hundred students. You can't, you know, pick out who's having a problem. And by the time a student's got*

a problem, they're at a distance, you can't cure that problem. (Transcript 3)

Secondly, the participants expressed limitation concerns that the mode of course delivery imposed on the quality of *learning and teaching*. Although the participants appreciated the access and reach offered by online modes of course delivery, there were also concerns that the quality of the student learning experience could be impacted. Key concerns expressed about online courses were the visibility and engagement of the students. The participants considered that the quality of student-teacher engagement could be impacted by the remoteness and invisibility of online students because the participants lacked the more obvious visual indications of engagement that face-to-face teaching allows.

> *(Learning online) adds compounding factors … It just adds barriers. The whole, 'how do you give them or explain the experience of the university and have them get a clear understanding or an internal actual understanding of something if they're doing it with poor internet connection, miles from the campus, over a computer and they're not competent with IT skills. It's just so difficult. Disengagement, even clarifying concepts. You don't have … those teachable moments. It's just very difficult to reach them.* (Transcript 6)

Thus, student class numbers and modes of course delivery formed another boundary in this descriptive category.

11.6 CONCLUSION

Work as quality learning and teaching underpinned and enabled the previous understandings and experiences of work captured in the four other descriptive categories. The category, in its essence, was teaching focused and represented the participants' engagement with pedagogy and curriculum design. When

considering their approach to *learning and teaching*, the participants adopted a strengths-based, student-centred approach, adapting curriculum and selecting pedagogies that best facilitated student learning. Moreover, the participants believed that learning and teaching provided professional satisfaction because of its contribution to widening university participation. As one of the participants reported,

> *What keeps me inspired about widening participation, and enabling in particular, is that I think it has meaningful outcomes for its participants. I don't think that anyone could go into a classroom and teach this cohort of students and not feel that it has a transformational effect on the lives of students. But also, on the lives of teachers.* (Transcript 6)

Finally, the participants were aware that the quality of student learning was dependant on a range of factors and considered the size of the cohort and mode of course delivery to be significant limiters of their ability to teach effectively.

CHAPTER 12: ENABLING EDUCATOR IDENTITY

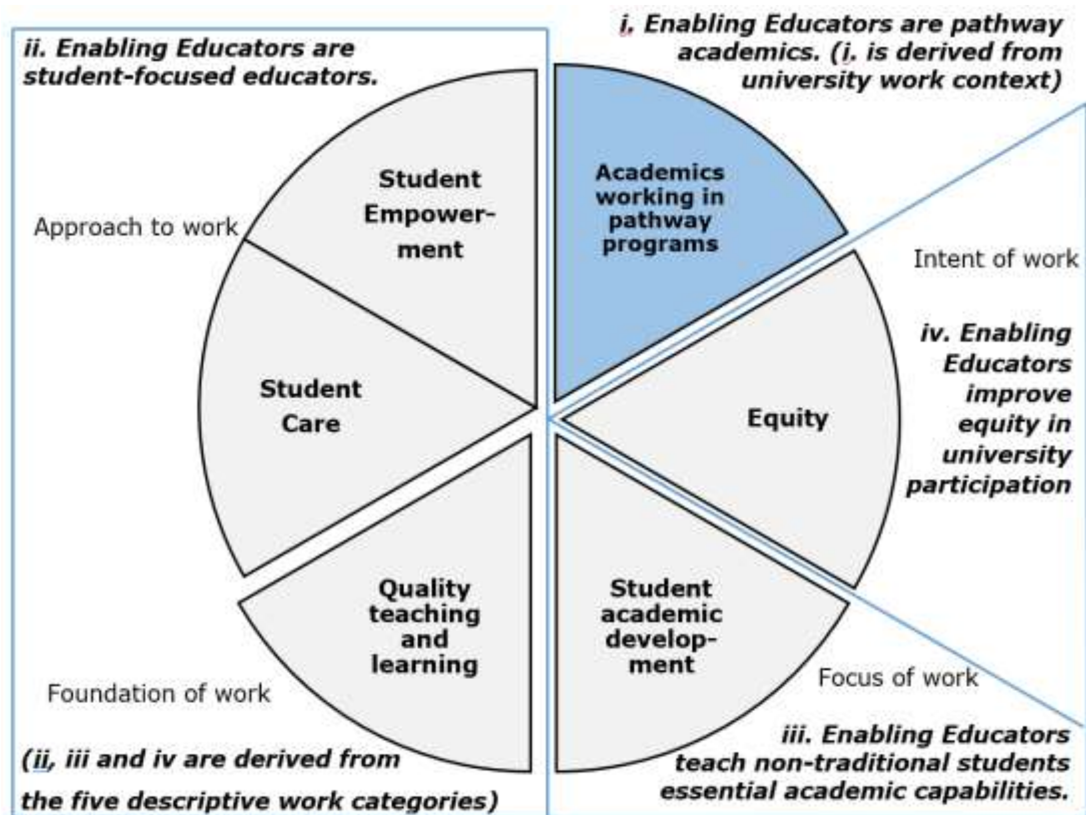
This chapter responds to the study's aim of describing Educator Identity (EEI) by providing a broad description of Enabling Educators and outlining the variations in EEI. This description of Enabling Educators and EEI is derived from the participants' understandings and experiences of their work in pathway programs (Chapters 6 to 11). The chapter also includes a discussion of the positioning of Enabling Educations within higher education before concluding with several assertions that are implicit in the study's description of Enabling Educators

12.1 A BROAD DESCRIPTION OF ENABLING EDUCATORS

This study found that: ***Enabling Educators are pathway academics who are student-focused educators teaching non-traditional students essential academic capabilities to improve equity in university participation.*** Figure 12.1 demonstrates the relationship between each designation in the description and the corresponding finding within this study.

Figure 12.1

Generated phenomenographic descriptors of Enabling Educator Identity



i. Enabling Educators are pathway academics. The Enabling Educator participants in this study are positioned as pathway academics due to their employment and work as academics in sub-bachelor pathway programs. However, it should be noted that the participants also self-identified as academics and frequently referred to familiar academic pursuits, such as adult education, participation in academic life and research.

ii, iii and iv. Enabling Educators are student-focused educators teaching non-traditional students essential academic capabilities to improve equity in university participation. Describing Enabling Educators as student-focused educators draws on the descriptive categories of *learning and teaching*, *student empowerment* and *student care* to recognise the

centrality of student-centred, strengths-based teaching in enabling education. The reference to teaching non-traditional students essential academic capabilities, draws on the descriptive category of *student academic development* and represents the specific needs and demographic of the student cohort, as well as Enabling Educators' teaching discipline and speciality. Finally, reference to improving equity in university participation acknowledges the descriptive category of *equity* as well as the positioning and purpose of pathway programs institutionally.

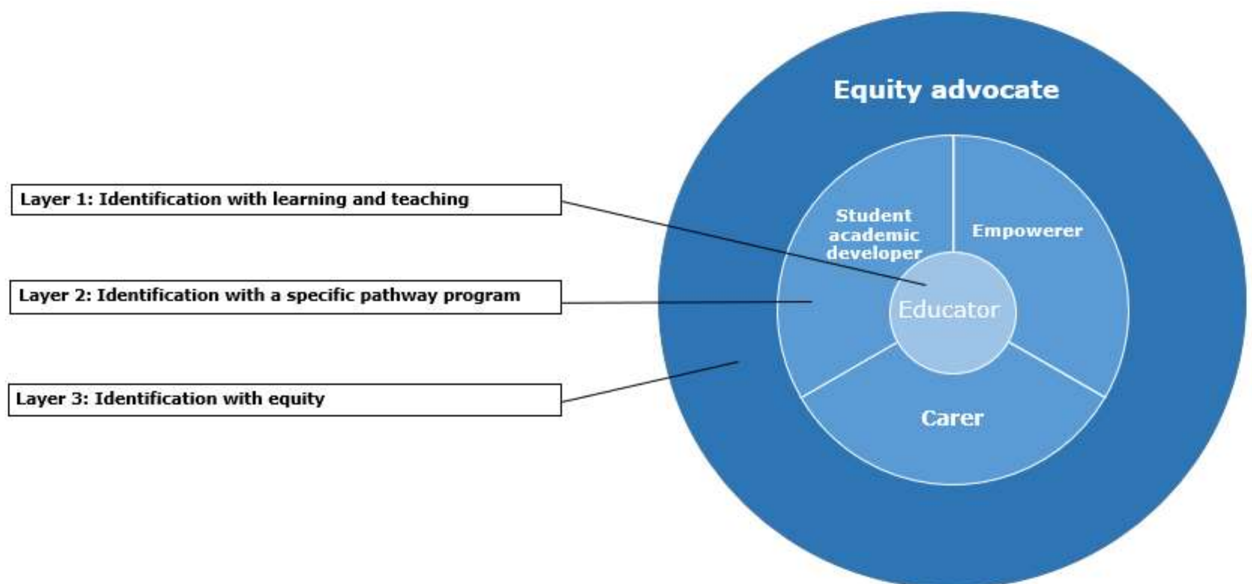
12.2 VARIATIONS IN ENABLING EDUCATOR IDENTITY

Although all the participants identified as Enabling Educators, their understandings and experiences of 'being an Enabling Educator' are different. This study generated five distinct identity descriptors from the Enabling Educators' understandings and experiences working in pathway programs. The EEI descriptors are derived from the study's exploration of understandings of, and experiences in, working in their respective pathway programs (see Chapters 7 to 11). As professional identity can be understood as "a *sense of self* that is derived and perceived from the role we take on in the work that we do" (Johnson et al., 2012, p. 563, emphasis in original), the extension from understanding of professional work to understanding of professional identity can be supported (Chapter 4). Moreover, the use of identity descriptors is a practice seen in other phenomenographic studies that similarly drew on descriptors to explore professionals in work contexts. Examples include; *the employee*, *the educator*, *the professional* and *the shepherd* (a study of nurses' roles and experiences as HIV counsellors, in Martin et al., 2020) and *community builder*, *knowledge bearer, inclusive humanist* and *dis/abled advocate* (study of high school principals in Jones, 2018).

Enabling Educator Identity can be understood by reference to five qualitatively distinct descriptors. The descriptors capturing variations in EEI are; *equity advocate, student academic developer, empowerer, carer* and *educator*.

Figure 12.2

Variations in Enabling Educator Identity

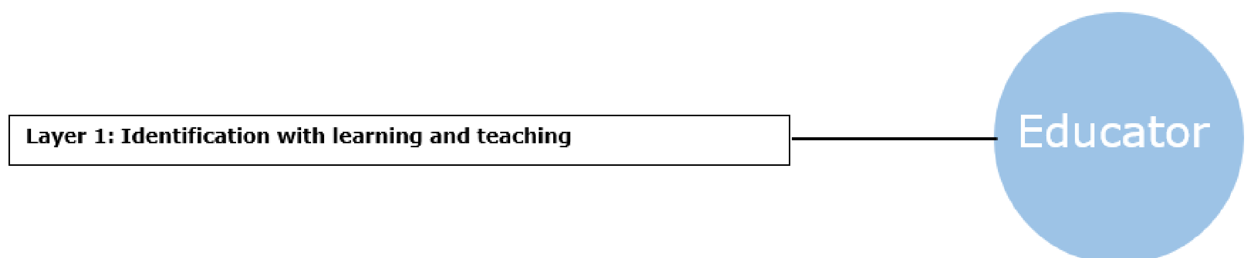


The five identities comprise a three-layer hierarchy (Figure 12.2), in which outer layers subsume and build on inner layers. Therefore, the inner layer, the *educator*, represents the most foundational and narrowly focused variation in EEI. *Student academic developer, empowerer* and *carer* formed the next layer of the hierarchy. Each of these variations in identity draws on teaching expertise (*educator*) for a specific function (academic development, empowerment and care*)* within the Enabling Educators' pathway programs. Finally, the most complex and global identity is represented by the *equity advocate*. The EEI variation of *equity advocate* draws on teaching expertise, as well as experience in academic development, empowerment and care in advocating for equity in a range of contexts, both locally and nationally. As the identity descriptors are derived from the study's

findings (see Chapters 7 to 11) the five variations in EEI are summarised below, with brief descriptions and a limited selection of illustrative participant responses.

Figure 12.3

Foundational identity: educator



In the first layer of the hierarchy, EEI had a learning and teaching focus. Being an educator is at the core of EEI and so Enabling Educators' most foundational identification is that of *educator* (including teacher and facilitator).

Phenomenographic hierarchies, in work-related studies, generally move from foundational and narrowly focused understandings to those with increasing complexity and scope. More foundational, hierarchical layers are considered necessary for, and are subsumed into, more complex and comprehensive layers. Thus, identification as an *educator* does not imply deficient or being rudimentary, as the *educator* identifies with that which was foundational to EEI, learning and teaching. Thus, in this study, *educator* underpins and enables the other variations in EEI.

A. Identity as educator. The Enabling Educators' sense of identity is foundationally as *educator* or facilitator of learning. Being an *educator* meant planning appropriate curriculum and engaging in practices common to learning and teaching, including explicit teaching, facilitating learning and assessment. *Educators* are aware that pathway students need to be taught through curriculum and pedagogies intentionally designed to facilitate the

learning of adult students with differing backgrounds. The *educator* identity is expressed, for example, when Enabling Educators planned a sequence of learning experiences or drew on their teaching experience to find the best way to explain a concept to a student.

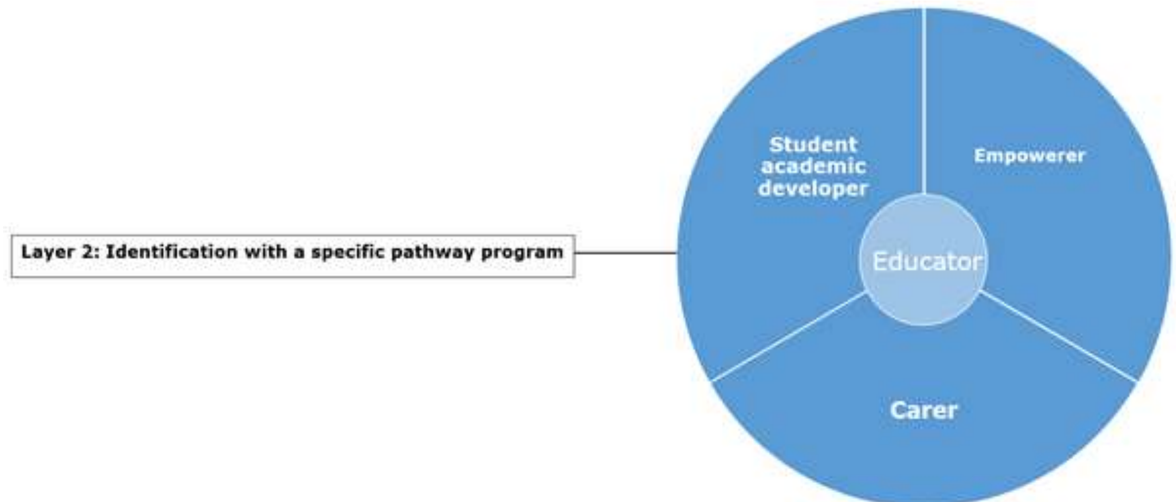
> *I think having a lot of (teaching) experience is crucial. Yeah, because I mean … it's knowing ahead of time what sort of things students are going to have problems with in the first place. So that you can be a bit proactive in how you present things … I have to have that experience to know how to respond to the students, to take advantage of the fact that I can individualise it on the spot without other concerns and I can notice things that are based on my experience.* (Transcript 8)

> *I am not a teacher (students versus person instructing) nor am I a lecturer (too remote and perceived to be too academic by students). So I would say that Enabling Educators are genuine facilitators of learning.* (Transcript 11)

Educators encompass aspects of EEI that are focused on learning and teaching and value their professional competence and ability to develop curriculum and facilitate learning experiences.

Figure 12.4

Central identities: student academic developer, empowerer and carer (student support in a specific pathway program)



In the second layer of the hierarchy, EEI is predominately focused and localised on the students and courses in the Enabling Educators' respective pathway programs. The participants' most common identification is with a particular set of students, courses and their local pathway program. Within these pathway programs, Enabling Educators are commonly engaged in work as *student academic development, student empowerment* and *student care* (Chapters 8, 9 and 10). Three variations in EEI can be inferred from these descriptive categories: *student academic developer, empowerer* and *carer*. It is of note that these expressions of EEI map variation across Enabling Educators, as a group, and so do not represent three distinct types of Enabling Educator. Individual participants vary in the specific combination and strength of identification with the three variations in EEI in this hierarchical layer. However, these three variations in EEI are predicated on effective learning and teaching practices, and so each variation incorporates the prior identity of *educator*.

B. i. Identity as student academic developer. In layer two, the first variation of EEI is *student academic developer*. For the *student academic developer*, being an Enabling Educator means commitment to *student academic development* within the Enabling Educator's courses and pathway program. The *student academic developer* draws upon the skills and competencies of a capable *educator* in bridging the gap between the students' academic development on entry into their pathway program and the required knowledge, skills and affective attributes students require for success in an undergraduate degree.

> *I describe myself as a teacher who draws upon the skills adult learners already have, and help them build upon these skills in order to be prepared for their undergraduate studies.* (Questionnaire 29)

Some *student academic developers* identify strongly with particular disciplines, such as mathematics or sociology, while others identify with the broader academic skills they teach, such as research and academic literacy. *Student academic developers* value building academic capacity to enable student success in university academic contexts.

> *What I always say to my students is, 'you're learning to be a higher education student. You're learning the skills of a higher education student'.* (Transcript 4)

The *student academic developer* believes that strengthening academic competencies, identity and sense of belonging helps students succeed in their undergraduate studies. Thus, these Enable Educators understand their role and identity from a perspective of *student academic development*.

B. ii. Identity as empowerer. In layer two, the second variation in EEI was *empowerer*. For the *empowerer*, EEI is

expressed through supporting the students in their pathway programs to be increasingly self-determining in the management of, and engagement with, their studies. *Empowerers* identify with, and were identifiable by, actions that promote student agency. *Empowerers* are aware that pathway students, despite their difficult experiences, still possess agency and benefit from self-determination. Thus, *empowerers* develop students' awareness of their agency and ability to act with autonomy. *Empowerers* draw on their teaching experience in developing and facilitating learning experiences, such as study management exercises, reflective activities and skills questionnaires. These learning experiences are designed to allow students to become more self-determining in their studies through leveraging their strengths and proactively engaging with the obstacles they face.

> *… we get an opportunity to really teach, don't we? … the amount of feedback that says things like, 'this has really helped me to understand who I am and this has taught me so much more than what I expected.' And that's what I mean, is that we are actually helping people to learn. Like it's not, we're not pushing the information at them and expecting [them] to take it in. We're offering it and allowing them to use it in the way that they need to ... But then we say to them, 'you can't … you're not going to be able to go forward here and continue through the rest of your life with what I've taught you or what we've covered in this class. So you have to learn how you're going to continue learning this by yourself'.* (Transcript 14)

Empowerers value student choice and agency in managing their studies, even if the student's choice is not to continue with study. The *empowerers* understand that positive attrition can also be agentic, and that *"is not the end of the road for (the students)*

and, when things get better they can always come back. Quite often they do come back to study" (Questionnaire 2).

> *So I guess, positive attrition, a student that just may not have been able to continue because they had to do full-time work but they've skilled up a bit, they've actually gained confidence in themselves, they've been able to dispel some of the ghosts of high school.* (Transcript 13)

Thus, the *empowerer* trusts that *"students rarely return to their past and so those skills they pick up, move them forward in whatever direction they go"* (Transcript 7).

Empowerers believe that students are capable of self-determination and best positioned to make decisions about their lives. Thus, *empowerers* recognise that they cannot make choices for their students and so their teaching focuses on student awareness, providing information and developing the skills students require to make informed choices.

B. iii. Identity as carer. In layer two, the third EEI variation is that of *carer*. *Carers* identify with supporting student wellbeing in their respective courses and pathway programs. *Carers* are relational and empathetically identify with students who have experiences of difficulty or hardship. *Carers* are aware of non-traditional students' experiences of anxiety and low self-confidence in academic contexts. They engage their educational expertise to develop curriculum and facilitate learning experiences that support student stress management and self-confidence.

> *I'd say a very high proportion of our students come through with a high level of anxiety about whether they are actually capable of being at uni ... that lack of confidence has come through being told … So we need to bust that myth about not being good enough for uni … The other thing that we do to*

> *boost their confidence is help them to identify a lot of the skills that they need at university, they are already using in their everyday life or in their work life. So we can help them to identify what their skills are and then how they can be translated into an academic context. So that immediately boosts their confidence.* (Transcript 1)

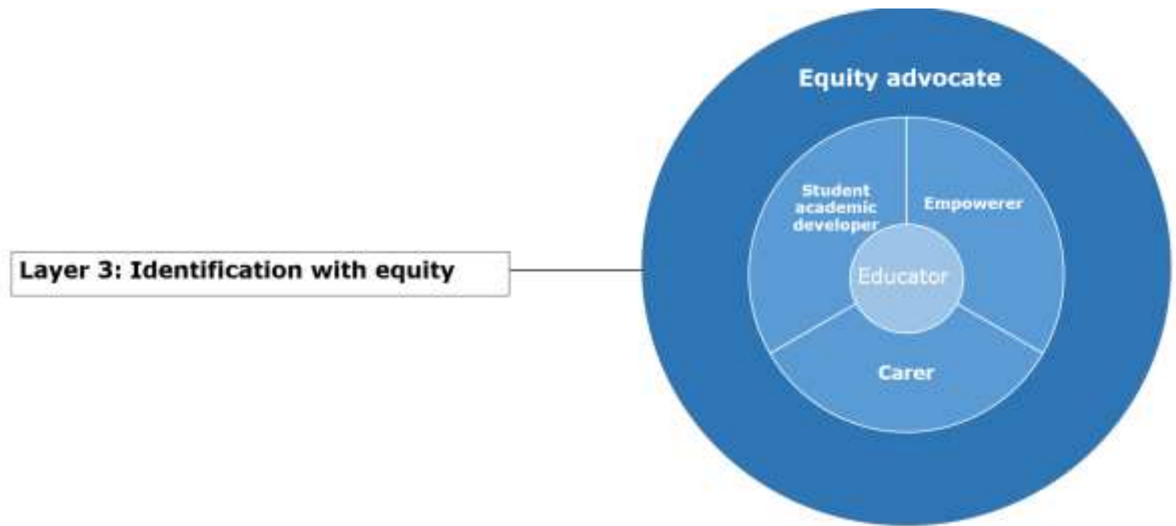
Moreover, *carers* value and are emotionally engaged with their students as individuals. As *carers* are acutely aware of student disadvantage and personal difficulty, *carers* are willing to invest, both professionally and personally, in supporting these students.

> *I enjoy being more attuned to the wellbeing of the students. I have a penchant for face-to-face teaching, and engage with the students as people, to gain a better understanding of their individual circumstances, and try and impact their lives with more care.* (Questionnaire 19)

Thus, *carers* empathise with their students, proactively employing their learning and teaching experience and expertise in improving student stress levels and self-efficacy.

Figure 12.5

Outward facing identity: equity advocate



The third layer of the hierarchy, *equity advocate*, integrates the previous two layers and captures the variation of EEI with the most complexity and broadest scope. EEI as *equity advocate* incorporates an understanding of, and purposeful engagement with, social justice as the rationale of the various aspects of their work. Curriculum is planned and taught with a deep understanding of how this work increases equitable outcomes in individual university contexts, as well as in the higher education sector and wider society. Student care, empowerment and the development of academic capabilities are also understood, beyond their immediate value in university preparation, to contribute to equity for students, their families, their communities, and society in general. Moreover, in this variation of EEI the Enabling Educator understands the value of pathway programs and advocates for these programs, both within their local university and nationally. *Equity advocate* also identifies with enabling education, as an emerging discipline, through research, professional associations and national projects.

C. Identity as equity advocate. The *equity advocate* represents the most complex understanding of EEI. Being an

equity advocate means being committed to equity as a universal principle. *Equity advocates* are aware of the inequity existing in university participation as well as society in general. *Equity advocates* understand that while improving equity in university participation offers a range of benefits to their students and society, this equity requires a broad multifaceted approach (developing academic competencies, empowerment and care) underpinned by quality learning and teaching practices. Thus, for *equity advocates* the core work of an Enabling Educator is:

> *Developing the academic readiness, confidence, and connectivity of individuals in our community who would otherwise not gain access to university study. These are often individuals from identified equity groups in our society: from low SES, remote and regional areas of Australia, as well as being the first in family to study.* (Questionnaire 23)

Moreover, *equity advocates* believe in the value of pathway programs and actively advocate for pathway programs and widening participation initiatives as a vehicle of social justice.

> *Why I consider (widening participation) important? Well, as I said, I guess, fundamentally it goes back to one of the things that I said and that was, you know, a kind of philosophical position whereby I really believe that education should be freely accessible to everyone. … I think that, it's about opportunities, right?* (Transcript 7)

Equity advocates identify with socially just outcomes for non-traditional students in higher education. This interest in *equity* defines their professional identity, permeates and informs their actions in their programs, in their universities and beyond into the higher education sector and wider society. *Equity advocates* also consider that enabling education is an emerging field of study.

They participate in research to better understand the nature and experiences of their students. Moreover, *equity advocates* identify with the wider enabling education sector through professional networks and projects.

12.3 POSITIONING ENABLING EDUCATOR IDENTITY WITHIN THE AUSTRALIAN ENABLING LITERATURE

Student success requires an "intentional, structured and proactive course of action that is systematic in nature and coordinated in application" (p. 26). The transferability of Tinto's notions of access and support to the Australian enabling education context were considered in Chapter 2. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 further suggested that appropriate support is delivered through an intentional, institution-based intervention that acknowledges both academic and social considerations and has the following characteristics,

- diversified and flexible structures that provide a range of options and support mechanisms for student wellbeing (Crawford et al., 2019; Pitman, 2017),
- educationally in preparing students in a broad range of academic skills (Baker et al., 2022; Devlin, 2013),
- pedagogies, and access to services, including institutional centralised services, that address financial, health and mental health advice and support (Crawford et al., 2019; McKay & Devlin, 2015),
- offering online and flexible modes of study and support that regard both educational and social considerations (Lambert, 2019: Shah, et al, 2014), and
- evidence-based and motivated by concern for social equity for all students (Ravulo et al., 2020).

This study's findings align with these broad characteristics and extends the literature through providing Enabling Educators'

perspectives and approaches to non-traditional student support in the Australian context. Thus, the contribution of this thesis is not in providing new knowledge, per se, but in the outcome space that draws together in one representation Enabling Educators' experiences and approach to widening university participation.

Firstly, the study's descriptive category of *work as equity in university participation* aligns with the general principle of equity-driven, actively inclusive interventions providing underrepresented students with access and appropriate support. Moreover, the study asserts that *equity* is the preeminent and guiding principle of enabling education.

Secondly, this study provides Enabling Educators' perspectives on three specific areas of support considered essential to achieving equity in university participation. These areas of support coincide with the descriptive categories of *student academic development*, *student empowerment* and *student care*. The findings are supported by the literature. Research by Levy and Treacey noted that for many pathway students "adapting to the academic requirements of university constituted an initial culture shock arising from a mismatch between their own expectations and the institutional culture and expectations" (2015, p. 134). McKay et al., (2018) also found strong pathway student support for the development of academic skills, familiarity with university culture and systems, building confidence and being inspired and empowered. Agosti and Bernat (2018) highlighted the value of programs that "facilitate students' development of a variety of skills," raise awareness of the "socio-cultural norms that are prevalent" in the university context and support "student welfare needs" (p. 7). Lizzio (2006) also considered pastoral care in their transition model, focusing on 'senses' that are informed by culture, connectedness, resourcefulness, purpose and capability.

Thirdly, the need for diverse, flexible support can be inferred from the interactions and combinations possible between the three descriptive categories of *student academic development, student empowerment* and *student care*. The literature emphasises that the diverse nature and backgrounds of equity students requires multiple levels and approaches to student support (Pitman, 2017). The multiple and nuanced approaches made possible by collaborative, cooperative practices of Enabling Educators with differing approaches to student support (*student academic development, student empowerment* and *student care*) allow for such a comprehensive, flexible and adaptable approach to student support.

Finally, the literature and the participant comments both supported the notion of strengths-based support.

> *I mean that I think what enabling education does in its best form is help students to realise that they had it all along … They have the determination and the will to succeed in whatever that they're doing and that helps students to reframe sometimes negative previous educational experience or reframe other discourses that are happening in their lives*. (Transcript 6)

Moreover, since beginning this study in 2018, there has been an increasing interest among Australian Enabling Educators in conducting research to capture and represent their own identities and experiences in widening university participation. The following three examples are drawn from current Australian enabling studies and reflect researchers' own experiences on working in enabling education and align with the study's categories of Enabling Educator Identity (EEI).

Firstly, Bunn (2019) examines effective enabling andragogy in a comment analogous with this study's EEI category of *educator*.

> We tend to put an awful lot into our teaching, and do a lot of pastoral care, and a lot of extra work, give students a lot of feedback. So, I think the "value adding" that we do is very important, and it's not just academic … it's the whole person. (p. 158)

Secondly, Monteith and Geerling (2019) offer the following reflection which incorporates their perspectives on students' perceptions of being different, the need for educators to personally connect with their students, the educators' use of their own experiences as teaching points and the modelling of reflection to support students overcoming hurdles to their own success.

> Part of relinquishing control over learning requires the tutor to share their successes and failures. Students can arrive at university with a preconception that staff are different to themselves. It is vitally important that they connect and relate to their tutor, so early in the unit we share our learning journeys and experiences to illustrate that there are multiple ways to achieving a university education, modelling reflection on the many hurdles to success. (Monteith & Geerling, 2019, p. 95)

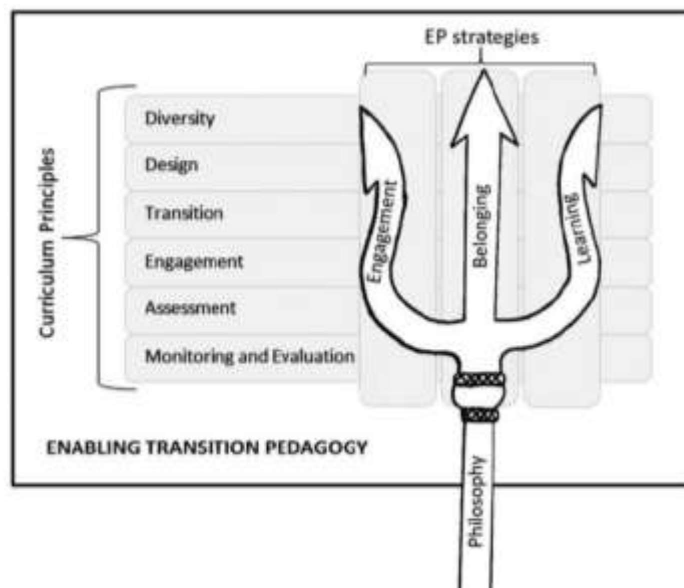
Monteith and Geerling's attention to students' senses of belonging and identity; academics' acting with empathy; and academics use of personal experience to support student self-determination in overcoming hurdles, are reminiscent of this study's EEI categories of *academic developer, empowerer* and *carer*.

Finally, Olds et al.'s (2019) trident diagram (Figure 12.3), offers a diagrammatic representation of a transition pedagogy that is underpinned by a philosophical approach, that "could be considered emancipatory" (p. 28). Their model aligns with this

study's descriptive category of *equity*. Interestingly, the authors refer to themselves as a "Social Justice League", a reference reminiscent of this study's EEI category of *equity advocate*. Olds et al.'s (2019) trident diagram further exemplifies the role that Enabling Educators can play, as academics, in extending knowledge beyond their pathway programs and influencing higher education pedagogies.

Figure 12.6

Enabling transition pedagogy model: The trident



Note. From "The social justice league: Philosophies of flourishing and emancipation in enabling education," A. Olds et al., 2019, p. 30. This figure represents the authors' depiction of their ideal engagement zone in which their educational philosophy simultaneously aligns the three enabling pedagogical strategies (EP strategies) to empower students.

Thus, the study's findings align with research from the Australian enabling education and international widening participation contexts and extend this existing research through contributing a unique perspective on Enabling Educators' experiences and approaches to equity in university participation.

12.4 ASSERTIONS ABOUT ENABLING EDUCATION

This study generated a broad description of Enabling Educators as pathway academics who are student-focused educators teaching non-traditional students essential academic capabilities to improve equity in university participation. There are three implicit assertions in this study's description of Enabling Educators. These assertions emphasise the place of Enabling Educators in academia, capture Enabling Educators' comprehensive response to inequity in university participation and underscore the importance of a collaborative approach to enabling education. These three assertions make a contribution to Australian enabling literature and the ongoing conversation about enabling education in Australia.

i. Assertions about Enabling Educators place in academia. Beyond simply describing Enabling Educators, this study's definition affirms inherent assertions about the positioning and contribution of Enabling Educators. These assertions respond to the tenuous nature of Enabling Educators in academia. The perception that enabling education occupies a "peripheral position" (Baker et al., 2022, p. 323) and that Enabling Educators are marginalised in academia (Thomas, 2014) has been reported in the literature and represented in this study's findings. Thus, in response, Table 12.1 draws on the various terms and phrases in this study's description of Enabling Educators to validate and affirm the standing of Enabling Educators in academia.

Table 12-1

Assertions implicit in the description of Enabling Educators

Enabling Educators are pathway academics who are student-focused educators teaching non-traditional students essential academic capabilities to improve equity in university participation	
Designation	**Implicit assertion**
Being ***pathway academics***	Firstly, ***pathway***, *designates* Enabling Educators' discipline specialty and department with their universities and *asserts and validates* Enabling Educators' position with the university structure and Enabling Education as a discipline speciality (Burke, 2013). Secondly, being pathway ***academics****, asserts and validates* Enabling Educators' right to recognition as academics with equal standing as their peers in the wider university, and research examining their particular identities and contexts (Bennett et al., 2016; Priest & McDougall, 2021).
Being ***student-focused, educators teaching non-traditional Students essential academic capabilities***	*Asserts and validates* Enabling Educators' approaches to teaching that considers support for the 'whole student' (Crawford & Johns, 2018), specific pathway pedagogies such as pedagogies of care (Bennett et al, 2016; Motta & Bennett, 2018), distinct pathway curricula (O'Rourke et al., 2019; Syme et al., 2021) and research to examine and improve pedagogical practices and develop curriculum.
Improving equity in university participation	*Asserts and validates* Enabling Educators' contribution to socially just universities and societies, (Lisciandro et al., 2019: Strauss, 2020) and the continued support of these educators and their programs.

Note. These assertions will be further explored in Chapter 13.

ii. Assertions about the composition of a comprehensive support platform for widening university participation in the Australian context? The second assertion regards a comprehensive expression of the support required to

redress inequity in university participation. The five ways in which the participants understood and expressed their work as Enabling Educators represent a broad proactive approach to student support that includes:

- Advocacy for both non-traditional students and enabling education.
- Student academic development comprised of supporting students in developing academic capabilities, acculturating into university culture and developing a student identity.
- Student empowerment through positioning students as agentic and providing learning experiences that support student self-determination through developing their ability to assess and meaningfully address their strengths and supports, obstacles and commitments.
- Student care which includes empathetic care and support for students in developing self-confidence and techniques to manage stress.
- Quality student-focused (student-centred and strengths-based) teaching and learning practices appropriate for non-traditional students.

iii. Assertions about the strength of collaborative work.

The inherent variation in this study's description of Enabling Educators relies upon and asserts the strength of collaborative approaches to widening participation. Although, the study suggests that the *equity advocate* represented the most complex and engaged variation in EEI, the study recognised the value of all Enabling Educators. Non-traditional students are diverse and have diverse experiences, strengths and educational needs. Enabling Educators with varying skills, perspectives and representations contribute to the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of pathway programs. Thus, a prominent notion that evolved from this study was that '*diverse students need multifaceted educators*'. For

example, a student experiencing family breakdown, may need a listening empathetic ear (*carer*) or counsel that empowers (*empowerer*), regardless of the Enabling Educator's expanse of, or lack of, networks (*equity advocate*). A casual academic, who does not engage in enabling research but draws on experience in adult education to recast explanations in various students' contexts (*educator*), may be exactly what an introductory program needs. Thus, this study's assertion is that each Enabling Educator had a contribution and a place.

12.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter offered a broad description of Enabling Educators as academics who are student-focused educators of non-traditional students, teaching academic capabilities to improve equity in university participation. The description encompasses five qualitatively distinct variations represented in corresponding identity descriptors which are mapped in a three-layer hierarchy. The *educator* is the foundational identity and establishes EEI on a foundation of student-centred, strengths-based learning and teaching. Next*, student academic developer, empowerer, carer* represent variations in identity that focus, within specific pathway programs, on three distinct aspects of student preparation for undergraduate studies. Finally, *equity advocate* captures the most complex and global identity represented in the study. As a phenomenographic study of group identity, the study does not suggest that any one Enabling Educator encompasses all five identity descriptors, nor does the study commend a single archetype or preferred EEI. Instead, the study recognises that each variation in EEI represents a qualitatively different understanding and contribution to enabling education.

Furthermore, the chapter discussed three implicit assertions in this study's description of Enabling Educators. These assertions

emphasised concerns regarding Enabling Educators’ ambiguous place in academia, the negating of their contribution to university education and the need for support of Enabling Educators’ research and collaborative practices. The following chapter (Chapter 13) proposes five recommendations designed to address these concerns.

CHAPTER 13: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENABLING EDUCATORS WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY SECTOR

Chapter 12 positioned Enabling Educators as pathway academics who are student-focused educators teaching non-traditional students essential academic capabilities to improve equity in university participation. Implicit in this definition were assertions regarding Enabling Educators' place in academia, their collaborative practices and contributions to higher education and research. Although enabling education is situated in a broad and complex governmental, societal and academic context, the recommendations in this chapter are more confined and pertain to issues raised in this study. These assertions correspond to five distinct, interrelated recommendations for university academic boards and the university sector.

The recommendations concern:

- Reviewing Enabling Educators' workloads and standing in academia
- Increasing support for Enabling Educators and their conducting research
- Developing enabling education as a distinct discipline with its own pedagogies and curriculum; and contribution to in higher education
- Supporting Enabling Educators' collaborative practices
- Ensuring the future security of enabling education.

These recommendations are directed at academic boards, positioned within university academic governance structures. Academic governance structures provide "the framework of policies, structures, relationships, systems and processes that collectively provide leadership to and oversight of a higher education provider's academic activities" (TEQSA, 2017). The

academic governance structure is generally referred to as an academic board but alternative titles are used such as the Academic Senate (University of Tasmania). The recommendations in this chapter address questions of academic standing and culture, academic workload allocations, resourcing to build research capacity and resourcing for networking. Responsibility for considering and acting on such matters is within the purview and resolve of these academic boards.

Moreover, the recommendations address concerns raised by Enabling Educators, who are university, academic employees. The Australian university sector has an active commitment to "ensure higher education and research are accessible to everyone" (Universities Australia, 2022) and the 48 pathway programs currently provided by Australian universities (Pitman et al., 2016) are a testament to individual universities and the sector's commitment to equity in university participation. However, the lack of research exploring and giving voice to Enabling Educators' experiences has meant that their work-related concerns have remained largely undocumented. This study is part of a small, but growing, body of literature that highlights areas which require more concerted attention and action by the university academic boards that have responsibility for care and development of Enabling Educators.

Finally, the five recommendations are interrelated. For example, if the academic boards were to increase support for enabling education research, this would further establish and define enabling education as a discipline, contributing to Enabling Educator's recognition and standing within their university's academic communities. Although the recommendations are interrelated, the following five sections will consider each, individually, and in turn.

13.1 ENABLING EDUCATORS REQUIRE DIFFERENT WORKLOAD ALLOCATIONS AND RECOGNITION IN ACADEMIA

This study emphasises the need for university academic structures to acknowledge and validate Enabling Educators' status in their institutions, and review Enabling Educators' workload allocations in recognition of the greater intensity of teaching in pathway programs. Although the participants fulfilled academic roles, they articulated points of difference between Enabling Educators and other academics in their university communities. These differences were clustered around two themes. Firstly, the impact that working in a pathway program had on the participants' time and emotional load. Secondly, the lower status attributed to the work and academic position of Enabling Educators.

13.1.1 IMPACT OF TIME AND EMOTIONAL INVESTMENT.

Several participants reported feeling that they invested more time and emotional energy in their work than their academic peers in undergraduate degree programs. Pathway programs provide access and support for non-traditional students who tend to be more underprepared for study in higher education than their traditional student peers (McKay et al., 2018). Consequently, several participants noted that teaching in a pathway program required considerably more time and emotional commitment than teaching in undergraduate courses.

i. Time impact. Several participants noted that *"enabling education is time intensive. It requires a lot more communication and consultation than undergraduate teaching"* (Questionnaire 15). Thus, for Enabling Educators,

> *… the teaching and the consulting with students in enabling is very time consuming. … it is a case of just recognising the vast levels of complexity in people's lives, that our systems*

and our processes don't necessarily always accommodate very well to. And it means that somehow or other the staff have to be a glue in the middle between the student and the institution. (Transcript 10)

Lisciandro (2019) also makes a similar self-reflective observation, that,

> In my first couple of years of working in a pre-university enabling program as a tutor, then later as unit coordinator, and on both regional and metropolitan campuses, I found that the experience was in stark contrast to any sort of teaching that I had done before. I spent more time with these students than other cohorts. While it was my most rewarding experience as an educator, it was, at times, also my most difficult (p. 125).

ii. Emotional impact. There are "high 'emotional labour demands'" associated with working with students in enabling programs (Crawford et al., 2018, p. 23). This concept of emotional labour positively reinvents Hochschild's original, more negative, concept. For Hochschild emotional labour was the demanding labour placed on an employee, such as an Air Attendant, to present a happy, positive 'face', regardless of their work conditions or emotional state (Ayuttacorn, 2016). In this study, several participants referred to emotional labour as the emotional cost or work required to support their students. Participants noted the emotional cost of their work, which was again reported as being greater than that of colleagues working in undergraduate programs. One participant observed that it was easy to

> *… underestimate that psychological element of enabling education. Yes, there are highs, there's lows as well, it's an emotionally engaged process … because you become aware*

> *of the stories of your students … in other parts of the tertiary education system, you wouldn't.* (Transcript 9)

The participants attributed the increased emotional involvement to their work with non-traditional students in their pathway programs. Thus, it was recognised that "*dealing with high attrition rates, students who bring the baggage of difficult family/social/financial circumstances"* contributed to the "*high emotional labour involved"* when working in pathway programs (Questionnaire 23).

13.1.2 STATUS AND POSITION WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

Several participants identified concerns that *"enabling practices, pedagogies and philosophies"* were, to some extent marginalised and considered as simply *"at the periphery or at the beginning as the first step for mature age students lacking other entry requirements to university"* (Transcript 6). Consequently, several participants noted that Enabling Educators may not be considered "*fully an academic in the traditional sense*" (Questionnaire 14).

> *I'm going to go a step further and say my only real struggle now, is being accepted by the wider university community … there is a real stigma attached to where we think we are going to be in the university, to our students.* (Transcript 5)

> *Being an enabling educator is one part of my professional identity … the level of pastoral care, the labour intensity of enabling teaching and the value of the teaching aren't always fully recognised outside of enabling by institutional structures.* (Questionnaire 14)

The participant experiences articulated in this study are common as Enabling Educators are noted to "occupy a somewhat ambiguous space on the fringes of higher education" (Johnston et al., 2021, p. 45; Strauss, 2020). Thomas (2014) further recognises that Enabling Educators "appeared to be undervalued or marginalised within the university system" and so "despite the wisdom and experience these academics have from years of teaching students from low SES backgrounds, it is unlikely that they will significantly shape institution-wide policy or practice, because they lack power and influence" (p. 815).

In summary, the first recommendation is that university boards, and the wider university sector, actively promote and resource initiatives to raise the profile of enabling education and the work of Enabling Educators. This would include universities reviewing workload allocations for academics in pathway programs to ensure that these allocations realistically account for the extra time required for pathway teaching and adequately provide for time to engage in research.

13.2 ENABLING EDUCATORS REQUIRE TIME RELEASE AND SUPPORT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This study underscores the need for greater support for Enabling Educators in conducting research and suggests the importance of a research agenda for enabling education. The participants reported that enabling education requires more time and involves greater emotional labour than that invested by other academic educators. Several participants articulated that the greater time involvement of enabling education negatively impacted on time for research.

> *I love being able to help students on the journey of getting back into education. I love the relational aspect of it in that*

we get more time with the students ... You know, research is obviously there but it is student first. (Transcript 4)

Thus, as the participants noted, the decrease in time devoted to research was a direct result of greater time engagement needed with students. As, simply stated by another participant, *"… the level of pastoral care, the labour intensity of enabling teaching ... can eat into the time I can allocate to things that I – and my institution – values, like discipline specific research"* (Questionnaire 14).

Despite the difficulty in finding time for research, the participants were aware of its value. The participants had research interests in a range of areas, such as learning and teaching, the educators' own practices, the characteristics of pathway students and contribution of enabling education, which all featured in the participant data.

… we are interested not just in the teaching but in understanding the teaching through research. (Transcript 6)

it's absolutely crucial actually. We need … to have the data and the publications to support our programs and show that they work and to show what the students think about them and to show the results. So, research is absolutely fundamental. (Transcript 1)

To share findings and resources with other enabling educators and to advocate for enabling education by disseminating research that may challenge the norms, protocols and practices of higher education that disregard the characteristics of our students. (Questionnaire 27)

The lack of time for research impeded the growth of knowledge in enabling education which, in turn, impacted the way

that Enabling Educators could support non-traditional students and develop enabling education as a discipline.

> *I also heavily value research in the enabling space. Because I feel like that's the way we progress … I feel like we need research in the enabling space in order to essentially have legitimacy.* (Transcript 4)

Secondly, the participants were aware that *"research is part of being an academic and it's very important to get that, you know, some data out there and published"* (Transcript 1). Considering the priority that the university sector affords to research and researchers, the reduced emphasis on research negatively impacted the status of both Enabling Educators and the discipline itself. The Enabling Educators in the study already perceived a stigma associated with attrition from pathway programs. For the participants, failure to contribute to university research productivity was thought to further erode the status and identity of enabling education, impeding its recognition as an academic discipline and the career progression of Enabling Educators.

> *… obviously if you want to progress in the role, from a professional point of view, you've got to research for, you need further study, that kind of thing. I think I've put a bit of pressure on myself over the last year … my teaching load's quite heavy … I often find I'm (researching) in my personal time because of teaching demands.* (Transcript 13)

The literature in Australian enabling education recognises and is responding to the need for quality research. The presence of numerous peer-reviewed articles in journals, such as the University of Newcastle's *International Studies in Widening Participation*, and various article lists curated by the National Association of Enabling Educators (2020) and individuals (Irwin et al., 2019) indicates the

strength of interest within enabling education. Thus, both participant experience and the literature itself displays an interest in further research in enabling education.

In summary, the second recommendation is that university academic boards review academic workload allocations for Enabling Educators in pathway programs to ensure that these allocations realistically account for the extra time required for pathway teaching and provide for time to engage in research.

13.3 ENABLING EDUCATION REQUIRES FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION AS AN EMERGING DISCIPLINE

This study argues that enabling education is an emerging discipline and distinct field of study that would benefit from further development by the university sector. As one participant noted,

> *The deeper you get into enabling education, the more you can see the variety of issues that exist within it. So, it's a field of study, it's a field of employment, it's a field of engagement.* (Transcript 9)

Developing enabling education as a discipline would require investing time and resources in defining its distinct identity and developing enabling pedagogies and curriculum. The university sector would, itself, benefit from this investment as enabling pedagogies could make an important contribution to undergraduate teaching practices.

13.3.1 DEVELOPING AS A DISTINCT DISCIPLINE IDENTITY

Although enabling education is a growing field of scholarship, it could be considered as a still emerging discipline and field of study. As one participant noted,

[Currently enabling education] has that entropy aspect to it. And people coming here from these various perspectives … So you need to build the discipline and that's actually, that's fascinating. In this day and age how often can you say you can build a discipline? So, we are really at a nascent stage … (Transcript 2)

Such participant comments drew attention to the importance of recognising and developing enabling education as a defined, specialised field of work and study.

i. Developing a recognisable academic identity. The first implication of the emerging nature of enabling education is the lack of a recognised academic identity.

… if we were group of physicists or groups of historians or something, we probably have some sort of coherent intellectual identity. You know, we might all be teaching something different or researching something different but we'd be linked by the fact that we could say 'we are all physicists.' Enabling Educators can say we are united by what we do but not necessarily the academic content of our research or academic profiles or anything like that … no one, of course, has studied enabling education at university because you can't. Like a physicist would have studied Physics, we haven't. (Transcript 10)

ii. Developing a recognisable career pathway. A second implication of the lack of a distinct identity is an absence of recognised pathways into enabling education.

How can you attract people and say, okay this is a discipline, there are some key issues here. (Transcript 2)

Career pathways into enabling education were diverse, with several participants previously working as high school teachers or studying postgraduate degrees. An early question set in the interviews explored the participants' experiences of becoming Enabling Educators. In the participates' responses, it was noted that none of the participants were aware of, or intentionally pursued, a career in enabling education.

> *Basically, I didn't make a conscious decision to be involved in widening participation.* (Transcript 7)

> *… the nuts and bolts of how I got involved was that I was starting a Ph D… my supervisor had a previous work history in enabling programs … It just seemed like a natural extension of the work that I was doing to get involved in that*. (Transcript 6)

The almost accidental nature of many participants' entry into enabling education may be attributed to enabling education's relatively unrecognised emergence in higher education.

> *I would say that it's very rare that somebody sets off to be an Enabling Educator. … As far as I know, there is no university degree that trains you to be an enabling adult educator … there is no set pathway. So many people come into this field, myself included, from other pathways.* (Transcript 9)

As has been already noted, enabling education *"is not taught as a discipline"* (Transcript 2), this challenge can be further exacerbated by the general lack of training for academics in the pedagogical knowledge and skills of teaching, particularly in online contexts (Rapanta, 2020). Nursing academics, for example, can study nursing and work as a nurse before embarking on an

academic career in the discipline of nursing. For enabling education there is no comparative discipline that can serve as a point of entry. This lack of a recognised identity potentially raises questions as to how universities and enabling programs can continue to attract and recruit capable and professionally passionate Enabling Educators.

13.3.2 DEVELOPING A DISTINCT CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

A further implication of the emerging nature of enabling education is the absence of a broad, commonly accepted set of enabling curricula and pedagogies. There is value in exploring "the particular challenges of teaching and learning for enabling students and to develop a range of appropriate enabling pedagogies" (Hodges et al., 2013, p. 6). This study's descriptions of *student academic development, student empowerment, student care* and *quality learning and teaching,* capture aspects of the Enabling Educators' awareness of distinctive enabling approaches to curriculum and pedagogy in their own pathway programs.

In this study's data, the participants also expressed an interest in collective sector benchmarking of learning outcomes in their universities' pathway programs, assessments and curriculum, with the aim of developing a broad framework of key learning outcomes (Transcripts 1, 2 and 5). However, achieving a more unified approach to enabling education is not without challenges. Firstly, enabling programs are outside the Australian Qualifications Framework (Pitman et al., 2016) and so are not directly linked to a common qualification structure, Secondly, the number and variety of approaches to pathway programs hinders auditing and standardisation (O'Rourke et al., 2019).

Research is being conducted that contributes to a distinctive enabling pedagogy and curriculum, including; the nature of an

enabling curriculum, pedagogies of transition and care (Bennett et al, 2016; Motta & Bennett, 2018), benchmarking studies (O'Rourke et al., 2019; Syme et al., 2021) and the reasons for attrition, and persistence, of various categories for students (for example Bookallil & Harreveld, 2017). University sector support in developing and furthering research capacity and a research agenda would contribute to the development of enabling education as a distinct curriculum and pedagogical approach.

13.3.3 RETURNS ON THE UNIVERSITY SECTOR'S INVESTMENT

Any potential investment, by the university sector in developing enabling curriculum and pedagogy could return benefits by extending current undergraduate teaching practices. As several participants noted, the wider adoption of enabling pedagogies would benefit higher education.

> *… all students benefit from the types of pedagogies and practices that I think make Enabling Educators really special and unique … the types of pedagogies and supports we offer in enabling should continue on throughout the whole student journey actually, I think. And that would create a richer, more supportive, more holistic environment to engage in education*. (Transcript 6)

In summary, the third recommendation is that the university academic boards, and the wider university sector, further develop enabling education as a valued and distinct discipline. This development should define and support Enabling Educators' academic identities and career pathways, as well as the enabling pedagogies and curricula. Such support is in the interests of the sector as this development has benefits for teaching and learning in higher education.

13.4 ENABLING EDUCATORS REQUIRE TIME AND FINANCIAL RESOURCING FOR COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

The five variations in EEI presented in this thesis (*equity advocate, student academic developer, empowerer, carer* and *educator*) are best understood as complimentary parts of a holistic approach to widening university participation. No single Enabling Educator can bear the weight of inequity in university participation nor support diverse pathway students as comprehensively as a team of educators. For this reason, this study emphasises the value of networking and collaborations among Enabling Educators, both within and across institutions. University sector support and resourcing of networking and collaborations would strengthen cooperation and commonality among programs and assist with the formation of a distinctive professional identity.

13.4.1 VALUE OF COLLEGIAL COLLABORATIONS WITHIN INDIVIDUAL PATHWAY PROGRAMS

The variation in EEI suggests that widening participation requires teams of diverse educators collaboratively working together. The participants recognised the diverse range of experience and ideas that existed among their peers which afforded different perspectives and skill sets. Thus, the participants recognised a range of advantages afforded by collaborative work. These advantages are interrelated and have been loosely clustered below as i) advantages to the Enabling Educators, ii) advantages to the program and iii) advantages to the students.

Firstly, the participants recognised that collegial collaborative practices afforded them advantages such as opportunities for professional support and growth.

You can always improve and always learn new things. So, I think, you know, it's great to share those practices. (Transcript 1)

I think (collaboration) enhances your ability to be effective because it gives you confidence that the decisions that you are making and the kind of, processes and work strategies that you are putting in place are effective. (Transcript 7)

Opportunities for personal support were also valued.

But I also think, because enabling education does have a high degree of pastoral support, it's really important for the emotional health and wellbeing of Enabling Educators within a suite of programs, to be able to collaborate and to share experiences … we have really serious issues sometimes arise … you know, the capacity to draw on each other's expertise and to be a team was important for our emotional health and wellbeing as well. (Transcript 6)

Secondly, the participants considered that collaborative practices benefited pathway program innovation and development.

… you get innovation by sharing ideas, by creating … by sharing knowledge and by imagining what things could look like. (Transcript 12)

I think it's important to work as a group … I think it improves the course, improves the program. It provides a strength. Different people have different inputs … I think anything that strengthens a program or a course will always strengthen (student) participation. (Transcript 11)

… you're looking for a better outcome and collaboration can result in a better outcome if you've got a couple of different viewpoints. (Transcript 3)

As student-centred educators, the participants considered the ultimate benefits to be for the pathway students.

I always hope that there would be people who want to better the course and who can provide feedback and evaluation of the course as well … openness to critique, directly benefits the students. (Transcript 4)

And I feel that working collaboratively with that broad suite of people, helps us develop educational curriculum that's most meaningful to students to ensure that the experience students are getting is the best it can possibly be. (Transcript 6)

Finally, having a larger group of Enabling Educators allowed students to find particular educators they identified with and related to. As one participant noted,

You know I think the diversity is good because sometimes someone might be really good at helping someone in stress, chatting about being a mum because you're the mum too or you know, a similar age … even for students that are looking at particular areas in undergrad. Like, you know, 'I am looking at nursing.' 'Oh well you should talk to this lecturer because she used to be a nurse.' … I think we all have different skills to offer … Yeah it's good to have the diversity for the students. (Transcript 13)

Thus, the participants noted that there are advantages afforded by working collaboratively in their respective pathway programs.

13.4.2 *VALUE OF CROSS-INSTITUTION COLLABORATIONS*

Although four of the study's variations in EEI *(student academic developer, empowerer, carer* and *educator*) had a localised focus within their own pathway programs, the *equity advocate* noted the importance of cross-institution and national collaborations. As one participant noted when clarifying a comment about a cross-institutional community of enabling educators,

> *I think it would be hugely beneficial especially … when I was a newcomer to the area, even still, making contact to try and meet people in enabling … That idea of actually being able to share practice ... yes, absolutely I think there's a need to develop that, that shared understanding …* (Transcript 5)

> *… it's important for Enabling Educators, obviously, to talk outside of their university as well ... our philosophy is widening participation … should be about working between universities to get the best practice for students.* (Transcript 4)

The participants further noted that, *"professional associations are very important in that regard for being able to, kind of, foster relationships across people"* (Transcript 7).

Contribution to a common identity and voice. The previous section has already drawn attention to enabling educations' lack of a recognised professional identity and status as an academic career. For these reasons several participants recognised the benefits of cross-institutional collaborations, and collaborations with professional organisations such as National

Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA), Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) and Foundation and Bridging Educators New Zealand (FABENZ).

> *I think as well, there's a macro-level importance to collaboration … I think it's only together as Enabling Educators that we can really tell the stories of why enabling's important… I think there's a kind of an activist purpose to it, in a way … and it's about being able to talk to governments who might not understand what it is that Enabling Educators do, to continue to tell the stories that matter.* (Transcript 6)

Thus, wider collaborations can make several contributions to the discipline of enabling education, as well as providing a collective voice of advocacy and recognition of the value of enabling education.

Although the participants recognised the value of networking, within and among institutions, they also articulated their struggles in finding time and space for collaboration.

> *… you've got to have a space to communicate experience, explore ideas, get creative, you know.* (Transcript 11)

> *… building relationships and networks with people is hard. Some people I, you know, don't realise the amount of work it takes to build those relationships and to make relationships. And then time is always the other thing. You need time to be able to do these things.* (Transcript 4)

Thus, the fourth recommendation is that the university academic boards provide greater time release and financial resourcing to support and encourage professional networking and collaborations for Enabling Educators, particularly at cross-institutional and sector-wide levels.

13.5 ENABLING EDUCATION REQUIRES CONFIDENCE IN CONTINUED FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The participants also noted that their enabling programs are successful in widening university participation. One participant noted that, *"I work in an institution where 20-25% of the undergraduate cohort actually come from an enabling pathway"* (Transcript 6). Not only do pathway programs provide access, these programs also better position non-traditional students for academic success. In fact, as Syme, Roche, et al. (2021) report in a six-year study of enabling and non-enabling students:

> Students who completed the enabling program had higher success rates, grade point averages (GPAs) and retention rates than their non-enabling peers. They were also empowered to overcome limiting beliefs about their academic and professional potential, which in turn led to success in their studies and careers that they had not previously imagined possible. (p. 1)

The fifth and final recommendation is that university academic boards, and the wider university sector, continue being committed to prioritising and providing funding, recognition and support for enabling education. This commitment would support Enabling Educator confidence in making strategic, future plans for the benefit of non-traditional students.

13.6 CONCLUSION

The experiences of Enabling Educators emphasise several concerns within their university contexts. For the study's participants, enabling education represents a 'double-edged sword.' For example, being a student-centred educator offered significant advantages in equity and holistic support of non-traditional students, but had negative ramifications for the

educators’ wellbeing, career progression and academic status. Although these concerns are not new to Enabling Educators, the paucity of research on these academics’ experiences contributes to a lack of awareness and action in addressing their concerns by university academic boards. Having explored the work experiences of a group of Enabling Educators, the aim of this chapter was to draw attention to issues inherent in, and unique to, their work in pathway programs and these were presented in five specific recommendations.

The five recommendations are that, firstly, the university sector better recognise the academic position of Enabling Educators and that university academic boards review academic workload allocations to allow for the greater intensity of teaching in pathway programs. Secondly, that universities support the development of researcher capability and the research agenda in enabling education. Thirdly, that enabling education be supported by the sector as an emerging discipline with distinct enabling pedagogies and curriculum. Fourthly, that universities adequately resource opportunities for networking and collaborations between Enabling Educators, both within their institutions and cross-institutionally. Finally, that university academic boards, and wider sector, maintain a commitment to and prioritisation of funding for enabling education.

CHAPTER 14: CONCLUSION

Little is known about the different ways Enabling Educators experience and understand their academic identities and work in pathway programs to redress inequity in university participation. This knowledge gap means that the voices of these academics may be unheard when universities endorse policies and cultures that impact Enabling Educators' emotional wellbeing, workload and research time allocations, and contributions to widening university participation and higher education. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to listen and give voice to these academic's experiences and understandings of their work as Enabling Educators. In fulfilling this purpose, the study conducted a phenomenographic investigation with Enabling Educators. The study's findings are succinctly summarised in this chapter in a response to the research questions that outlines the study's original contributions. Next, the chapter reviews the study's recommendations and delineates the study's limitations. The chapter, then, suggests topics for future research before, finally, offering some closing thoughts.

14.1 RESPONDING TO THE STUDY'S RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study's aim was to examine differences in the ways Enabling Educators understood and experienced their academic identities and work with pathway students. Therefore, a phenomenographic research approach was chosen as phenomenography's interest in variation aligned with the study's aim and phenomenographic literature already included research on professional identity, which helped to guide the study and research questions.

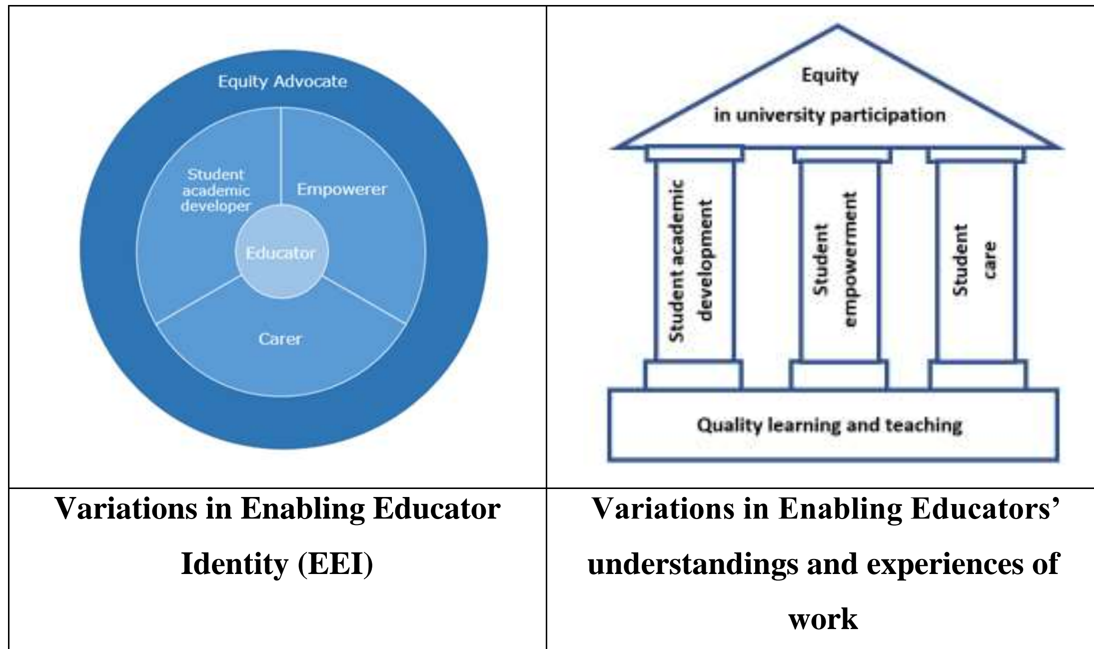
The study's investigation of variations in Enabling Educator Identity (EEI) was designed around three specific research questions. These research questions were:

1. What are the different experiences, life events and ideas that Enabling Educators select when describing their work in pathway programs?
2. What are the variations in meanings that Enabling Educators give to these aspects of their work in pathway programs?
3. What conclusions can be drawn about variations in Enabling Educator Identity from the qualitative differences in Enabling Educators' experiences and understandings of their work in pathway programs?

The study's response to these research questions represents its original contributions to knowledge in enabling education. The study found variations in the ways Enabling Educators identified with their profession and their work. The five variations in EEI were: *equity advocate*, *student academic developer*, *empowerer*, *carer* and *educator*. The outcome spaces mapping variations in the ways Enabling Educators experience and understand their work and identity (see Figure 14.1) represent the study's first original contribution.

Figure 14.1

Diagrammatic representations of EEI and Enabling Educators' understandings and experiences of work



Variations in Enabling Educator Identity (EEI)	**Variations in Enabling Educators' understandings and experiences of work**

The study's second original contribution is the participants' perspectives on what constitutes effective student support in pathway programs. While it is acknowledged that equity in higher education requires both access and appropriate support, there is conjecture regarding the nature of that support. The study found that Enabling Educators collaboratively provide pathway students access to a comprehensive range of support that includes:

- advocacy for both non-traditional students and the benefits of enabling education,
- academic development that supports students in developing academic capabilities, acculturating into university culture and developing a student identity,
- student empowerment through positioning students as agentic and providing learning experiences that support student self-determination through developing their ability to

assess and meaningfully address their strengths and supports, obstacles and commitments,

- dare including empathetic care and support for students in developing self-confidence and stress management techniques, and
- quality, student-centred, strengths-based teaching and learning practices, specific to non-traditional students.

The final, original contribution of the study is a broad description of Enabling Educators that captures their response to inequity in university participation; a response that is grounded in quality, student-centred, strengths-based learning and teaching practice. The study's broad description of Enabling Educators is: *Enabling Educators are pathway academics who are student-focused educators teaching non-traditional students essential academic capabilities to improve equity in university participation.* (see Table 14.1).

Table 14-1

A broad description of Enabling Educators

Variations in Enabling Educators' understandings and experiences of work	Corresponding variation in Enabling Educator Identity (EEI)	Description of Enabling Educators (EEI + context in pathway programs)
Quality learning and teaching	*Educator*	Enabling Educators are pathway academics who are student-focused educators teaching non-traditional students essential academic capabilities to improve equity in university participation
Student academic development	*Student academic developer*	
Student empowerment	*Empowerer*	
Student care	*Carer*	
Equity in university participation	*Equity advocate*	

Note: This table is a duplicate of Table 1.1.

14.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the participants' perspectives on the nature and positioning of enabling education in the university sector, Chapter 13 offered a range of recommendations to university academic boards. The following five statements capture the study's key, strategic recommendations:

1. Enabling Educators require greater recognition and validation in academia, as well as revised workload allocations that

account for the higher emotional load and time intensity of teaching in pathway programs.

2. Enabling education requires resourcing to develop as a discipline with its own distinct pedagogy and curriculum.
3. Enabling Educators require greater support in conducting research, as well as a clearly articulated research agenda. This research agenda needs to incorporate studies of Enabling Educators and research that defines and develops enabling pedagogies and curricula.
4. Collaborations among Enabling Educations, both within institutions and across the sector, require better resourcing and time release. Such collaboration would support and improve pathway student outcomes, strengthen cooperation and commonality between programs and assist with the formation of a distinctive professional identity.
5. Resolute commitment be made to prioritise and provide funding, recognition and support for enabling education. This commitment would allow Enabling Educators to confidently make strategic plans for enabling education and for the benefit of non-traditional students.

A further recommendation pertains to including phenomenography in the current suite of research approaches used in enabling education. While this single study illustrates the potential contribution of phenomenography, there are other indicators of the transferability of phenomenography to enabling education studies. Firstly, phenomenography has a recognised role in educational studies and a proven ability to be adapted, suggesting a high level of transference and applicability to enabling education studies. Secondly, phenomenography, with its inherent expectation of variation, is inclusive of diverse groups of participants. Pathway student cohorts are diverse and phenomenographic research can investigate variations in student

experiences within particular groups, such as the differences between experiences of regional students or online students. Thirdly, phenomenographic studies are empowering for the participants. Phenomenographic data collection methods value the participants' own voices and experiences by allowing them to select and narrate their own experiences and understandings. Finally, phenomenographic analysis does not apply an a priori hypothesis and is non-judgemental of participant experience.

However, despite the potential advantages of phenomenographic research, phenomenographic research approaches are novel in enabling education. It is, therefore, strongly recommended that greater theoretical and ethical consideration be given to risk analysis and the suitability of phenomenographic research with vulnerable students. A cautious approach to the implementation of phenomenographic research would contribute to greater confidence in the use of a potentially valuable research approach in enabling education.

14.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Every study's research methodology has inherent limitations. In this phenomenographic study of variations in Australian Enabling Educators' identities and work, contextual limitations exist due to the composition of, and relatively small sample size, and methodological limitations exist due to researcher subjectivity. The transferability of this study's findings is impacted by both these limitations.

Firstly, contextual limitations are due to the relatively low number of participants. The number of participants included in this study needed to be restricted to allow the phenomenographic requirement for simultaneous analysis of the entire data set. The limited sample size (31 open-ended questionnaire respondents and 14 semi-structured interviewees) required purposive sampling and

participants in this study were intentionally selected with a focus on the experiences of Australian Enabling Educators. The contextualisation within Australian university governance and Federal Governmental policy and legislation, represents an international limitation to the study. Moreover, the decision to invite participants via the National Association of Enable Educators of Australia (NAEEA) newsletter, further narrowed participant selection to a subset of a wider pool of Australian Enabling Educators, being those with NAEEA membership. Also, the participants were all employed as full-time academics, and this employment demographic further reduces transferability as the experiences and concerns of part-time, contract and professional staff working in enabling education may be different to full-time Enabling Educators.

Secondly, the interpretive nature of phenomenographic analysis represents another limitation. Phenomenographic analysis emphasises the researcher's role and interaction with the data in generating an outcome space. The interpretive nature of phenomenographic analysis can be managed (see Chapter 5) but not negated entirely. Chapters 4 and 5 described the researcher's approach to managing the trustworthiness of this research. Chapters 6 to 13 described the generation of the study's outcome space, justified by, and illustrated with, numerous participant quotations.

This section has described several limitations of the findings and acknowledged that the study's most transferable and significant contribution to the literature is to Australian enabling education. Phenomenographic studies do not purport to have high levels of transferability. However, despite the limitations and cautions presented, this study can offer insights and potential points of departure for research in other higher education contexts.

14.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has argued that as an emerging discipline, research in all aspects of enabling education should be supported and encouraged. Future recommended research, emphasised in this study, includes further examination of Enabling Educator Identity, exploration of enabling pedagogies and curricula, investigation into the implications and the applications of online modes of study in pathway programs.

It is recommended that a broad range of studies be undertaken to learn more about Enabling Educators. To date, much of the research in enabling education has focused on the lives and educational experiences of pathway students. Although Enabling Educators are key stakeholders in enabling education their experiences remain underresearched. As an emerging discipline, enabling education would benefit from research that contributes to the definition and depth of understanding of EEI. Such research should engage both greater numbers of Enabling Educators and differing research perspectives.

Secondly, this study alludes to the potential influence of Enabling Educators' teaching practices on student success. Research examining the extent and means of this influence needs further investigation. Moreover, given the diversity of the academics' career pathways into enabling education, there would be value in researching Enabling Educators' understandings of, and practices in, enabling curriculum and pedagogies.

Thirdly, greater research examining online course delivery in enabling education would be beneficial. A question remains regarding Enabling Educators' understandings and experiences of delivering online courses. While this study did not focus on online modes of delivery, several participants raised concerns about online course delivery. The participants suggested that although online modes of delivery could offer advantages to students, such

as greater access, flexibility and equity, online course delivery also potentially contributes to student confusion and isolation. Future research that explores online course design and delivery, including the concepts and pedagogical principles Enabling Educators draw on when designing online curriculum, would contribute to higher education teaching and learning practices. Moreover, while the study found that Enabling Educators support students in developing their academic capabilities, empowering students and caring for them, questions remain regarding effective and sustainable ways to academically develop, empower and care for large numbers of online students.

14.5 CONCLUSION

Global initiatives for widening participation are a response to historic inequities in participation in higher education. Global experience indicates attempts to increase access to educational opportunities alone are insufficient to establish equity. Even when access is increased, traditional students have greater access to prestigious institutions and fare better than their non-traditional counterparts, who are more likely to have more complex life and educational experiences. Thus, equity requires non-traditional students to have access to both alternate pathways into higher education and to a range of academic and social support. Although there is a growing body of knowledge within enabling education, questions remain about the nature of appropriate student support and how the support is best delivered. Moreover, little is known about the identities and experiences of the Enabling Educators who design and deliver this support. This raises questions about Enabling Educators' academic identities and roles working in pathway programs, and whether their voices are being heard and considered in higher education. This study, therefore, contributes to a gap in current knowledge by describing the relationships

between five variations in EEI: *equity advocate*, *student academic developer*, *empowerer*, *carer* and *educator*; outlining Enabling Educators' comprehensive approach to student support through *equity*, *student academic development*, *student empowerment*, *student care* and *quality learning and teaching*; and providing a broad description of Enabling Educators as: *pathway academics who are student-focused educators teaching non-traditional students essential academic capabilities to improve equity in university participation.*

The implications of the study flow from its description of Enabling Educators. The educators, collectively, are well positioned to offer students a range of support structures. In fact, they recognised the strength of their own diversity of experience and expertise and valued collegial, collaborative approaches that provided professional and personal support. The participants were aware that being student-focused educators of students with complex educational and life histories, meant that their students experienced higher rates of attrition, than undergraduate students, and that they had lower research productivity than their academic peers. Within their university contexts, the participants perceived that the high student attrition and low publication data led to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of pathway programs and Enabling Educators. Moreover, as an emerging discipline, the participants observed that enabling education would benefit from a recognisable academic identity, a defined research agenda and clearer routes in enabling education as an academic career.

In conclusion, the study began with my simple curiosity about the identity of Enabling Educators. 'Who they understood themselves to be?' and 'How they understood their work in pathway programs?' This study was borne out of an appreciation and respect for the work undertaken by these academics. In professional and social conversations, I found these academics

moved, effortlessly, from their teaching practice; to issues of social justice that concerned both their students and wider social events; to the research they were conducting or reading. My initial expectation was, therefore, to possibly find a triad, with two points based on the classic university functions of 1) teaching and 2) research, with an additional 3) social justice component. However, the study's actual outcome spaces (Figure 14.1) are both more authentic and useful. While not overstating the importance of one individual study, it does focus on a group of essential, underresearched, stakeholders in enabling education. This study is also the first phenomenographic study of Enabling Educators' experiences in pathway programs and contributes their voice to the growing body of literature in an emerging field of research.

The final word in this study should be the voice of one of the participants, capturing much of what this study has found and why I believe the study to be important.

> *What keeps me inspired about widening participation and enabling, in particular, is that I think it has meaningful outcomes for its (students). I don't think that anyone could go into a classroom and teach this cohort of students and not feel that it has a transformational effect on the lives of students. But also, on the lives of teachers … and for our institutions. Our higher education landscape is richer for widening participation and I think that enabling programs have the best outcomes for students and institutions, actually. So that keeps me here. I think that the students themselves are very inspiring and motivating. The programs are really high quality. (My) colleagues are, generally speaking, some of the most passionate about teaching and passionate about higher education … So when you're in a*

team like that, it's easy to get out of bed and come to work. (Transcript 4)

REFERENCES

Abadi, H. A., Ayentimi, D. T., & Coetzer, A. (2020). The meaning and essential nature of a profession: A multi-perspective approach. *Labour & Industry: A Journal of the Social and Economic Relations of Work*, *30*(1), 85-96. https://doi.org/10.1080/10301763.2020.1723784

Adams, K., Hean, S., Sturgis, P., & Clark, J. M. (2006). Investigating the factors influencing professional identity of first-year health and social care students. *Learning in Health and Social Care*, *5*(2), 55-68. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-6861.2006.00119.x

Agosti, C. I., & Bernat, E. (2018). University pathway programs: Types, origins, aims and defining traits. In C. I. Agosti & E. Bernat (Eds.), *University Pathway Programs: Local responses within a growing global trend* (pp. 3-25). Springer Nature.

Aitken, A. (2010). Becoming an academic: Professional identity on the road to tenure. *The Journal of Educational Thought, 44*(1), 55–68.

Åkerlind, G. S. (2003). Growing and developing as a university teacher – Variation in meaning. *Studies in Higher Education*, *28*(4), 375-390. https://doi.org/10.1080/0307507032000122242

Åkerlind, G. S. (2005). Learning about phenomenography: Interviewing, data analysis and the qualitative research paradigm. In J. A. Bowden, & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography*. (pp. 63-73). RMIT University Press. Melbourne.

Åkerlind, G. S. (2008). A phenomenographic approach to developing academics’ understanding of the nature of teaching and learning. *Teaching in Higher Education, 13*(6), 633-644. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510802452350

Åkerlind, G. S. (2012). Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. *Higher Education Research & Development, 31*(1), 115-127. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2011.642845

Åkerlind, G. S. (2018). What future for phenomenographic research? On continuity and development in the phenomenography and variation theory research tradition. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *62*(6), 949-958. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1324899

Åkerlind, G.S., Bowden, J. A., & Green, P. (2005). Learning to do phenomenography: A reflective discussion. In J. A. Bowden, & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography.* (pp. 74-100). RMIT University Press. Melbourne.

Alsop, G., & Tompsett, C. (2006). Making sense of ‘pure’ phenomenography in information and communication technology in education. *Research in Learning Technology*, *14*(3). https://doi.org/10.3402/rlt.v14i3.10966

Altbach, P. G. (2013). Access means inequality. In P. G. Altbach, *The international imperative in higher education: Global perspectives in Higher Education.* (pp. 21–24). Sense Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-338-6_5

Armstrong, D., & Cairnduff, A. (2012). Inclusion in higher education: Issues in university–school partnership. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *16*(9), 917-928. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2011.636235

Andrewartha, A. & Harvey, A. (2014). Willing and enabled: The academic outcomes of a tertiary enabling program in regional Australia. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, *54*(1), 50-68.

Arvaja, M. (2018). Tensions and striving for coherence in an academic's professional identity work. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *23*(3), 291-306. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2017.1379483

Ashworth, P., & Lucas, U. (2000). Achieving empathy and engagement: A practical approach to the design, conduct and reporting of phenomenographic research. *Studies in Higher Education*, *25*(3), 295-308. https://doi.org/10.1080/713696153

Aukett, J. W. (2017). What is a profession? *British Dental Journal*, *223*(5), 323-324. https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.bdj.2017.754

Australian Government Productivity Commission. (2019). *The demand driven university system: A mixed report card.* https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/university-report-card

Ayuttacorn, A. (2016). Winyann and Affective Performance among Female Thai Flight Attendants. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology, 17*(1), 50-65.

Baker, S., Irwin, E., Hamilton, E., & Birman, H. (2022). What do we know about enabling education as an alternative pathway into Australian higher education, and what more do we need to know? A meta-scoping study. *Research Papers in Education*, *37*(3), 321-343. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2020.1849369

Baker, S., Ramsay, G., & Lenette, C. (2019). Students from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and meaningful

participation in higher education: From peripheral to fundamental concern. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, *21*(2), 4-19. https://doi.org/10.5456/WPLL.21.2.4

Barbarà-Molinero, A., Cascón-Pereira, R., & Hernández-Lara, A. B. (2017). Professional identity in higher education: influencing factors. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *31*(2), 189–203. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-05-2015-0058

Barnard, A., McCosker, H., & Gerber, R. (1999). Phenomenography: A qualitative research approach for exploring understanding in health care. *Qualitative Health Research*, *9*(2), 212-226. https://doi.org/10.1177/104973299129121794

Bauman, Z. (2004). *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*. Polity Press. Cambridge, UK.

Baumeister, R. F. (1997). The self and society: Changes, problems, and opportunities. In R. D. Ashmore & L. J. Jussim (Eds.), *Self and identity: Fundamental issues* (pp. 191-217). Oxford University Press.

Bennett, A., Motta, S. C., Hamilton, E., Burgess, C., Relf, B., Gray, K., Leroy-Dyer, S., & Albright. J., (2016). *Enabling pedagogies: a participatory conceptual mapping of practices at The University of Newcastle, Australia.* Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education (CEEHE). University of Newcastle. https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-andinnovation/centre/ceehe/publications.

Bennett, A., Southgate, E., & Shah, M. (2015). Global perspectives on widening participation: Approaches and concepts. In M. Shah, A. Bennett, & E. Southgate (Eds.), *Widening higher*

education participation: A global perspective (pp. 241-253). Elsevier Chandos. Amsterdam.

Bentley, S. V., Peters, K., Haslam, S. A., & Greenaway, K. H. (2019). Construction at work: Multiple identities scaffold professional identity development in academia. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*, 628. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00628

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(2), 219-234. https://doi/10.1177/1468794112468475

Berzonsky, M. D. (2011). A social-cognitive perspective on identity construction. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research, Vol. 1* (pp. 55–76). Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_3

Biedenbach, T., & Jacobsson, M. (2016). The open secret of values: the roles of values and axiology in project research. *Project management journal*, *47*(3), 139-155.

Björk, J., Stenfors, T., Juth, N., & Gunnarsson, A. B. (2021). Personal responsibility for health? A phenomenographic analysis of general practitioners' conceptions. *Scandinavian Journal of Primary Health Care*, *39*(3), 322–331. https://doi.org/10.1080/02813432.2021.1935048

Bolt, B. (2011). *Heidegger reframed: Interpreting key thinkers for the arts*. I. B. Tauris. London, UK.

Bookallil, C., & Harreveld, B. (2017). Insights into attrition from university-based enabling programs. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, *57*(1), 58-81.

Bookallil, C., & Rolfe, J. (2016). University-based enabling program outcomes: Comparing distance education and internal study. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*. *56*(1), 89-110.

Bowden, J. (2000). The nature of phenomenographic research. In J. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography.* (pp. 1-18). RMIT University Press. Melbourne.

Bowden, J. (2005). Reflections on the phenomenographic team research process. In J. A. Bowden, & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography.* (pp. 11-31). RMIT University Press. Melbourne.

Bowden, J. A., & Green, P. (2005). Series Preface. In J. A. Bowden, & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography.* (pp. v-vi). RMIT University Press. Melbourne.

Bradley, D., Noonan, P. Nugent, H. & Scales, B. (2008). *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report*. Canberra: Australian Government.

Brennan, J., & Naidoo, R. (2008). Higher education and the achievement (and/or prevention) of equity and social justice. *Higher Education, 56*(3), 287-302. DOI:10.1007/s10734-008-9127-3

Bruce, C. S. (1994). Reflections on the experience of the phenomenographic interview. In R. Ballantyne & C. Bruce (Eds.), *Proceeds of Phenomenography: Philosophy and practice* (pp. 47-56). Centre of Applied Environmental and Social Educations Research, Queensland University of Technology. Brisbane, Queensland.

Bunn, R., & Westrenius, A. (2017). Enabling and changing lives: Stakeholders who affect and are affected by the enabling

initiative. *International Studies in Widening Participation*, *4*(1), 55-73.

Bunn, R. (2019). We need to help students discover themselves and see into the life of things. In A. Jones, A. Olds & J. G. Lisciandro (Eds.), *Transitioning students into higher education* (pp. 151-160). Routledge.

Burke, P. J. (2013). *The right to higher education: Beyond widening participation*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Burke, P. J. (2016). Access to and widening participation in higher education. In J.C. Shin, & P. Teixeira (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of international higher education systems and institutions*, 1-7. DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9553-1_47-1

Burns, E. A. (2019). *Theorising Professions*. Springer International Publishing.

Canrinus, E. T., Helms-Lorenz, M., Beijaard, D., Buitink, J., & Hofman, A. (2012). Self-efficacy, job satisfaction, motivation and commitment: Exploring the relationships between indicators of teachers' professional identity. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *27*(1), 115-132.

Cardoso, I., Batista, P., & Graça, A. (2014). Professional identity in analysis: A systematic review of the literature. *The Open Sports Sciences Journal*, *7*(1).

Carmichael, C. & Taylor, J. A. (2005). Analysis of student beliefs in a tertiary preparatory mathematics course. *International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology, 36*(7), 713–719.

Carroll, D. R., & Li, I. W. (2022). Work and further study after university degree completion for equity groups. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *44*(1), 21-38.

Castelli, L., Ragazzi, S., & Crescentini, A. (2012). Equity in education: A general overview. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 69*, 2243–2250.

Castelló, M., McAlpine, L., Sala-Bubaré, A., Inouye, K., & Skakni, I. (2021). What perspectives underlie 'researcher identity'? A review of two decades of empirical studies. *Higher Education*, *81*(3), 567-590.

Caza, B.B. & Creary, S.J. (2016). The construction of professional identity. In A. Wilkinson, D. Hislop, & C. Coupland, (Eds). *Perspectives on contemporary professional work* (pp. 259-285). Elgar.

Chojenta, P. (2017). Students in enabling programs need support not deterrents. *International Studies in Widening Participation*, *4*(1), 86-91.

Cibangu, S. K., & Hepworth, M. (2016). The uses of phenomenology and phenomenography: A critical review. *Library & Information Science Research*, *38*(2), 148-160.

Clancy, P., & Goastellec, G. (2007). Exploring access and equity in higher education: Policy and performance in a comparative perspective. *Higher Education Quarterly, 61*(2), 136-154. DOI:10.1111/j.1468-2273.2007.00343.x

Clarke, M., Hyde, A., & Drennan, J. (2013) Professional identity in higher education. In B. M. Kehm & U. Teichler (Eds.), *The Academic Profession in Europe: New Tasks and New Challenges* (pp. 7-22). SpringerLink.

Clegg, S. (2008). Academic identities under threat? *British Educational Research Journal, 34*(3), 329–345.

Collier-Reed, B., & Ingerman, Å. (2013). Phenomenography: From critical aspects to knowledge claim. In M. Tight (Ed.), *Theory and method in higher education research* (pp. 243-260). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Collier-Reed, B. I., Ingerman, A., & Berglund, A. (2009). Reflections on trustworthiness in phenomenographic research: Recognising purpose, context and change in the process of research. *Education as Change, 13*(2) 339-355.

Connelly L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg nursing: Official Journal of the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses*, *25*(6), 435–436.

Conz, E., Lamb, P. W., & De Massis, A. (2020). Practicing resilience in family firms: An investigation through phenomenography. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, *11*(2). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2020.100355.

Cope, C. (2004). Ensuring validity and reliability in phenomenographic research using the analytical framework of a structure of awareness. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *4*(2), 5.

Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, *41*(1), 89-91.

Corley, W., & McNeil, J. (2017). *Exploring nontraditional characteristics of students in a freshman engineering course.* ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition. DOI: 10.18260/1-2--28331.

Cossham, A. F. (2017). An evaluation of phenomenography. *Library and Information Research*, *41*(125), 17-31.

Côté, J. E., & Levine, C. G. (2014). *Identity, formation, agency, and culture: A social psychological synthesis*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Coyle, M., Sandover, S., Poobalan, A., Bullen, J., & Cleland, J. (2021). Meritocratic and fair? The discourse of UK and Australia's widening participation policies. *Medical Education 55*(7), 825-839.

Crawford, N. (2014). Practical and profound: Multi-layered benefits of a university enabling program and implications for higher education. *International Studies in Widening Participation, 1*(2), 15-30.

Crawford, N. L., & Johns, S. (2018). An academic's role? Supporting student wellbeing in pre-university enabling programs. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, *15*(3), https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol15/iss3/2

Crawford, N., Kift, S., & Jarvis, L. (2019). Supporting student mental wellbeing in enabling education: Practices, pedagogies and a philosophy of care. In A. Jones, A. Olds & J. G. Lisciandro (Eds.), *Transitioning students into higher education* (pp. 161-170). Routledge.

Crawford, N., Olds, A., Lisciandro, J., Jaceglav, M., Westacott, M., & Osenieks, L. (2018). Emotional labour demands in enabling education: A qualitative exploration of the unique challenges and protective factors. *Student Success, 9*(1), 23-33. DOI: 10.5204/ssj.v9i1.430

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage. London.

Dahlgren, L. O., & Fallsberg, M. (1991). Phenomenography as a qualitative approach in social pharmacy research. *Journal of Social and Administrative Pharmacy, 8*(4), 150-156.

Daniel, B. K. (2018). Contestable professional academic identity of those who teach research methodology. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *41*(5), 548-561.

Dashper, K., & Fletcher, T. (2019). 'Don't call me an academic': Professional identity and struggles for legitimacy within the vocational field of events management higher education. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, *25*(2). DOI:10.1016/j.jhlste.2019.100201

Dawkins, J. (1988). Higher education: A policy statement Canberra. *Australian Government Printing Office*.

Day, C. (2018). Professional identity matters: Agency, emotions, and resilience. In P. A. Schutz, J. Hong, & D. C. Francis (Eds.), *Research on Teacher Identity: Mapping challenges and innovations* (pp. 61-70). Springer. DOI:10.1007/978-3-319-93836-3_6

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Sage. Thousand Oaks, CA.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia.

Department of Employment, Education and Training. (1990). *A fair chance for all. National and institutional planning for equity in higher education: A discussion paper.* Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service. http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/152620

Department of the Attorney General. (2003). *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service. https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2022C00005/Download

Devlin, M. (2010, January). Non-traditional student achievement: Theory, policy and practice in Australian higher education. *FYHE 2010: Aspiration, Access, Achievement: Proceedings of the 13th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference 2010* (pp. 1-13). Queensland University of Technology.

Devlin, M. (2013). Effective university leadership and management of learning and teaching in a widening participation context: Findings from two national Australian studies. *Tertiary Education and Management*, *19*(3), 233-245.

Devlin, M., Kift, S., Nelson, K., Smith, L., & McKay, J. (2012). *Effective teaching and support of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds: Resources for Australian higher education.* Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education. https://www.lowses.edu.au/assets/ALTC%20LSES%20Final%20Report%202012.pdf

Devlin, M., & McKay, J. (2018). Teaching inclusively online in a massified university system. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, *20*(1), 146-166.

Devlin, M., & O'Shea, H. (2012). Effective university teaching: Views of Australian university students from low socio-economic status backgrounds. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *17*(4), 385-397.

De Wit, H., & Reisberg, L. (2017). Massification and differentiation in postsecondary education: a marriage of convenience?. In P. G. Altbach, L. Reisberg, & H. De Wit, H. (Eds), *Responding to massification: differentiation in postsecondary education worldwide*. (pp. 191-198). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Dodo-Balu, A. (2018). Fairness and inclusion: Online learning as an enabler of Australian higher education policies aimed at student equity and social justice. *International Studies in Widening Participation*, *5*(2), 26-39.

Doody, O., & Noonan, M. (2013). Preparing and conducting interviews to collect data. *Nurse Researcher*, *20*(5).

Dortins, E. (2002). Reflections on phenomenographic process: Interview, transcription and analysis. *Quality Conversations: Research and Development in Higher Education*, *25*, 207-213.

Du Gay, P., Evans, J., & Redman, P. (Eds.) (2000). *Identity: A reader* Sage Publications. London.

Dugas, D., Stich, A. E., Harris, L. N., & Summers, K. H. (2020). 'I'm being pulled in too many different directions': Academic identity tensions at regional public universities in challenging economic times. *Studies in Higher Education*, *45*(2), 312-326.

Duus, R. E. (2020). *Constituting selves: Psychology's pragmatic horizon*. Springer Nature.

Ecclestone, K. (2007). An identity crisis? The importance of understanding agency and identity in adults' learning. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, *39*(2), 121-131. https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2007.11661544

Eckerdal, A. (2006). *Novice students' learning of object-oriented programming* [Doctoral dissertation, Uppsala University]. https://www.it.uu.se/research/publications/lic/2006-006/2006-006.pdf

Elliott, A. (2020). *Concepts of the self*. Polity Press.

Engstrom, C., & Tinto, V. (2008). Access without support is not opportunity. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *40*(1), 46-50.

Entwistle, N. (1997). Introduction: Phenomenography in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *16*(2), 127-134.

Fitzgerald, A. (2020). Professional identity: A concept analysis. *Nursing Forum, 55* (3), 447-472.

Flecknoe, S. J., Choate, J. K., Davis, E. A., Hodgson, Y. M., & Johanesen, P. A. (2017). Redefining academic identity in an evolving higher education landscape. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, *14*(2), 1-18.

Flick, U. (2018). Triangulation in data collection. In U. Flick *The Sage handbook of qualitative data collection* (pp. 527-544). Sage Publications Ltd, https://www-doi-org.ezproxy.usq.edu.au/10.4135/9781526416070.n34

Friese, H. (2002). Identity: Desire, name and difference. In H. Friese (Ed.), *Identities: Time, difference, and boundaries* (17-31). Berghahn Books. New York.

Gale, T., & Parker, S. (2013). *Widening participation in Australian higher education: Report to the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) and the Office of Fair Access (OFFA), England*. CFE Research Leicester, UK.

Gee, J. P. (2001) ‘Identity as an analytic lens for research in education’. In W. G. Secada, (Ed.), *Review of Research in Education 25 (2000–2001)* (pp. 99-125). American Educational Research Association. Washington, DC.

Goertz, G., & Mahoney, J. (2012). Concepts and measurement: Ontology and epistemology. *Social Science Information*, *51*(2), 205-216.

Grant-Smith D., Irmer B., & Mayes R. (2020). *Equity in postgraduate education in Australia: Widening participation or widening the gap?* [Research report]. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Perth.

Green, P., & Bowden, J. A. (2009). Principles of developmental phenomenography. *The Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research*, *2*(2), 52-70.

Greyling, W., Boal, R., McKnight, E., & Tappenden, G. (2009). Raising a literacy-embedding team's awareness of their meaning-making: A constructivist approach. *Third National Conference of Enabling Educators.* University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia.

Goastellec, G. (2010). From Empiry to Theory: The social construction of Inequalities in higher education. In G. Goastelec (Ed.),*Understanding inequalities in, through and by higher education*. (pp. 123–131). Sense Publishers , AW Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). *Effective evaluation: Improving the usefulness of evaluation results through responsive and naturalistic approaches*. Jossey-Bass.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, *2*(163-194), 105.

Hajar, A. (2020). Theoretical foundations of phenomenography: A critical review. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *40*(7), 1421-1436.

Hammack, P. L. (2015). Theoretical foundations of identity. In K. C. McLean & M. Syed (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of identity development* (pp. 11–30). Oxford University Press.

Han, F., & Ellis, R. A. (2019). Using phenomenography to tackle key challenges in science education. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*, 1414.

Hasselgren, B., & Beach, D. (1997). Phenomenography—a "good-for-nothing brother" of phenomenology? Outline of an analysis. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *16*(2), 191-202.

Hattie, J.A.C. (2003). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence? [Paper presented]. *Building Teacher Quality: What does the research tell us? ACER Research Conference,* Melbourne, Australia. https://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2003/4/

Harter, S. (1997). The personal self in context: Barriers to authenticity. In R. Ashmore & L. Jussim (Eds.), *Self and identity: Fundamental issues* (pp. 81-105). Oxford University Press.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. Cassell. London.

Harmes, M. K., Hopkins, S., & Farley, H. (2019). Beyond incarcerated identities: Identity, bias and barriers to higher education in Australian prisons. *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education*, *4*(1), 1-16.

Harness, S., & Boyd, P. (2021). Academic identities and their deployment within tutorials. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *108*, 101777.

Hendrikx, W. (2020). What we should do vs what we do: Teachers' professional identity in a context of managerial reform. *Educational Studies*, *46*(5), 607-623. DOI: 10.1080/03055698.2019.1620694

Herbaut, E., & Geven, K. M. (2019). What works to reduce inequalities in higher education? A systematic review of the (quasi-) experimental literature on outreach and financial aid. *A Systematic Review of the (Quasi-) Experimental Literature on Outreach and Financial Aid (April 2, 2019). World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, (8802).

Hewer, C. J., & Lyons, E. (2018). Identity. In C. J. Hewer, & E. Lyons, (Eds.), *Political psychology: A social psychological approach* (pp. 93-113). John Wiley & Sons.

Hitch, D., Macfarlane, S., & Nihill, C. (2015). Inclusive pedagogy in Australian universities: A review of current policies and professional development activities. *International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, *6*(1), 135-145.

Hoang, C. H., & Pretorius, L. (2019). Identity and agency as academics: Navigating academia as a doctoral student. In L. Pretorius, L. Macaulay, & B. Cahusac de Caux (Eds.), *Wellbeing in doctoral education* (pp. 143-151). Springer, Singapore.

Hodges, B., Bedford, T., Hartley, J., Klinger, C., Murray, N., O'Rourke, J., & Schofield, N. (2013). *Enabling retention: processes and strategies for improving student retention in university-based enabling programs*. [Project report]. Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

Hodges, B. (2018). 'Come One, Come All': The question of open entry in enabling programs. In C. Agosti & E. Bernat (Eds.), *University pathway programs: Local responses within a growing global trend* (pp. 133–150). Springer International Publishing.

Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Jr., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds.* Harvard University Press.

Holmström, I., Halford, C., & Rosenqvist, U. (2003). Swedish health care professionals' diverse understandings of diabetes care. *Patient Education and Counseling*, *51*(1), 53-58.

Holmqvist, M., & Selin, P. (2019). What makes the difference? An empirical comparison of critical aspects identified in phenomenographic and variation theory analyses. *Palgrave Communications*, *5*(1), 1-8.

Hong, J., & Cross Francis, D. (2020). Unpacking complex phenomena through qualitative inquiry: The case of teacher identity research. *Educational Psychologist, 55*(4), 208–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2020.1783265

Hornsby, D. J., & Osman, R. (2014). Massification in higher education: Large classes and student learning. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning, 67*(6), 711-719. DOI:10.1007/s10734-014-9733-1

Horrigan-Kelly, M., Millar, M., & Dowling, M. (2016). Understanding the key tenets of Heidegger's philosophy for interpretive phenomenological research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *15*(1), 1609406916680634.

Hopkins, S. (2015). Ghosts in the machine: Incarcerated students and the digital university. *Australian Universities' Review*, *57*(2), 46-53.

Hossain, D., Gorman, D., Williams-Mozely, J., & Garvey, D. (2008). Bridging the gap: Identifying needs and aspirations of Indigenous students to facilitate their entry into university. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, *37*(1), 9-17.

Ibarra, H. (1999). Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 44*, 764-791.

Ireland, J., Tambyah, M., Neofa, Z., & Harding, T. (2009). The tale of four researchers: Trials and triumphs from the phenomenographic research specialization. In *Proceedings of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) 2008 International Research Conference. Changing Climates: Education for Sustainable Futures* (pp. 1-15). The Australian Association for Research in Education.

Irwin, E., Baker, S., & Hamilton, E. (2019, 8 Nov). *Alternative pathways into higher education open access annotated bibliography: Enabling, foundation, access and bridging education*. https://apo.org.au/node/266946

Irwin, E., & Hamilton, E. (2019). Uncomfortable spaces: Philosophy, pedagogy and practice in online enabling education. In A. Jones, A. Olds & J. G. Lisciandro (Eds.), *Transitioning students into higher education* (pp. 101-110). Routledge.

Jacob, W. J., & Gokbel, V. (2018). Global higher education learning outcomes and financial trends: Comparative and innovative approaches. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *58*, 5-17.

James, R. (2007). *Social equity in a mass, globalised higher education environment: The unresolved issue of widening access to university*: University of Melbourne, Centre for the Study of Higher Education.

James, R., Bexley, E., Anderson, A., Devlin, M., Garnett, R., Marginson, S., & Maxwell, L. (2008). *Participation and equity: A review of the participation in higher education of people from low socioeconomic backgrounds and Indigenous people* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Melbourne. Centre for the Study of Higher Education).

James, T. (2013). *Successfully transitioning to university: The influence of self-efficacy.* National Enabling Association of Australia, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia.

Jarling, A., Rydström, I., Ernsth Bravell, M., Nyström, M., & Dalheim-Englund, A. C. (2020). Perceptions of professional responsibility when caring for older people in home care in Sweden. *Journal of Community Health Nursing*, *37*(3), 141-152.

Jarvis, L. (2021). Try before you buy: using enabling programs to negotiate the risks of higher education. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, *61*(1), 26-44.

Jawitz, J. (2009). Academic identities and communities of practice in a professional discipline. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *14*(3), 241-251.

Jenkins, R. (2014). *Social Identity* (4th ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315887104

Johnston, K. (2021). “I am an enabling success story”: An autoethnographic narrative of an unskilled mother’s foray into academia. *Access: Critical Explorations of Equity in Higher Education*, *8*(1), 22-31.

Johnston, K., Mann, G., Mullaney, L., & Kumar, B. (2021). The identity conga line: How diverse lecturers perform the enabling dance. *Access: Critical Explorations of Equity in Higher Education*, *8*(1), 45-58.

Johnson, M., Cowin, L. S., Wilson, I., & Young, H. (2012). Professional identity and nursing: Contemporary theoretical developments and future research challenges. *International Nursing Review*, *59*(4), 562-569.

Jones, R. J. (2018). *Variations in experience and meaning: Accounts of leadership involvement and identities with special education and disability* [Doctoral thesis, University of South Florida]. https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/7530

Kaminsky, E., Rosenqvist, U., & Holmström, I. (2009). Telenurses’ understanding of work: Detective or educator? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *65*(2), 382-390.

Kasperiuniene, J., & Zydziunaite, V. (2019). A systematic literature review on professional identity construction in social media. *SAGE Open*, *9*(1), 2158244019828847.

Kemp, D.A., & Norton, A. (2014). *Review of the demand driven funding system*. Department of Education, Canberra. Retrieved from https: blogs.deakin.edu.au/inovation-in-psychology/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2014/ ReviewOfDemandDrivenFunding.pdf

Kettunen, J., & Tynjälä, P. (2018). Applying phenomenography in guidance and counselling research. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, *46*(1), 1-11.

Kift, S. (2016). *Enabling acccessibility, flexibility and equity: A transition pedagogy for pathway program*. [Paper presentation] 3rd Biennial Conference: Foundation and Bridging Educator New Zealand.

Kihlstrom, J. F., Beer, J. S., Klein, S. B. (2003). Self and identity as memory. In M. R. Leary, & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 68-90). Guilford Press. New York.

Kim, Y. M., & Greene, W. L. (2011). Aligning professional and personal identities: Applying core reflection in teacher education practice. *Studying Teacher Education*, *7*(2), 109-119.

Kjeldmand, D., Holmström, I., & Rosenqvist, U. (2006). How patient-centred am I? A new method to measure physicians' patient-centredness. *Patient Education and Counseling*, *62*(1), 31-37.

Klinger, C., & Murray, N. (2012). Tensions in higher education: widening participation, student diversity and the challenge of academic language/literacy. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, *14*(1), 27-44.

Krause, K. L. (2017). The Australian higher education student experience: A personal reflection on 15 years of research. *HERDSA Review of Higher Education*, *4*, 53-78.

Laiho, A., Jauhiainen, A., & Jauhiainen, A. (2020). Being a teacher in a managerial university: Academic teacher identity. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 1-18. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2020.1716711

Lambert, S. R. (2019). Six critical dimensions: A model for widening participation in open, online and blended programs. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, *35*(6), 161-182.

Larsson, J., Holmström, I., & Rosenqvist, U. (2003). Professional artist, good Samaritan, servant and co-ordinator: Four ways of understanding the anaesthetist's work. *Acta anaesthesiologica Scandinavica*, *47*(7), 787–793. https://doi.org/10.1034/j.1399-6576.2003.00151.x

Larsson, J. & Holmstrom, I. (2007). Phenomenographic or phenomenological analysis: Does it matter? Examples from a study on anaesthesiologists' work. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being, 2*(1), 55-64.

Leisyte, L., & Dee, J. R. (2012). Understanding academic work in a changing institutional environment; faculty autonomy, productivity, and the identity in Europe and the United States. In J. C. Smart, & M. B. Paulsen (Eds.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 123-206). Springer, Dordrecht. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8005-6

Levy, S., & Treacey, M. (2015). The student voices project and teaching transition: Final observations. In S. Levy & M. Treacey. (Eds.), *Student Voices in Transition: Vol. Second edition*. Van Schaik Publishers.

Li, I. W., & Carroll, D. R. (2017). *Factors influencing university student satisfaction, dropout and academic performance.* [Research report]. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), (pp. 1-56). Curtin University, Perth.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, *1986*(30), 73-84.

Lindquist, I., Engardt, M., Garnham, L., Poland, F., & Richardson, B. (2006). Physiotherapy students' professional identity on the edge of working life. *Medical Teacher*, *28*(3), 270-276.

Lisciandro, J. G., Olds, A. & Jones, A. (2019). Philosophy, pedagogy and practice in transitional education: An introduction. In A. Jones, A. Olds & J. G. Lisciandro (Eds.), *Transitioning students into higher education* (pp. 1-8). Routledge.

Lisciandro, J. G. (2019). Introduction: Challenges for educators. In A. Jones, A. Olds & J. G. Lisciandro (Eds.), *Transitioning students into higher education* (pp. 125-126). Routledge.

Lizzio, A. (2006). *Designing an orientation and transition strategy for commencing students: A conceptual summary of research and practice* [First year experience project]. Queensland: Griffith University.

Lomax-Smith, J., Watson, L., & Webster, B. (2011). *Higher education base funding review*. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Canberra, Australia. http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/191943

McAdams, D. P. (1997). The case of unity in the (post)modern self: A modest proposal. In R. Ashmore & L. Jussim (Eds.), *Self and identity: Fundamental issues* (pp. 46-78). Oxford University Press.

McCall, D., Western, D., & Petrakis, M. (2020). Opportunities for change: What factors influence non-traditional students to

enrol in higher education? *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, *60*(1), 89-112.

Macfarlane, B., & Erikson, M. G. (2020). The right to teach at university: A Humboldtian perspective. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1-12.

McGill, C. M. (2018). Leaders' perceptions of the professionalization of academic advising: A phenomenography. *The Journal of the National Academic Advising Association*, *38*(1), 88-102.

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J., & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, *41*(9), 1002-1006.

McKay, J., & Devlin, M. (2015). Widening participation in Australia: Lessons on equity, standards, and institutional leadership. In M. Shah, A. Bennett, & E. Southgate (Eds.), *Widening higher education participation: A global perspective* (pp. 161-179). Elsevier Chandos. Amsterdam.

McKay, J., Pitman, T., Devlin, M., Trinidad, S., Harvey, A., & Brett, M. (2018). The use of enabling programs as a pathway to higher education by disadvantaged students in Australia. In C. Agosti & E. Bernat (Eds.), *University Pathway Programs: Local Responses within a Growing Global Trend*. Springer, Cham.

Machovec, G. (2017). Trends in higher education and library consortia. *Journal of Library Administration, 57*(5), 577-584. DOI:10.1080/01930826.2017.1326266

Mann, G. (2021). I’m hearing voices: A multivocal, autoethnographic study into constructing a holistic enabling educator identity. *Access: Critical explorations of equity in higher education*, *8*(1), 6-21.

Marginson, S. (2016). The worldwide trend to high participation higher education: Dynamics of social stratification in inclusive systems. *Higher Education, 72*(4), 413-434. DOI:10.1007/s10734-016-0016-x

Martin, N. M., Clerigo, D. F. F., Schaefer, F. J. E., & Soriano, J. G. (2020). A phenomenographic study: Exploring the variations of registered nurses' perceived roles and experiences as HIV counselors. *Enfermería Clínica*, *30*, 216-220.

Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography—describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science*, *10*(2), 177-200.

Marton, F. (1986). Phenomenography—a research approach to investigating different understandings of reality. *Journal of Thought*, *21*(3), 28-49.

Marton, F. (1988). Phenomenography: Exploring different conceptions of reality. In D. Fetterman (Ed.), *Qualitative approaches to evaluation in education: The silent revolution.* (pp. 76-205). New York: Praeger.

Marton, F. (1994, November). The idea of phenomenography. In *Conference proceedings, phenomenography: Philosophy and practice,* (pp. 7-9). QUT, Brisbane.

Marton, F. (2000). The structure of awareness. In J. A. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 102-116). RMIT University Press. Melbourne.

Marton, F., & Booth, S. (1997). *Learning and awareness*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Marton, F., & Säljö, R. (1976). On qualitative differences in learning: I. Outcome and process. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *46*(1), 4-11.

Marton, F., & Pong, W. Y. (2005). On the unit of description in phenomenography. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *24*(4), 335-348.

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Metaphor*. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphor

Midgley, W., & Trimmer, K. (2013). "Walking the labyrinth": A metaphorical understanding of approaches to metaphors for, in and of education research. In W., Midgley, K., Trimmer, & A., Davies, (Eds.), *Metaphors for, in and of education research* (pp. 1–9). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Miller, J. (2019). Where does the time go? An academic workload case study at an Australian university. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *41*(6), 633-645.

Milner, H. R. (2010). Culture, Curriculum and Identity in Education. In H. R. Milner (Ed). *Culture, curriculum, and identity in education* (pp. 1-11). Palgrave Macmillan, New York. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230105669_1.

Monteith, D., & Geerlings, P. (2019). Pulled by motivation, pushed by inspiration: Approaches to transitioning high school students to university. In A. Jones, A. Olds & J. G. Lisciandro (Eds.), *Transitioning Students into Higher Education* (pp. 91-100). Routledge.

Morf, C. C., & Mischel, W. (2012). The self as a psycho-social dynamic processing system: Toward a converging science of selfhood. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 21–49). Guilford Press. New York.

Morgan, G. (2006). *Images of organization* (3rd ed.). Sage. Thousand Oaks, CA.

Motta, S. C., & Bennett, A. (2018). Pedagogies of care, care-full epistemological practice and 'other' caring subjectivities in enabling education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *23*(5), 631-646.

Munro, G. G., O'Meara, P., & Mathisen, B. (2018). Paramedic academics in Australia and New Zealand: The 'no man's land' of professional identity. *Nurse Education in Practice*, *33*, 33-36.

Naidoo, R. 2004. Fields and institutional strategy: Bourdieu on the relationship between higher education, inequality and society. *British Journal of Sociology of Education 25*(4) 457–71.

National Association of Enabling Educators. (2020). *Resources.* Retrieved 21 August 2022 from https://enablingeducators.org/resources-list/

National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) (2011). *Progress Report: 2008-2011*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. Adelaide.

Naylor, R., & James, R. (2015). Systemic equity challenges: An overview of the role of Australian universities in student equity and social inclusion. In M. Shah, A. Bennett, & E. Southgate (Eds.), *Widening higher education participation: A global perspective* (pp. 1-13). Elsevier Chandos. Amsterdam.

Naylor, R., & Mifsud, N. (2019). *Structural inequality in higher education: Creating institutional cultures that enable all students.* [Research report]. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. Perth.

Naylor, R., & Mifsud, N. (2020). Towards a structural inequality framework for student retention and success. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *39*(2), 259-272.

Naylor, R., Baik, C., & James, R. (2013). A critical interventions framework for advancing equity in Australian higher education. [Discussion paper] Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education. Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne. http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/259740

Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *19*(4), 317-328.

Nicholson, S. (2018). Diversifying the medical workforce requires a step change in widening participation-Putting the cat amongst the pigeons! [version 1] *Medical Education Publisher*, *7*. https://doi.org/10.15694/mep.2018.0000279.1

Niesel, C., Buys, L., Nili, A., & Miller, E. (2020). Retirement can wait: A phenomenographic exploration of professional baby-boomer engagement in non-standard employment. *Ageing & Society*, *42*(6), 1378-1402. DOI:10.1017/S0144686X20001555

Nieuwoudt, J. E. (2021). Psychological distress among students in enabling education: An exploratory study. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, *61*(1).

Noble, C., O'Brien, M., Coombes, I., Shaw, P. N., Nissen, L., & Clavarino, A. (2014). Becoming a pharmacist: Students' perceptions of their curricular experience and professional identity formation. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, *6*(3), 327-339.

Norton, A., & Cherastidtham, I. (2018). *Mapping Australian higher education 2018*. Retrieved from https://grattan.edu.au/report/mapping-australian-higher-education-2018.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1), 1609406917733847.

O'Keeffe, S., & Skerritt, C. (2021). Exploring teacher identity using poststructural tools. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *44*(2), 179-192.

Olds, A., Jones, A., & Lisciandro, J.G. (2019). Philosophies of flourishing and emancipation in enabling education. In A. Jones, A. Olds & J. G. Lisciandro (Eds.), *Transitioning students into higher education* (pp. 161-170). Routledge.

O'Rourke, J. A., Relf, B., Crawford, N., & Sharp, S. (2019). Are we all on course? A curriculum mapping comparison of three Australian university open-access enabling programs. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, *59*(1), 7-26.

Orgill, M. (2012)**.** Phenomenography. In N. Seel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning*, (pp. 2608-2611). New York, NY: Springer.

Orth, G., & Robinson, C. (2013). Do potentially successful students in tertiary enabling programs have any common characteristics that underpin resilience and persistence? If so, how can this information help future enabling students? In *Proceedings of the 3rd National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia Conference* (pp. 1-12). National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia.

Owens, T. J., Robinson, D. T., & Smith-Lovin, L. (2010). Three faces of identity. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *36*, 477-499.

Paterson, M., Higgs, J. Wilcox, S. & Villenuve, M. (2002). Clinical reasoning and self-directed 1earning: Key dimensions in professional education and professional socialisation. *Focus on Health Professional Education*, *4*(2), 5–21.

Pedler, M. L., Willis, R., & Nieuwoudt, J. E. (2022). A sense of belonging at university: Student retention, motivation and enjoyment. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *46*(3), 397-408.

Pinnegar, S., Mangelson, J., Reed, M., & Groves, S. (2011). Exploring preservice teachers' metaphor plotlines. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *27*(3), 639-647.

Pitman, T. (2015). Unlocking the gates to the peasants: Are policies of "fairness" or "inclusion" more important for equity in higher education? *Cambridge Journal of Education, 45*(2), 281-293. DOI:10.1080/0305764X.2014.970514

Pitman, T. (2017). Widening participation in higher education: A play in five acts. *Australian Universities' Review, 59* (1), 37-46.

Pitman, T., Trinidad, S., Devlin, M., Harvey, A., Brett, M. & McKay, J. (2016). *Pathways to higher education: The efficacy of enabling and sub-bachelor pathways for disadvantaged students.* [Research report]. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Curtin University. Perth.

Pitman, T., Harvey, A., McKay, J., Devlin, M., Trinidad, S., & Brett, M. (2017). The impact of enabling programs on Indigenous participation, success and retention in Australian higher

education. In J. Frawley, J. A. Smith, & S. Larkin (Eds.), *Indigenous pathways, transitions and participation in higher education* (pp. 235-249). Springer, Singapore.

Priest, A. M., & McDougall, J. K. (2021). Editorial: Speaking for ourselves. *International Studies in Widening Participation*, *8*(1), 1-5. Retrieved from https://novaojs.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/149/150

Prosser, M. (2000). Using phenomenographic research methodology in the context of research in teaching and learning. In J. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 34-46). RMIT University Press. Melbourne.

Prosser, M., & Trigwell, K. (1999). *Understanding learning and teaching: The experience in higher education*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Rands, M., & Gansemer-Topf, A. M. (2016). Phenomenography: A methodological approach for assessment in student affairs. *Journal of Student Affairs Inquiry*, *1*(2), 1-19.

Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guàrdia, L., & Koole, M. (2020). Online university teaching during and after the Covid-19 crisis: Refocusing teacher presence and learning activity. *Postdigital science and education, 2*(3), 923-945.

Ravulo, J., Said, S., Micsko, J., & Purchase, G. (2020). Social value and its impact through widening participation: A review of four programs working with primary, secondary & higher education students. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *6*(1), 1-20.

Redmond, G., Wong, M., Bradbury, B., & Katz, I. (2014). *Intergenerational mobility: new evidence from the*

Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth. National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide.

Reed, C. (2018). Professionalizing corporate professions: Professionalization as identity project. *Management Learning*, *49*(2), 222-238.

Richardson, J. T. E. (1999). The concepts and methods of phenomenographic research. *Review of Educational Research*, *69*(1), 53–82. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543069001053

Robinson, O. C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *11*(1), 25-41.

Roche, T., & Syme, S. (2018). Emerging trends and future directions of enabling education. *Student Success*, *9*(1), i.

Roger, K., Bone, T., Heinonen, T., Schwartz, K., Slater, J., & Thakrar, S. (2018). Exploring identity: What we do as qualitative researchers. *Qualitative Report*, *23*(3), 532-546.

Rodgers, C. R., & Scott, K. H. (2008). The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach. *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 732-755). Routledge Handbooks Online. DOI: 10.4324/9780203938690.ch40

Rodrigues, F., & Mogarro, M. J. (2019). Student teachers' professional identity: A review of research contributions. *Educational Research Review*, *28*, 100286.

Ruohotie-Lyhty, M. (2018). Identity-agency in progress: Teachers authoring their identities. In P. A. Schutz, J. Hong, & D. C. Francis (Eds.), *Research on teacher identity: Mapping challenges and innovations* (pp. 25-36). Springer.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2003). On assimilating identities to the self: A self-determination theory perspective on internalization and integrity within cultures. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 253–272). Guilford Press. New York.

Sachs, J. (2001). Teacher professional identity: Competing discourses, competing outcomes. *Journal of Educational Policy, 16*(2), 149-161.

Saks, M. (2012). Defining a profession: The role of knowledge and expertise. *Professions and professionalism*, *2*(1).

Säljö, R. (1979). Learning about learning. *Higher education*, *8*(4), 443-451.

Sandberg, J. (1994). *Human competence at work: An interpretivist approach.* Goteborg University, Sweden: Bas.

Sandberg, J. (2000). Understanding human competence at work: an interpretative approach. *Academy of Management Journal* *43*(1), 9-25.

Santamaria, F., & Priest, A. M. (2021). Sentio ergo sum: Professional philosophy and personal identity in the making of an enabling educator. *Access: Critical Explorations of Equity in Higher Education*, *8*(1), 32-44

Schendel, R., & McCowan, T. (2016). Expanding higher education systems in low- and middle-income countries: the challenges of equity and quality. *Higher Education, 72*(4), 407-411. DOI:10.1007/s10734-016-0028-6

Schwandt, T. A., Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2007). Judging interpretations: But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, *114*, 11-25.

Shah, M. (2015). Widening higher education participation: A global perspective. In M. Shah, A. Bennett, & E. Southgate (Eds.), *Widening higher education participation: A global perspective* (pp. 26-29). Elsevier Chandos. Amsterdam.

Shah, M., & Cheng, M. (2019). Exploring factors impacting student engagement in open access courses. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, *34*(2), 187-202.

Shah, M., Goode, E., West, S., & Clark, H. (2014). Widening student participation in higher education through online enabling education. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, *16*(3), 36-57.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Teachers College Press.

Sigelman, C. A., Rider, E. A., & De George-Walker, L. (2013). *Life span human development* (Australia and New Zealand edition). Cengage Learning. South Melbourne, Vic.

Sin, S. (2010). Considerations of quality in phenomenographic research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *9*(4), 305-319.

Sjöström, B., & Dahlgren, L. O. (2002). Applying phenomenography in nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *40*(3), 339-345.

Slay, H. S., & Smith, D. A. (2011). Professional identity construction: Using narrative to understand the negotiation of professional and stigmatized cultural identities. *Human Relations*, *64*(1), 85-107.

Slee, R. (2011). *The irregular school: Exclusion, schooling and inclusive education*. Routledge. London.

Smith, J., Trinidad, S., & Larkin, S. (2015). Participation in higher education in Australia among under-represented groups: What can we learn from the Higher Education Participation Program to better support Indigenous learners? *Learning Communities: Internal Journal of Learning in Social Contexts: Special Edition: Indigenous Pathways and Transitions into Higher Education*, *17*, 12-29.

Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2013) *Higher Education: The Fair Access Challenge*, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, London.

Somekh, B., & Lewin, C. (2011). *Theory and methods in social research*. Sage.

Stamouli, I., & Huggard, M. (2007, September). Phenomenography as a tool for understanding our students. In *International Symposium for Engineering Education* (pp. 181-186). Ireland: Dublin City University.

Strating, R., & Earl, C. (2015). Adjusting to the university culture: becoming an independent learner. In S. Levy & M. Treacey. (Eds.), *Student Voices in Transition: Vol. Second edition* (pp. 33-46). Van Schaik Publishers.

Stenfors-Hayes, T., Hult, H., & Dahlgren, M. A. (2013). A phenomenographic approach to research in medical education. *Medical Education*, *47*(3), 261-270.

Stenfors-Hayes, T., Hult, H., & Dahlgren, L. O. (2012). Three ways of understanding development as a teacher. *European Journal of Dental Education*, *16*(1), 151-157.

Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2003). A sociological approach to self and identity. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.),

Handbook of self and identity (pp. 128–152). Guilford Press. New York.

Stone, C. (2017). *Opportunity through online learning: Improving student access, participation and success in higher education* [NCSEHE 2016 Equity Fellowship Final Report)]. Curtin University, National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. Perth, Australia.

Stone, C. (2021). Improving student engagement, retention and success in online learning. In M. Shah, S. Kift, & L. Thomas (Eds.), *Student retention and success in higher education* (pp. 167-189). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Strauss, P. (2020). Not quite university people? Academics teaching on foundation studies programmes in New Zealand universities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *39*(5), 1013-1025.

Stryker, S. (2008) From Mead to a structural symbolic interactionism and beyond. *Annual Review of Sociology. 34*, 15-31.

Svensson, L. (1997). Theoretical foundations of phenomenography. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *16*(2), 159-171.

Syme, S., Davis, C., & Cook, C. (2021). Benchmarking Australian enabling programmes: assuring quality, comparability and transparency. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *46*(4), 572-585.

Syme, S., Roche, T., Goode, E., & Crandon, E. (2021). Transforming lives: the power of an Australian enabling education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 1-15. DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2021.1990222

Tan Y.H., & Tan S.C. (2020) Designing the phenomenographic study and constituting the outcome spaces. In: Y. H., Tan & S. C. Tan (Eds.), *Conceptions of knowledge creation, knowledge and knowing* (pp. 47 – 68). Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-3564-2_4

Taylor, P. (2008). Being an academic today. In R. Barnett & R. Di Napoli (Eds), *Changing identities in higher education* (pp. 27-39). Routledge, London, UK.

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). (2021), Higher education standards framework (threshold standards). *https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2022C00105*

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). (2017). Guidance note: Academic governance: Version 2.3. *https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/guidance-note-academic-governance*

Tessier, S. (2012). From field notes, to transcripts, to tape recordings: Evolution or combination? *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *11*(4), 446-460.

Thomas, G. (2014). Closing the policy–practice gap for low-SES students in higher education: The pedagogical challenge. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *33*(4), 807-820.

Tice, D. M., & Wallace, H. M. (2003). The reflected self: Creating yourself as (you think) others see you. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 91-105). Guilford Press. New York.

Tight, M. (2016). Phenomenography: The development and application of an innovative research design in higher

education research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *19*(3), 319-338.

Tinto, V. (2014). Reflective practice: Tinto’s South Africa lectures. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 2(2), 5–28.

Trigwell, K. (2000). A phenomenographic interview on phenomenography. In J. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 63-82). RMIT University Press. Melbourne.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (1998, October 5-9). *Higher education in the twenty-first century: Vision and action*. [Paper presentation] World Conference on Higher Education, Paris. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000141952

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2018). UNESCO Institute for Statistics data on education. http://data.uis.unesco.org/

Universities Australia. (2022). Diversity and Equity. Retrieved August 21, 2022 from https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/policy-submissions/diversity-equity/

Unterhalter, E. (2009). What is equity in education? Reflections from the capability approach. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 28*(5), 415-424. DOI:10.1007/s11217-009-9125-7

Unterhalter, E., & Carpentier, V. (2010). *Global inequalities and higher education: Whose interests are we serving?* Palgrave Macmillan. Basingstoke.

Valentine, J. C., Konstantopoulos, S., & Goldrick-Rab, S. (2017). What happens to students placed into developmental

education? A meta-analysis of regression discontinuity studies. *Review of Educational Research*, *87*(4), 806-833.

Van Lankveld, T., Schoonenboom, J., Volman, M., Croiset, G., & Beishuizen, J. (2017). Developing a teacher identity in the university context: A systematic review of the literature. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *36*(2), 325-342.

Van Maanen, J., & Barley, S. R. (1984). Occupational communities: Culture and control in organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 6,* 287–365.

Vignoles, V. L. (2018). 12 Identity: Personal AND social. In K. Deaux, & M. Snyder (Eds.) *The Oxford handbook of personality and social psychology*, (pp. 289-316). Oxford University Press.

Vukasovic, M., & Scarrico, C. S. (2010). Inequality in higher education: Definitions, measurements, inferences. In G. Goastellec (Ed.), *Understanding Inequalities in, through and by higher education*. Sense Publishers , (pp. 1-16).AW Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Walsh, E. (2000). Phenomenographic analysis of interview transcripts. In J. Bowden & E. Walsh, (Eds.). *Phenomenography*. (pp. 19-33). RMIT University Press. Melbourne.

Walton, J., Priest, N., Kowal, E., White, F., Brickwood, K., Fox, B., & Paradies, Y. (2014). Talking culture? Egalitarianism, color-blindness and racism in Australian elementary schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 39*(0), 112- 122. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.01.003

Walton, E. (2015). Global concerns and local realities: The “making education inclusive” conference in Johannesburg.

Intervention in School and Clinic, 50(3), 173-177. DOI:10.1177/1053451214542039

Webb, G. (1997). Deconstructing deep and surface: Towards a critique of phenomenography. *Higher education*, *33*(2), 195-212.

Wenger, E. (2010). Communities of practice and social learning systems: The career of a concept. In C. Blackmore (Ed.), *Social learning systems and communities of practice* (pp. 179-198). Springer, London.

West, M. (2018). *Feeling, being, and the sense of self: A new perspective on identity, affect and narcissistic disorders*. Routledge. London.

Westen, D. & Heim, A. K. (2003). Disturbances of self and identity in personality disorders. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity*. (pp. 128-152). Guilford Press. New York.

Wheeler, E. A. (2017). On the stability of identity interacting with the impermanence of time. In J. D. Sinnott (Ed.), *Identity flexibility during adulthood* (pp. 3-17). Springer, Cham.

Widäng, I., Fridlund, B., & Mårtensson, J. (2008). Women patients' conceptions of integrity within health care: a phenomenographic study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *61*(5), 540–548. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04552.x

Wilson, A. M. (2014). Application of Heideggerian phenomenology to mentorship of nursing students. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *70*(12), 2910-2919.

Willans, J. (2021). “Will they see through me?”: The exploration of disorienting dilemmas that contributed to the transformation

of an enabling educator. *Access: Critical Explorations of Equity in Higher Education*, *8*(1), 83-96.

Woodward, K. C. (1997). *Identity and difference* (Vol. 3). Sage Publications. London.

World Bank. (2018). Data and Statistics. https://databank.worldbank.org/databases

Yates, C., Partridge, H., & Bruce, C. (2012). Exploring information experiences through phenomenography. *Library and Information Research*, *36*(112), 96-119.

Younger, K., Gascoine, L., Menzies, V., & Torgerson, C. (2019). A systematic review of evidence on the effectiveness of interventions and strategies for widening participation in higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *43*(6), 742-773.

Zygmont, C. S., & Naidoo, A. V. (2018). Phenomenography—an avant-garde approach to extend the psychology methodological repertoire. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 19*(1), 1-19. DOI: 10.1080/14780887.2018.1545061.

APPENDIX A: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE (INCLUDING PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM)

Enabling Educators' understandings and experiences of their work in widening university participation

USQ Ethics approval: H18REA250

Part 1 - Online survey: This online survey is part of a study of Enabling Educators' experiences and understandings of their work in university pathway programs. This research aims to give voice to your experiences and perspectives in Enabling Education.

The survey consists of 4 sets of short response, open-ended questions that explore various aspects of your work as an Enabling Educator. Each set of questions will ask you to;

1. select and describe a concrete situation that best represents a specific aspect of your experience as an Enabling Educator, and
2. reflect and elaborate upon why this particular experience is representative of that aspect of your experience in Enabling Education.

The survey should take approximately 30 to 40 minutes to complete, and can be saved to be continued at a future time.

Part 2 - Invitation to participate in an interview: At the end of this survey you will also be invited to participate in a 1 hour semi- structured interview.

- ***If you are interested in participating in the interview***, you will be asked to provide contact details. These contact details will allow your survey responses to be discussed and

explored in the interview. Your time is valuable and this will save
replication of questions in the interview.

- ***If you decline participation in the interview***, you will not be requested to record any identifying information and this survey will not collect any personal or identifying data. As such, your survey responses will be anonymous and confidential.

Please note that, regardless of your decision, your anonymity will be protected at all times when referring to, or reporting, the findings of this study. Also, any data collected in this survey will be securely stored following the University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and there are no negative consequences for deciding not to participate. You may withdraw from the survey at any time and can decline to answer a question, if you so choose.

Selecting 'Next' will take you to the consent page

NEXT

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research project.

There are 15 questions in this survey.

Participant Information and Consent

Step 1: By selecting the 'Yes' option below you are indicating that you;

- Have read and understood the information regarding this project.
- Have no questions regarding this project.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the researcher (Russell.Crank@usq.edu.au).
- Are over 18 years of age.
- Understand that any data collected may be used in future research activities.

Selecting 'Yes' will record your consent to participate in the survey. You must then select 'Next' for start the survey!

*

Please choose **only one** of the following:

◯ Yes
◯ No

Step 2: Please note: If you gave consent to complete the survey, **you need to select 'Next' and will immediately start the survey!**

1. What do you believe is the core work of an Enabling Educator?

This survey explores aspects of your professional experience in Enabling Education. This question set asks you to consider what you believe to be your core work as an Enabling Educator and briefly describe an event that exemplifies this core work. Please take a moment to consider the event that ***best*** represents this core work, as often it is the most recent occurrence that we recall first.

a. What do you believe to be the core work of an Enabling Educator?

Please write your answer here:

b. Provide an example of a concrete situation which you believe exemplifies what is central to your work as an Enabling Educator.

Please write your answer here:

c. Please elaborate on why you believe this to be good example of what is central to your work in Enabling Education.

Please write your answer here:

2. What makes you feel successful as an Enabling Educator?

This question set asks you to select, briefly describe and reflect upon an event that you believe best represents success for you as an Enabling Educator

a. When do you feel you have been most successful in your work as an Enabling Educator?

Please write your answer here:

b. What was your role in making this success occur?

Please write your answer here:

3. When do you feel that your work in Enabling Education is difficult?

This question set explores aspects of your professional experience when you have encountered difficulty. You are asked to select an experience that you would describe as difficult and reflect in writing how the experience affected your work as an Enabling Educator.

a. Describe a situation or experience you have encountered when your work as an Enabling Educator was difficult?

Please write your answer here:

b. How did this difficulty impact your ability to be who you are as an Enabling Educator?

Please write your answer here:

4. How do you describe yourself as an Enabling Educator?

This question asks you to reflect upon your identity as an Enabling Educator.

How would you describe who you are as an Enabling Educator?

Please write your answer here:

What do you feel is your contribution to Enabling Education?

Please write your answer here:

Demographics

How long have you been working in enabling education?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- 16 to 20 years
- 21 to 25 years
- Greater than 26 years

Teaching area (if relevant)

If you work within a program, as either a Course Examiner or Academic Educator, which of the options below best describes the course?

❶ Check all that apply

Please choose **all** that apply:

- [ ] Study Skills
- [ ] Communication
- [ ] Mathematics
- [ ] Digital Skills or Digital Literacy
- [ ] Academic English
- [ ] Other or not applicable

Does your teaching involve online modes of delivery? *

❶ Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Do you teach one or more courses, subjects or programs online?

Invitation to participate in a 1-hour semi-structured interview

You are invited to participate in a 1 hour semi-structured interview about your experiences in enabling education. Participation in the interview will considerably add to the richness and depth of the study. However, you are welcome to accept or decline this invitation to participate in the interview.

1. If you select the **yes** response below, you will be directed to a page that will request your name and contact details. These details will be recorded with your responses which can be discussed at the interview, providing you with an opportunity to elaborate on your survey responses. *Please note that your*

anonymity will be protected at all times when referring to, or reporting, the findings of this study.

2. If you select the ***no*** response below, you will be directed out of the survey and *your survey responses will remain completely anonymous*

*

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

◯ Yes, I would be interested in being contacted regarding an interview (your contact details and responses will be recorded for the interview).

◯ No, I would not be interested in being contacted regarding an interview (your responses will be anonymous).

Contact details (for participants interested in an interview)

Thank you for considering participation in a 1 hour, semi-structured interview.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes, I would be interested in being contacted regarding an interview (your contact details and responses will be recorded for the interview).' at question '14 [Int1]' ()

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey

Please note: You may withdraw your data at any time. If you do wish to withdraw from this project or withdraw data collected about

you, please contact the Principal Investigator (Russell.Crank@usq.edu.au). Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland.
If you would like to request a summary of the research findings, please contact the Principal Investigator at

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics on +61 7 4631 2214 or email researchintegrity@usq.edu.au. The Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

○ Submit your survey.

Thank you for completing this survey.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – INTERVIEWS

University of Southern Queensland

Participant Information Sheet
for a USQ Research Project

Project Details	
Title of Project:	**Variations in Enabling Educators' understandings of their work in widening university participation: A phenomenographic study**
Human Ethics Research: Approval Number	**H18REA250**

Researcher's Contact Details	
Principal Investigator	Russell Crank
Email	
Telephone	

Description

Purpose and aims of the research: Widening university participation requires the collaboration of diverse educators in a comprehensive and nuanced response to student diversity and the complexity of disadvantage in higher education. While the diversity and experiences of the students enrolled in widening participation programs have been well documented, the experiences of another major stakeholder, the educators teaching the programs, has attracted less attention. This lack of research effectively silences the voices of Enabling Educators in deliberations of widening university participation. Thus, this project studies the experiences of Enabling Educators, exploring both their individual understandings of their work in widening participation and their experiences working collaboratively in teams. Therefore, this study has implications for improving the effectiveness of collaborations in enabling programs with the aim of improving cooperative practices and the holistic response to student diversity.

Participation

You are being invited to participate in a one hour semi-structured interview.

The interview will start with your responses to the questionnaire you completed earlier this year. You will be provided with a copy of your responses before the interview and the initial part of the interview will give you the opportunity to clarify or add to your original responses.

The second part of the interview will explore your experiences of working collaboratively with your colleagues. Similar to the questionnaire, we will discuss concrete examples of your collaborative experience; exploring a core example, a successful collaboration and a collaboration that was difficult.

Expected Benefits

Your participation in these interviews is completely voluntary. Please note that if you decide not to participate in these interviews there will not be any negative consequences. Also, you may withdraw from the interview at any time and can decline to answer any specific question, if you so choose.

It is anticipated that this research will benefit you through providing the opportunity to reflect upon your work, as well as, contributing your voice and perspective to the ongoing discussions about widening university participation.

Risks

Although this research involves negligible risk, at times reflecting on issues raised in a survey can create feelings of confusion and distress. If, after completing the survey, you feel the need to talk with someone, please do so immediately by contacting your Employee Assistance Program.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The interviews and their transcripts will be treated confidentially, and the names of individual participants are not required in the transcribed data for analysis. Also, the data collected in this survey will be securely stored following the University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy.

Questions about this research project

Please direct any questions or requests for further information to the researcher. The contact details are provided at the top of this information sheet.

Thank you for your participation

Russell

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM – INTERVIEWS

University of Southern Queensland

Consent Form
for a USQ Research Project

Project Details	
Title of Project:	**Variations in Enabling Educators' understandings of their work in widening university participation: A phenomenographic study**
Human Ethics Research: Approval Number	**H18REA250**

Researcher's Contact Details	
Principal Investigator:	Russell Crank
Email:	
Telephone:	

Online consent form

Please check the boxes to the right of the document to indicate that you:

• Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.	☐Yes / ☐No
• Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.	☐Yes / ☐No
• Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the researcher.	☐Yes / ☐No
• Understand that the interview will be audio recorded. [When the interview is recorded online, only the audio file will be kept]	☐Yes / ☐No
• Are over 18 years of age.	☐Yes / ☐No
• Understand that any data collected may be used in future research activities.	☐Yes / ☐No
• Agree to participate in the project.	☐Yes / ☐No

Participant Name	
Participant Signature	
Date	

Please attach a digital signature and return this sheet to the researcher prior to undertaking the interview.

APPENDIX D: RUN SHEET FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interview guide

Participant name: ___________

TO OPEN INTERVIEW

Re-iterate objective of research: In today's interview – I would initially like to revisit the questionnaire about your exp in WUP but from the analysis of responses emerge the slightly wider context for EE work units.

- Re-iterate confidentiality of research
- Affirm use of recording mechanism
- **Confirm consent**
- Deal with any queries participants might have

SET A

I was hoping to hear a little about how you can to work in WUP?

[Gaps were left between questions to allow for written notes and comments]

It would be great to get an overview of your career path and background

- as well as some of your reasons for choosing the work in WUP (widening university participation/ enabling education/ pathway programs – participants' preference)?

Can I ask about the present – why are do you stay – what draws you to WUP today?

SET B

1. So, a few days ago I emailed a copy of your questionnaire responses, I was wondering if you had anything to add to your comments or if you thought differently about any of the questions?

Any elaborations, thoughts, new ideas?

2. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS [from the participant's questionnaire responses]

• a [These were specific questions about and points of interest or clarification from the questionnaire responses]
• b

• c

3. So, in summary: What does 'being an Enabling Educator mean to you?
[What contribution do EEs make?]

SET C

1. Thinking about widening university participation - how essential do you think it is to work with other Enabling Educators to widen university participation?
Can you think of a concrete example?

2. When do you feel you have been most successful in working with other Enabling Educators?

- Please elaborate on why this experience successful? (You may refer to events and practices that led up to the experience or which occurred after the experience.)

- How did this success enhance your ability to be an effective Enabling Educator?
- What did ***you*** do to contribute to this being a successful experience? (Your professional – personal actions)
- What ***other factors*** contributed to this being a successful experience?

Diverse educators for diverse students: Do you notice and difference in the ways your colleagues understand WUP?

3. In your experience;

- What are some of the advantages that working other EE provides widening participation?
- Are there factors you need to consider when working with other EEs in widening participation?

4. For you personally, as an Enabling Educator, what do you seek to achieve collaborating with other Enabling Educators?

- For you personally, as an Enabling Educator, what do you seek to achieve collaborating with other Enabling Educators?
- What are the core activities you do to establish effective collaborations with other Enabling Educators? How do you do to establish an effective collaboration?

TO CLOSE INTERVIEW

- Ask if there is anything that participants thought would have discussed that has not been addressed at this point
- Confirm understanding of any items that have arisen during the interview session
- Discuss possible arrangements re follow-up e.g. transcript review, follow-up questions

MORE GENERAL PROMPTS

Can you elaborate on that?

Can you identify instances when ...?

Can you give me some examples of ...?

What do you mean by?

You mention ... but you also mention ... apparent contradiction ..

.can you please clarify? I'd like to hear more about ...

I don't want an institutional viewpoint, am interested in your viewpoint ...

What else, where, when, how, why, why important?

NOTES FOR INTERVIEWER

Ask short clear unambiguous questions

Do not interrupt ... let the interviewees speak to the end

Do not finish sentences

Do not proffer opinions/facts etc