

**The Personal Tutor and Tutees' Encounters of the  
Personal Tutor Role- Their lived Experiences**

**A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy**

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## **Abstract**

The study investigated the relationship between personal tutor and tutee, perceptions of support encounters and their lived experiences within an undergraduate pre-registration nurse education programme.

The personal tutoring system plays a vital role in sustaining nurse learners by being an anchor for their professional and personal development. The tutors monitor progress, support, intervene on the tutees' behalf and act as a confidante. The need for support is especially acute in university based nurse education when the tutees face challenges in clinical practice due to the vocational and professional nature of the course they are undertaking. Yet the meaning of the personal tutoring role is often confusing and serious misunderstandings may exist between tutors and tutees.

The aim of this study is to search for the meaning of personal tutoring by illuminating their lived experiences and encounters. An 'Husserlian' phenomenological approach was taken. A purposive sample of 36 tutors and 44 tutees (9 tutors and 10 tutees were from a Northern university and 27 tutors and 34 tutees from a London university) took part in the study. Each of their experiences were recorded in a 30-45 minutes open-ended taped interview. The findings were analysed by Colaizzi's (1978); Van Manen's (1990) and Cortazzi's (1993) data analysis methods.

The findings revealed a wide variation of encounters on the nature of support and practice. The tutees varied in their readiness to learn, define, discuss and negotiate support. Often they lacked the powers of effective communication skills or the ability to think about their role in the process of negotiating access and support. They then found themselves experiencing a 'sink or swim' phenomenon. They reported a 'parent and child relationship' and attributed problems to a shortfall in the quality of their tutors' interpersonal interactions. Tutees reported positive encounters when they got and felt supported by their tutors. The tutors' data showed that they

had an overwhelming feeling of frustration when tutees lacked study skills and presented their personal problems.

Some tutors indicated a high level of empathic understanding for their tutees and showed that they would often 'go an extra mile' to support their tutees. A few other tutors offered very little support or guidance. The essences that were found to be important in the tutor-tutee relationship were: mutual trust, engagement, respect and accepting responsibilities.

The study illuminated the complexity and skill required to be a tutee and a tutor. Tutors individual support styles echoed with the tutees to varying degrees. A positive experience by tutees and tutors was perceived when each had a shared understanding of the support concept.

Therefore, the study has highlighted the need for greater (and arguably formal) guidance to learners on the premises of learning and personal tutor support in the Higher Education context. Conversely, it suggests that benefit might accrue from skill training in personal tutor work for nurse teachers to enable them to better understand students learning needs and skill training for tutees to enable them to be more self-aware of their learning needs., thereby ensuring a more sophisticated support relationship between both tutor and tutee.

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\* London and Northern Universities are pseudonyms to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of the two Higher Education Institutions where data were collected from.

*A little note to our son, James,*

*"Well James, Mummy has at last finished her book, so you can talk with me now and I'll not ask you not to speak with me for 2 hours because I'm trying to write my book.  
Thank you James" Mum x*

## **Special Dedications**

This thesis is dedicated to the memories of a few people who taught me that education is the key to personal development and meaning in life. They showed me that without education my growth and development would have been stunted and I would not have ever achieved my full potential. They made me a great believer in supporting anyone who desires to learn.

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## **The Author**

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I am also known as Anne Dobinson. I have been in Nurse Education for 15 years. During my time in educating student nurses I found that tutees often speak highly of their personal tutors when they had been well supported, whilst others who felt inadequately supported would meekly seek our support from other tutors rather than their own personal tutor when needing help with an academic or personal problem.

“What is the nature of the tutor – tutee relationship had been a topic that I needed to understand and share with tutors and tutees?” The research findings will be shared with them in order to enable them to understand each other’s role and responsibilities.

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## **Glossary & Abbreviation of terms used in the Thesis**

DfE- Department of Further Education

DOH- Department of Health

ENB- English National Board for Nursing & Midwifery

HEFE- Higher Education Funding for England

HEQC-Higher Education Quality Council

NMC Nursing and Midwifery Council for Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors.

UKCC -United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery & Health Visiting.

QAA -Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction and background to the research**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the lived experiences of tutees and personal tutors with the aim being to illuminate the concept of personal tutoring in Nurse Education. The rationale for conducting the study is that there is a dearth of consideration on the impact and quality of support that a personal tutor can have on their tutees' vocational and professional learning. Consideration of personal experience and the nature of support in the current nurse education climate has not been explored fully, and most of what is written about personal tutoring is from the perspective of what the personal tutor is or does. What is missing is the recognition of the nature of the encounter and experiences. This chapter will orientate the readers to the phenomenon being explored and will provide a background to the contextual development of the personal tutor role and its emergence within Nursing Education.

#### **1.1 The subject of the study: Personal Tutoring**

The complex nature of the role of the personal tutoring relationship and what it means to be a 'receiver' and a 'giver' of academic and pastoral support will be outlined. Tutees' and Personal Tutors' lived experiences will be explored to highlight what the process of personal tutoring is within professional education.

Lecturers from professional education are distinctly different than those in Higher Education. Professional educators are regarded as 'interpersonal professionals' who

predominantly work through face-to-face interaction with the service users, clients, patients and students (Ellis, 1992).

In the case of Professional Health care lecturers they have to demonstrate knowledge, skills, competences, effective interpersonal relationships and communication skills as major components of their teaching. They also have a three directional, dynamic relationship with:

- The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) who is the statutory governing body for Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors.
- The Local Education Consortium which is influenced by the government and the local hospitals.
- The provider for Nursing Education, that is the University Institution.

Other University lecturers who are not professionally based focus on 'pure knowledge', for example, a degree in Chemistry or Biology is the science and not the art, which is the imparting of skills, knowledge and attitude (Taylor, 1997). Also, these individuals are not assessed on their ability to impart skills or competences in a practice setting and may not therefore fully grasp the context of the role and the relationship that professional nurse educators and nurse tutees have to work within.

Given the very specific and extended responsibilities that are placed upon professional educators and their tutees, the functions of personal tutoring have evolved to ensure 'professional tutees' have adequate support systems in place to facilitate their growth and development leading to successfully addressing their professional qualification.

## **1.2 The context of the study: Factors that influence Nurse Education Curriculum**

Nurse Education curriculum addresses knowledge development for and about practice (Taylor, 1997). Theoretical education is provided at the University and the training is obtained from the professional practice setting (see Appendix 1 – The Nursing Curriculum). This leads to many challenges having to be faced by tutors and tutees. Jarvis (1993) suggests that competing ideologies influence education. He cites four models of education as follows:

- The market model where there is competition, the School of Health Sciences/nursing competes with surrounding institutions to recruit a limited number of students from the local population and a large proportion of students from overseas.
- The social control model which is led by the government and which influences nurse education delivery to ensure it meets the changing needs of society.



- The progressive liberalism education model where education is about enriching the individual in their process of lifelong education
- The welfare model is about education that puts right structural injustices.

It is within the context of all these various models that I wish to focus on the role of Personal Tutoring. I highlighted in Appendix One that the nursing curriculum is developed from Lawton's (1983) cultural and situational analysis. Culture is defined as the whole way of life of a society and the purpose of education is to make available to the next generation what we regard as the most important aspect of the nursing education culture (Lawton, 1983).

### **1.3 Origin and background to the study**

The study of the lived experiences of tutees and personal tutors will not aim to develop a theory of personal tutoring as there has been two authors: Wheeler et al (1993) and Earwaker (1992) who have written books on the subject, but I will aim to develop a model of personal tutoring that expands personal tutees' and personal tutors' awareness of their working relationship.

The English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting stresses that the role of the personal tutor is central to the achievement of learning outcomes in nurse education programmes (ENB, 1997). Bramley (1977) suggests that personal tutoring is primarily about teaching and the function of the teacher is to provide a

supportive and stimulating environment. Quinn (1988) defines a personal tutor system as one 'in which a student nurse is assigned to a specific member of the teaching staff.' Both Quinn and Bramley see the personal tutor as essential to the educational process and the relationship that prevails between tutor and student is a key factor in the success of the personal tutoring system. The personal tutor role is to provide tutees with academic, pastoral and clinical support.

The term 'personal tutor' has been part of the nursing curriculum since the early 1980's. It refers to a system in which a student nurse is assigned to a specific member of the teaching staff for the entire three years of their undergraduate nursing studies until s/he gains the necessary knowledge and skills to register as a qualified nurse with the NMC. This system is also a feature of post-graduation nursing studies in Higher Education. It is aimed at forging a close relationship between tutor and student that will facilitate the student's learning (Quinn, 1988). Personal tutoring is multifaceted. It involves a number of functions which are: encouraging and supporting; informing and advising; disciplining; counselling; monitoring and coaching; liasing and representing; negotiating, record-keeping and the provision of references (Quinn, 1988:414).

#### **1.4 Human Relationship – a collaboration between two individuals**

Relationships can sometimes become frayed when the personal tutor and tutee are not communicating properly with each other, that is, when there is no or very little rapport between them. Rapport is concerned with mutual recognition of each others

interactional needs, acknowledging each other and communicating with each other (French, 1983). The provision of personal tutoring has an interpersonal dimension that requires social skills and forming a relationship, for example, “getting to know you” or “getting along together”. It is about sending out information to the other person about the feelings one has towards each other (French, 1983) and responding. The interaction that takes place is similar in nature to that of the nurse-patient interaction because the patient expects the nurse to listen to his or her needs and to offer some form of care or help whatever the problem might be. Similarly, it is imperative to explore the relationship that personal tutors and tutees have had with each other. Project 2000 has meant an increase in theoretical studies in both time and depth; and this major shift in nurse education reform has increased students’ demand for educational support from personal tutors. For lecturers and students’ time availability has become a major factor in interpersonal relations (Taylor 1993). Quinn (1994) claims that personal tutoring is perhaps the single most important aspect of the nurse education system, and it is here that potential problems can be forestalled. He stated that the personal tutor system should forge a close relationship between tutor and tutee and facilitate learning by the provision of individual support and guidance throughout the student’s training. If the quality of the relationship between the tutor and tutee is fraught with a communication breakdown, or if the tutees perceive that they are not supported, it can influence the decision for the student to continue or not to continue training when the going gets tough (Quinn, 1988:413). Quinn sees the tutor as a role model for interpersonal skills development and for the students to learn about interacting with the patients.

## 1.5 Qualities necessary for the provision of personal tutoring

Like any human relationship, the personal tutoring relationship involves people in an interaction process of verbal and non-verbal communication that requires each individual to possess certain attributes and values. If “good” human relationships are to exist, it requires individuals to have the fundamental requirement, of ‘*self-awareness*’. Communication is something that goes on between two people, for example, if you were to walk up to a person to ask for directions to the railway station, and he were to look away from you and continue to read his newspaper, it means he does not want to engage with you, that is, an interpersonal phenomenon. However, by ‘*self-awareness*’, which is the ‘*intrapersonal*’, (talking to ourselves) in this incident, it would make you think about why was this man unhelpful, was it to do with the manner in which you approached him and so on. ‘*Self-awareness*’ is how we receive information from outside and from ourselves, how we communicate with ourselves, the degree to which we are in touch with ourselves, our body, our feelings, thoughts, intuitions and behaviour (French, 1983). The ‘*intrapersonal*’ phenomenon is seen as an essential requirement for interpersonal communication (Weinhold and Elliot (1979). Therefore,

*“Self awareness is an insight into our strengths and hang-ups, a climate of trust between tutor and tutees which will engender appropriate disclosure, credibility as a good teacher as well as sympathetic tutor in order to gain mutual respect.”*  
Quinn,1988:413

Bramley (1997) added that some personal tutors still have not fully realised that their own personality is their principal tool in the personal tutoring job. Before going

further to explore personal tutoring, it is necessary to present how teaching and learning are conceptualised.

See Table below:

**Table 1.5 – The provision of teaching for Learning**

Teaching	Learning
Telling - (Teacher imparts, tells the students about what caring for the patient is)	Reproduction of knowledge on a procedural skill such as giving an injection
Leading - (Show the students how to assess patient's needs, plan, implement and evaluate care)	Comprehension – students show competences of skills by processing, integrating and understanding.
Transmitting knowledge - (Humanistic skills such as listening or educating the patient. This is a complex interactive process.)	This is complex involving intellectual, motivational, personal, emotional and developmental variables indicated by analytic, synthetic and evaluative thinking. Observed by the manner (kind and gentle approach) that the student cares for the patient.

*(Source: Adapted from Raaheim K et al (1991). Helping students to learn, Teaching, counselling and research. p153).*

From my adaptation of Raaheim et al's model that I presented above, it is apparent that the giving of an injection is the behavioural and the manner that the student cared for the patient would indicate the psychological development of the learner.

The teacher facilitates the student's learning. Cognitive theorist of learning such as Bruner (1961:124) said: “ *discovery learning includes all forms of obtaining knowledge for oneself by the use of the mind*”. The above table shows how behavioural and cognitive theories influences learning. The theories of learning and teaching will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

### **1.5:1 Teaching and caring relationship**

Nursing involves ‘*caring for and about the patients*’ (McMahon et al, 1998). Within a nurse education context a ‘caring experience’ will be perceived by the tutees in the same manner as ‘patients’ interpret their quality of care. It would mean that the teacher had tended or cared well for the students’ needs, whatever they were. Whilst ‘cared about’ would be the quality, the manner of the tutor’s interaction with the tutee. It is the affective component of the complex human interaction that is the fabric of the student-teacher relationship. This is supported by Appleton’s (1990) study that affirms and describes the meaning of human care and the experience of caring from the perspective of doctoral students during their educational experience in a programme of nursing. Furthermore it is suffice to say that a humanistic approach to learning is pertinent for the success of education. This is closely related to the philosophy of phenomenology, as it asserts that reality lies in the person’s perception of an event and not in the event itself, that is, to gain a nursing qualification. Rogers (1983) in his book ‘Freedom to Learn’ had argued that teaching by giving knowledge does not meet the requirement of today’s changing world. Rogers viewed learning as being on a continuum, a developmental process

with much meaningless material at one end and significant or experiential learning at the other. Any educationalist would argue that nursing curriculum for nurse education based strongly on theoretical knowledge would be absolutely meaningless, without the development of human caring 'doing' skills, for example, helping a sick individual who had a stroke to eat because s/he is paralysed. Consider an example, a student learns about Biology, Sociology and Psychology and other theoretical components of nursing care and s/he does not attend to a patient with a 'warm', caring and sensitive approach, then what is the use of the theoretical knowledge. It is meaningless because learning involves much more than an interaction with an extensive body of knowledge. Boud et al (1996) supports this by saying that learning is all around us, it shapes and creates our lives – who we are, what we do, it requires personal commitment, it utilises interaction with others, it engages our emotions and feelings. Experiential learning is something of immense value as suggested by Kant (1788) when he opened up his 'Critique of Pure Reason' with the claim that '*all our knowledge begins with experience there can be doubt about it*'.

## **1.6 The Nursing Curriculum**

Curriculum is an important aspect in education. It encompasses all of the activities included under the umbrella term 'education' and 'training' (Quinn, 1994:9) and consists of the 'official curriculum' and 'hidden curriculum'. The 'official curriculum' is the essential core element of the content of what is to be taught (as shown in Appendix 1). It is similar to a policy which teachers should implement, it is laid down formally by the Institution and the NMC formerly known as the

United Kingdom Central Council, UKCC). The 'hidden' curriculum is the attitudes and values transmitted by the teachers (Quinn, 1994:11). In a way, the exploration into the lived experiences of the personal tutoring process will make the values explicit. Therefore, the **aims** of this study are:

- To describe qualitative the variations of the experience teachers and students have about the personal tutoring system.
- To gain an understanding why some teachers provide more support to their tutees than others?
- To explore tutees' help seeking behaviour and their approach to learning,

### **1.7 From a Nurse to Nurse Tutor and preparation of future nurses**

The process of becoming a nurse and a nurse tutor needs to be discussed because the tutor is required by the NMC to be a Registered Nurse and a Registered Nurse Tutor (RNT). Professional education as perceived by Jarvis (1983) is that professional schools such as nursing schools aim to produce new recruits to the health care profession who at the completion of their training, have a sufficient level of knowledge and skills to practice as a nurse and that professional standards will be maintained thereafter. Lester-Smith (1966: 9) suggested that Stuart Mills had claimed that the heart of education lies in the 'culture that each generation purposefully passes to those who are to be their successors'.



Though it could be debated that nurse educationalists do not intend to clone their recruits, they do endeavour to develop a certain set of values and attitudes within the nursing students for whom they are responsible. For example the nurse lecturer who is lacking in the 'inter-human' skills will not be able to impart the 'humanistic' values that are so necessary for caring or looking after a sick individual. Similarly, John Dewey (1916, 1938) made a claim that education must have a humanistic base and he stated that education is an enterprise for supplying the condition which insures growth or adequacy of life, irrespective of age, therefore suggesting that through education, humanistic skills could be imparted. Dewey emphasised the active nature of learning, where experience is in two parts: first, the undergoing of the experience and second the thought and consideration of what this experience means. He wrote: "*we do not learn by doing... we learn by doing and realising what came out of what we did*" (Dewey, 1938)

Additionally, Martin Buber (1878-1965) proposed a philosophy of 'inter-human'. He suggested that it is based on two types of relationship: 'the I-It' and the 'I-Thou'. According to Martin Buber, the 'I-it' relationship is considered as the 'object of knowledge', the individual is 'frozen in an 'existential state'. An 'I-it', individual is considered to contain information or data that is wanted, but s/he sees no need to engage with others to impart the knowledge, that is someone who is aloof and detached from the student. In the case of an, 'I-it' tutor, no connection, that is no engagement exists between the tutor and the tutee. In any interaction, there is always an awareness of time constraints which the tutor uses as a form of limitation or

boundary circumscribing the relationship. For example, a tutor or supervisor who has a high workload and is under pressure to attend various meetings given her/his status in the institution may not have the time or inclination to commit herself or himself to attend to the students' needs for support.

However in the 'I-thou' tutor relationship, which is in total contrast to the 'I-it' relationship. 'a stand is taken' with the other person, the student. The subject of the meeting is considered in her or his total being and uniqueness. In the meeting with the student the nurse lecturer is giving to her tutee and vice versa, an essential component of human interaction, that is, getting into a dialogue and having a rapport with each other.

Additionally, another philosopher, Gabriel Marcel (1948) confirmed Buber's philosophy on human interaction, by saying that there is an 'influx' of the others' presence. Presence is 'reality'; it is a kind of 'influx, that depends upon us being permeable, that is 'how is the person coming across?' Is it that a person is treating the other as a concrete object, ignoring her or his unique need or characterisation, devaluing her/him and dehumanising the other person then this is 'I-it' relationship. Whereas in the 'I-thou' relationship the teacher and tutee engages and interacts with each other with mutual interest in what each has to say.

In the philosophy of existence, Marcel (1948:24) states 'influx' to mean the presence of the other, which actually produces an effect in the being, to whom the presence is

directed. He adds: '*creative fidelity consists in maintaining ourselves in an actively permeable state*'.

In the 'I-thou' relationship the two persons communicate with each other, value each other and come across as 'human'.

It may seem that I am idealising the role of tutee and personal tutor. This is not the case, I am interested in finding out what it means for students to be supported by personal tutors and what aspect of the personal tutor role had significant impact on them. From the concept of experiential learning, a number of qualities such as personal involvement, self-initiation, pervasiveness, self-evaluation and meaningfulness will enhance our awareness and personal development (Boud et al, 1996). Furthermore, Rogers (1983) advocates that the most important factor in a relationship that exists between the facilitator of learning and the learner are the facilitator's qualities, such as: genuineness, trust, acceptance, and empathic understanding.

## **1.8 My rationale for the Study**

During my five years as a Course Director/Leader for the Undergraduate Nursing Studies at a London university I came across many variations in how students are supported or, not supported by their personal tutors. Whilst each student who is undertaking any study programme at the university is allocated to a personal tutor, the following anecdotes suggest that there is inequity of access, inconsistency in

practice and a lack of clarity about what personal tutors were meant to do for students. At the same time, I also hear the frustrations that lecturers share informally when meeting colleagues in the photocopying or Staff Common rooms. Lecturers would often express their frustrations by saying that a particular student has been demanding of their time or that students regard them (personal tutors) as “surrogate parents”, ‘buddies’ and ‘counsellors’. On the other hand, I would hear tutees report to me that their personal tutors do not care for them, that they the tutees do not get a response to their calls for help, that some of their personal tutors are unwilling to support them with a job application which results in the job offer being withdrawn from them, and some of them even claim that other tutees are receiving preferential treatment.

Some tutees had wanted to change personal tutor but they had felt ‘ill-at-ease’ to discuss this fact with their named/allocated personal tutor. Thus, my observation of what seemed ‘a lived- experience’ for the tutees and tutors aroused my curiosity.

### **1.9 The search for the meaning of the tutorial encounters – the aim of the study**

I believe that an understanding of the variations in experience by the tutees and personal tutors will be illuminating and it will provide a systematic means of gaining insights into the process of the personal tutor role. It would enable the nurse lecturers and the nursing students to have a better understanding of each others role in the context of Nurse Education.

A research into students' satisfaction and attrition rate by Kinsella et al (1999) carried out at the University of Swansea revealed that students' reasons for leaving the Common Foundation Programme had been personal problems and disillusionment. Students' disillusionment was due to poor organisation, mismanagement, poor teaching and lack of support. They report that 30% of the 1996 cohort of students in one educational setting had regular contact with their personal tutors and successfully completed the programme. Although Kinsella et al did not report on the remaining 70%, which will have included those students who left the programme. I feel one can reasonably conclude that dissatisfaction with the lack of support from Personal Tutors could have been a reason why some students left the course and thereby contributed towards the attrition rate at the university.

#### **1.9:1 The complexity of the personal tutor role**

From my previous unpublished research on "Nurse Teachers' Perception of the Personal Tutor Role in Nurse Education" I found that the personal tutor role is indeed demanding, conflicting and complex. The personal tutors very often have to provide academic and pastoral support/ guidance. The academic work would involve study skills, developing students' essay- writing skills, reading draft essays, providing remedial work and in-depth feedback to tutees. Occasionally they are required to refer their tutees to specialist subject lecturers for additional tutorials, represent students at academic hearing appeals or support the students when they are experiencing personal problems. The participants in my previous unpublished study

had reported that they found the pastoral care nature of their role quite demanding and stressful. On some occasions personal tutors are made to feel “bad” by their personal tutees if the grades were not what they expected, the tutees believed that if their personal tutor had read their draft essays then they should have achieved a higher grade than what they had actually been awarded. Tutees would often re-act angrily towards their personal tutors as a result of not achieving the grade they had expected.

The pastoral nature of the support included: assisting students who are experiencing personal or psychological difficulties. These included, fear of examinations or failure to meet deadlines, serious family problems, bereavement, the break-up of a close relationship, domestic violence, sexual abuse, self-harm and suicide, manic depression, un-planned pregnancy or coming to terms with the termination of a pregnancy and there are others who get themselves into difficulties through the use of alcohol or recreational drugs.

Dooley (1980) uses the analogy of the ‘Good Shepherd’. He argued that the concept of pastoral care cannot be divorced from its roots in the idea that the pastor, as the father, or leader of a flock cares for her/his charges. Best et al (1995:15) saw pastoral care as a necessary feature of holistic education and for ‘pastoral care’ to be a very comprehensive concept that expresses a commitment to the welfare, well-being and fullest development of the individual. Often one sees a student who is in need of pastoral care as a challenge. Occasionally, lecturers would label a student

who needs pastoral support as ‘manipulative and child-like’. The Department of Science and Education (DES) (1988:3) reported that pastoral care is concerned with promoting pupils’ personal social development based on the fostering of a positive attitude which incorporates the quality of teaching and learning, through the nature of the relationships among the pupils and teachers. Although, this definition was given in the context of secondary education, I would argue that nursing students are no different, irrespective of the fact that they are over eighteen years of age and most of them are mature students when they come into nurse education. When they enter the profession of nursing, the notion of care and caring are equally important if they are to become caring nurses for the future benefit of society.

### **1.10 Some literature into students’ support**

Jacques (1992) said those students (though by no means all) who come to counsellors and tutors with what appears to be psychiatric symptoms, for example depression could be viewed as casualties of the institutions. He perceived the personal tutor role to be a ‘friendly parent’ to students who feel lost in the comparative anonymity of higher education, a role that acts as an agent at the interface between the personal and the academic, to keep a watching brief on the problems that the students are likely to encounter and to support and facilitate the students in progressing through the stages of personal development.

A Psychological Health Survey Project undertaken at Leicester University (1995) showed that the most important source of help and advice for students is their family

and friends, closely followed by their personal tutor. It added that the University is not “*in loco parentis*” in relation to its students, but it does have an important duty of care.

The latest government strategy document “*Making a difference*” (2000) has proposed the recruitment of an extra 6,000 student nurses. Nurse teachers are already stretched to the limit teaching large groups of students, implementing new teaching methods such as Enquiry-Based and Problem-based-Learning, marking increasing numbers of assignments, practice-based-assessments, clinical teaching provision and supporting a group of 20-30 personal students. Given the workload demands placed on tutors it is difficult to conceptualise how the provision of adequate support to undergraduate nursing students can be facilitated to ensure that the students cope with learning to be a ‘nurse’.

So, what is it like to be a personal tutor? What is it like to be personal tutee? These questions will be answered by using an Husserlian phenomenology approach whose directive is to ‘return things to themselves’ by gaining an ‘emic’ (insider), that is, the participants own perspectives of their experiences, which will provide an ‘etic’ (outsider view), that is, the researcher’s view. This will lead to an understanding of the processes of personal tutoring and what being tutored means for the tutees and tutors’ and how they experience their role.



## 1.11 Research Methodology – a brief justification for Husserlian Phenomenology

Harris (1976) suggests that researchers need an understanding of the ‘emic’ perspectives, the insider’s or native’s perceptions and the insider’s accounts of reality which will help to uncover knowledge of the reasons why people act as they do. Researchers will then be able to give an explanation of events from the cultural member’s points of view. The outsider’s perspective is the ‘etic’ view, students and lecturers can identify problems but they must be encouraged to speak for themselves, as they will express not only what the problems are, but also their own feelings and perceptions. As Harris (1976:36) states:

*“the way to get inside of people’s heads is to talk with them, ask questions about what they think and feel”.* Holloway and Wheeler (1996) purport that the emic perspectives will correspond to the reality and definitions of the informants (tutors and tutees).

Phenomenology derives from the Greek word *phainein* which means ‘to show’, ‘to be seen’, ‘to appear’ (New Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1993) and is a qualitative research methodology that will provide rich descriptions of what it is like to be a personal tutor and what it is like for a nursing student as a personal tutee.

## **1.12 Husserlian Phenomenology**

The starting point of phenomenology is the phenomena itself, rather than theories (Cohen, 1987). Husserl suggested that the phenomena cannot be separated from the experiences of them, thus to gain access to the phenomena is through a pre-reflective description of it in the participants own words (Jasper, 1994). ‘Lived experiences’ an off quoted phrase has become the catch-phrase of the phenomenological method ‘tell it as it is’ (Beck, 1992; Cohen, 1987; Omery 1983 and Melia 1984), and by adopting this approach one will illuminate the lives of the personal tutors and the tutees.

In order to report on the lived experiences of the participants and to answer the research questions it is imperative to heed the key elements of Husserlian’s phenomenology which comprises of three components: bracketing, intentionality and essences.

Bracketing is the attempt to free oneself from bias in reflecting back on experience. This is also called an ‘epoche’ phenomenological reduction. Schultz (1970) asserts that the first step in Husserl’s method is the ‘elimination of all preconceived notions’.

Intentionality refers to the directness of the mind towards objects (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1987). This idea is based on the assumption that our awareness was one

thing of which we could be certain (Koch, 1995). The building of knowledge should therefore start with this conscious awareness.

Essences provides the essential nature of the 'real', the relationship between the mind and body, 'the Cartesian' duality, the body experiences the action. The notion of embodiment is to view the body as a way through which we can potentially experience the action of ourselves in the world. The ontological question: "*what is being in the world*" and the epistemological question "*how do we know?*"

Husserl wanted to bring to light the ultimate structures of the consciousness (essences) and to 'evaluate critically the role these structures play in determining the sense of it all' (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1987).

Thus, I intend to ask about the 'meaning of human experience' and 'reality'. The study of the life-world, which is a Husserlian's concept will be adopted. Ontology (the reality and existence) of the nature of support and encounters for the tutors and tutees will be explored to provide the epistemology (theory of knowledge) and understanding about how tutorial support works for tutees in nurse education. As such phenomenology has been described as the use of subjective and first person experience as a source of knowledge (Maslow, 1966).

### 1.13 Data collection

Following ethical permission being granted by my place of work, a large London university, I collected data in three stages:

- Focus group interviews with nursing students who were coming to the end of their three years undergraduate nurse training. The justification to use focus groups was to obtain a group's perception about the experiences they have had and to use it as a pilot study to see if it was a worthy topic to research in-depth and to devise an interview guide for use in open-ended interviews with students and nurse lecturers.
- The second stage was data collection with students and nurse lecturers. Taped Open-ended interviews by adopting Price's (2000) laddering technique was used to get participants to describe their lived-experience.
- A university in the North of England was chosen to participate in the study. Data was collected by the use of the open-ended interview with 10 students and 9 tutors.

The rationale for electing to use another Higher Education establishment for data collection was that I have been working at the London university for seven years and this may be seen as a source of bias when I have a good working knowledge about the personal tutoring system. To use my work-place as a main setting to collect data

would also pose limitations in terms of ‘generalisability’ of the study. The sources of biases could be the researcher herself (that is myself), participants, method of data collection, the environment (setting) and the phenomenon (the role of the personal tutor).

Bracketing was employed. I suspended my assumptions as much as I could by examining my own attitudes, beliefs and prejudices about what and how personal tutoring is or should be. I literally bracketed these out, and in a sense I began to research the study by not letting what I know about the subject on personal tutoring influence my interview technique or data collection but to look at it ‘afresh’. I also conducted the research and data collection without letting my values influence what was being said by the tutors and tutees.

I was aware that there may be a risk of the “Hawthorne effect” which would result in colleagues not presenting a “true picture” (Parachoo, 1997) about how they provide personal tutoring support to their tutees. Therefore, I did not include colleagues who wanted to participate in case they exaggerated or did not tell the truth about their experience with tutees and instead gave me data that they thought would be good to talk about.

Furthermore, tutors and tutees might also become defensive and they might be concerned that the findings would incriminate them. They may fear that, to be truthful will reveal something about themselves for which there would be a penalty

to pay. An added concern of mine was that tutors and tutees would be hesitant and defensive when I approached them to participate in the research study due to my ascribed position of being a Course Leader/Director for the pre-registration Undergraduate Nursing programme. (I will highlight the difficulties I experienced in these areas in my research journey field notes). Throughout the 4 years of conducting this research I intended that the objective epistemology, that is, the ‘trustworthiness’ of the study should be maintained. The tutees’ and personal tutors’ description of their experience will provide an ontological finding of the nature of the reality: what it is like to be a personal tutor and what it is like to be a tutee. It will lead to an educational authenticity in the hope that an awareness of tutors and tutees’ lived- experiences will lead towards an improved understanding of the personal tutoring system.

#### **1.14 The Structure of the Thesis**

This study will be written in the first person, a practice that is permitted in qualitative work (Swanson- Kauffman, 1986 and Webb 1995). A phenomenological approach used to describe experiences and to search for meaning will be conducted. I intend to get personal tutees and tutors to reflect upon their lived experiences to illuminate the nature of the personal tutoring process which in essence will lead to understanding their reality of being a tutee or a personal tutor. I intend to write the thesis in two parts for ease of presentation and in order to take the reader(s) on a journey, that reveals the findings and their significance of the tutors’ and tutees’ encounters and their lived experience of the personal tutor role.

**Part 1** will consist of the following chapters:

Chapter 1 will provide an introduction, an outline of the background to set the context of the study and will also identify the philosophical underpinning of the research into personal tutees and their tutors' encounters.

Chapter 2 will examine and discuss previous writings on the nature and development of personal tutoring in nurse education and will consider learning and teaching theories.

Chapter 3 will outline my assumptions and research questions and present a shift in working practices as dictated by tutors' workload. Tutors' and tutees' perception of each other vary according to the quality of their interactions and the relationship that they experience when they meet together.

Chapter 4 will identify the research methodology to justify the selection of Husserlian's Transcendental Phenomenology, Colaizzi's (1978), Cortazzi (1993) and Van Manen (1990) methods of data analysis.

Chapter 5 will discuss my difficulties in managing the thick description of experiences that led me to consider narrative forms of data presentation.

**Part 2** will outline the data findings, presentation and analysis and will contain the following chapters.

Chapter 6 will present data findings as “Tutees Stories” by presenting selective narrative data to show their lived experiences with their tutors.

Chapter 7 will illuminate the “Tutors’ Stories” by identifying aspects of the experiences they had encountered whilst supporting students with academic, pastoral and clinical support.

Chapter 8 will show the analysis of the data and discussion of the findings to bring to light the nature of the tutors’ and tutees’ working relationship in the personal tutoring context.

Chapter 9 will ‘decentre’ the phenomena and expose the essential structures of personal tutoring support and reveal when tutees experience positive and helpful encounters with their tutors. It will also highlight the complexity of the personal tutor role.

Chapter 10 will conclude the thesis by outlining the limitations of the study, implications for practice and suggest a workable model for personal tutoring.



In summary, this chapter has orientated the readers to the phenomenon and rationale for the study and the structure of the lay out of the Thesis has been identified. The purpose of the investigation is to explore the process of personal tutoring as conceived within a nurse education context. I intend to use Husserlian's Transcendental phenomenology to reveal what each individual's experiences were by getting participants to reflect on their experiences of personal tutoring. Professional education is different because it fosters an idealism of caring that is linked with interpersonal and communication skills. I do not aim to develop a theory on personal tutoring but I aim to illuminate and capture the essence of the lived experiences of tutees and personal tutors. By doing so it will be possible to identify the core elements that make a tutorial encounter a positive or 'good' experience.

The following chapter will focus on literature reviewed and on the historical development of personal tutoring in the context of learning and teaching theories and identify the gap in knowledge that is addressed by the study.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter aims to review existing literature on the topic of “personal tutor” in Higher Education (HE) with a specific emphasis on the Nurse Education setting. An outline of the search strategy is attached. (See Appendix 2 – Search for Literature for Personal Tutoring). A review of literature to gain the historical, socio-economical, political and psychological processes of personal tutoring within Higher Education, in particular to nursing students is provided. This has been necessary in order to understand the term ‘personal tutor’. It has been highlighted that a variety of titles are used when reporting that the students are assigned to a member of staff who takes some responsibility for students’ welfare. They are for examples: moral tutor, welfare tutor, mentor and course tutor ( Wheeler and Birtle, 1995:15). They added that the assigning of a member of staff originated from an Oxbridge tradition where students were allocated a moral tutor and by the mid-twentieth century the term ‘personal tutor’ had colonised other universities. Given that currently a market model education system is in operation, it is felt necessary to review how this support system has evolved and how its current context or meaning is viewed by educationalists.

Literature on the role of the personal tutor has not been very specific in revealing the experience and nature of the role as perceived by the individuals involved in the relationship. However, I feel it is absolutely vital to review previous writings on the

topic. An attempt to present the literature in chronological order will facilitate the reading and analysis of the personal tutor role.

Phenomenologists believe that the literature review should be reviewed after data collection and analyses, so that the information in the literature will not influence the researcher objectively (Oiler, 1996). Although I agree with this statement, the nature of the study is such that I feel a literature review at the start will clarify and inform me of the issues involved, and better enable me to focus on what I can discover in the research process.

The result of the literature search showed that there is a dearth of actual research papers on the topic of the personal tutoring experience in Nurse Education, Therefore, I will present a theoretical and thematic review of the literature. Higher Education documentary evidence on the role of personal tutor, theories of learning and teaching for nursing students, mentoring, facilitation skills and nature of support will be presented in this chapter.

## **2.1 Personal Tutor- Documentary search**

At my place of work, a London Higher Education Institution the policy is:

*“each department is required to establish an effective system of personal tutoring and inform each student in the Department of the system”*

(Senate No136.8 , 15 June 1988). The purpose is to ensure a personal tutor is allocated for each student who is following a programme leading to a degree or diploma and an academic supervisor is allocated to each student who is undertaking

a research project. The allocation of students to tutors is determined by the Associate Dean for students, Head of Department for Nursing & Midwifery and Senior Course Officers.

The academic level of the programme and the clinical speciality of the academic staff are identified on a personal tutor database at the London university.

In order to ensure that personal tutors are allocated a fair and equal distribution of personal tutoring responsibilities a weighting system has been developed. The weighting system allocates points against each programme relative to the perceived demands the personal tutor will experience in carrying out their personal tutoring responsibilities with each student for whom they have been allocated. The points are totalled for each personal tutor to act as a guide to ensure an equitable distribution of 'student demands' placed on the personal tutor is achieved. (See Appendix 3 – Points distribution to Lecturers when providing personal tutoring)

The School of Nursing & Midwifery has amongst its aims to promote an environment where everyone is encouraged to participate fully in the development of its policies and strategies. The strategic aim is to provide high quality education which meets the needs of education and employers by being student-centred. In order to monitor its services, an independent consultant investigated the attrition rates within the Diploma in Nursing Studies (November, 1999). The Data analysis from the investigation suggested that there is a correlation between academic and

non-academic attrition. It found that non-academic reasons account for a high percentage of attrition and recommended that student support may have the greatest impact on attrition by outlining:

- *personal tutors maintain regular contact with their tutees. The frequency of this contact may well vary depending upon the needs of the students but monthly contact should be regarded as a minimum. Such contact should be recorded in the same way as lecturing and clinical contact.*
- *the personal tutors' and clinical supervisors' responsibilities for providing help and support and referring the student to appropriate agencies" be reinforced.*
- *That support arrangements for students in practice areas be reviewed to ensure that students are provided with adequate support from clinical staff and regular contact with a link teacher.*
- *Review the counselling and welfare provision to students.*

Source:\* Thomas's Report on Attrition on the Diploma in Nursing Studies , November 1999) [students' attrition rate is confidential information and therefore cannot be shown here.]

### **2.1:1 Personal tutor's work**

In an article: " War on Attrition" Nick Liplely stated that a government official needs to undertake a review of why so many student nurses quit their courses and quotes the England's Chief Nursing Officer as saying that the average rate stands at 17 per cent for two years up to 1996 and in some institutions figures are as high as 49% (Dinsdale, 1998). Student nurses are important, they need to be valued and they need to be recognised as part of the health service system. The paper recommends better students' support and for teachers to have a more clearly defined specialist roles. (Liplely, 2000).

McSherry and Marland (1999) used an analogy of "The Grand National" where all of the horses and riders strive to complete the gruelling course, with some horses falling at the first hurdle and others at the last, with the owners only realising a financial return on those who successfully complete the course. Similarly, educators guide students around their course, with the return on this level of academic investment being ultimately realised by the patients, who are taxpayers, and the nursing profession who have each made an investment in the process. Patients and the nursing profession will win or lose depending on how many students complete the course, a situation that will be very much influenced by the fact that the students have been appropriately supported and guided by their Personal Tutor. The weak students who have not been appropriately supported may ultimately not cross the winning line thereby further contributing to the attrition rate. In such a case the end result will be that the public and the profession will have a shortage of trained nurses.

Therefore, the aim should be to create an appropriately supportive environment that ensures an adequate supply of highly trained nurses ready to meet the challenge of nursing in the next millennium. McSherry and Marland (1999) discuss students' discontinuation from the nursing programmes making recommendations for fairness and equitable support to be provided to students' thereby reducing the numbers' of cases of discontinuation. Attrition figures are subjective and depend on the data collection and how recorded reasons for discontinuation are monitored: McSherry and Marland (1999) suggest that there should be a reliable and sensitive national

system to record and monitor reasons for all levels of discontinuation amongst student nurses' completion rate. In my place of work, although all the students who leave the course need to complete an exit questionnaire this is not collated or examined to find out why the students left the course before completion. Discontinuation is either for failing theoretical or practice based assessments (PBA). To succeed academically the student nurse must pass the theoretical assessment and demonstrate practice competencies. Marland and McSherry (1997) asked if nurse educators are guilty of hypocrisy, while espousing holism and evidence-based practice they may be neglecting to support the most distressed and vulnerable in their care- their students.

Marland's and McSherry's writing did not show how they researched and generalised their arguments. But I do consider their concluding remarks to be worthy of consideration.

## **2.2 Nursing Context and Nursing Students**

Since this study focuses on nursing students, it is felt that a review of theoretical literature into what is nursing and what aspects of learning and teaching takes place in a nurse education setting are needed. Nursing is a practice education. It requires an individual to show a caring approach. Briggs (1972) describes nursing as the major caring profession. The word "caring" implies a relationship, and a relationship immediately implies a social situation, Cox (1983) summarises it (caring) in the

form of an equation which highlights different aspects of the human condition that one might need to take into account:

*“Human behaviour = f(individual characteristics + social situation)  
The f stands for the interrelationship between the characteristics of the individuals and the social situation” (Cox, 1983:4).*

Thus, the tutor-tutee relationship will reveal how they perceive and interact with each other.

By the term social culture or situation, Cox (1983) means the building blocks of a society, for example, families, schools and hospitals or larger units such as the education system or the NHS. Nurses/teachers ought to remember that when they are caring for people, they need to bear four ‘levels’ in mind, the physical, psychological, social structure and cultural background of the individuals (Cox, 1983:5). Nursing is an activity of assisting other fellow human beings to meet fully her/his needs and to overcome difficulties or problems. This can only happen when there is a continuous interpersonal transaction (French, 1983).

### **2.3 Historical background of nursing education**

The training and education of nurses was completely removed from NHS training schools to Higher Education, Universities by 1996. Nurse training used to be traditionally hospital- based where nurse education followed an apprentice/master model. But Briggs (1972) proposed that nursing should become a research-based profession and although some universities were providing degree nursing qualification it was proposed that all NHS training schools be transferred to higher



education. The students status changed from 'employees' to 'students' and the teachers from 'trainer' to 'academic lecturer' and subsequent changes in norms were reflected in the promotion of "adult" approaches to learning. Formerly, teaching was didactic and teacher-centred.

The 1990's saw Schools of Nursing which were previously linked to hospitals integrate into Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in order to raise the academic standard level of pre-registration nurse education as called for by Project 2000. The emphasis in educating nurses moved from an 80/20 clinical/academic balance to a 50/50 clinical/academic balance. In 1986 the UKCC changed the system of nurses training in order to develop nurses who are knowledgeable and competent practitioners. The support system has two main aims, that is to facilitate the students' academic progression to Diploma or Degree level and also to prepare them for their role as competent, qualified practitioners. The move into HEI also led to the modularisation of the nursing programme, which meant that students now have contact with, many lecturers.

An Evaluation Report by the UKCC (1999) found that students had gained a sound theoretical knowledge base, research awareness and communication skills but their practical skills were under-developed. A recommendation was made to increase students' competence in clinical skills acquisition. The Report also addressed the issues surrounding recruitment and the attrition rates and suggested the reinforcement of effective student support systems.

The integration of Schools of Nursing into Higher education enables the students to spend an average of 75 per cent of their time in the classroom where they receive the theory of nursing and the remaining 25 per cent is spent in clinical areas. Nurse educators/teachers were told to facilitate the development of nurses, who are, analytic, reflective and creative practitioners accountable for their own professional actions, (Brown, 1993). Student-centred and self-directed learning became the espoused approaches for the education of nurses. Burnard, (1984) said that nursing students who have been given control of their own learning are more likely to help clients to control their own care.

Additionally, McKenna (1993) argued that nursing is by definition, both a science and an art. By 'Science' he implied that it requires intellectual activity and knowledge and by 'art' he refers to skilful practice. Nursing can be argued to have a vocational and professional element. To become a fully competent nurse the students have to undertake a three years training and education programme of study which will then lead to registration as a Registered Nurse with the statutory body, the NMC in the United Kingdom. Training refers to learning undertaken with the intention of developing competence for a social role, for example to be a nurse. Whereas, education refers to learning undertaken for the sake of curiosity or personal development (Callery, 1990). To be a nurse, s/he requires both the training and education.

The central tenet of nursing is the concept of care. The notion of caring and nursing are synonymous (Lenninger 1988 and Newman 1986) perceive nursing practice as being directed towards recognising the pattern of the person in their interaction with the environment and nurses as partners in the process of evolvment to expanded consciousness. It requires nurses to establish a rapport with the patients and they also need to reflect and be self-aware of their actions. Thus, nurses are involved in 'being with' personas at any point in the life cycle and facilitating the process, particularly when individuals are suffering and do not find any meaning in what is going on (Tennant, 1999). Nursing is a relationship in which two people are involved in some transaction and the quality of their transactions influences each other's feelings, sensations and perceptions. They both emit stimuli (French, 1983) which are perceived by the other person. This other person acts on the information to maintain and mediate the interaction.

The basis of caring has been described as an interpersonal relationship (Rodgers, 1989) in which there is both objectivity when the nurse acts upon the patient and intersubjectivity when the nurse acts with the patient. This was supported by Morrisons' (1992) findings when he studied both nurses' perception and patients' perception of caring, when the patients identified instrumental and affective elements crucial to being a caring nurse.

Tennant (1999) investigated the concept of care with 9 nursing students to understand their perception of nursing, health, illness and the pre-registration course.

From the content analysis four emerging themes were caring, nurture, healing and self-development. She found that 'caring' has an element of 'being with' individuals for the maintenance of the status quo. Nursing also incorporated a more proactive perception of the interaction between the nurse and the nursed and it included anticipation of development, growth and change for the better. It was termed 'nurture' which was interpreted as prevention, education, facilitation and healing which was concerned with restoration, for example helping people to get better.

When considering the definition of caring and nursing, it could be contextualised that 'Nurse Education' be viewed as preparing future nurses who are 'good carers', communicators, record-keepers, spiritual guides, skilled technicians and counsellors. Savage (1986) said that health care is becoming more sophisticated by arguing that the technical advances of medicine and its capacity to prolong life, the changing needs of an ageing population and development of specialities have all led to disbanding the bureaucratic occupational mode of nursing and replacing it with a professional one. Nursing is no longer regarded as a vocation but a profession. Savage (1986:12) asserted that a better standard of nurse education, higher expectation and nascent consumerism will provoke a re-appraisal of the client/expert relationship.

### **2.3:1 Nursing Education and personal tutoring**

Smith and Redfern (1989) have explored what patients expect from nurses and they reported the nurse-patient relationship is an area of great importance to patients – a

desire to be treated with warmth, kindness and sensitivity but it also means that they did not want a close relationship of a quasi-psychotherapeutic kind. They summed it up by saying that patients judged the quality of nursing by its 'emotional style'. As nurses perform activities such as promoting health, restoring health, helping people to die with dignity and helping disabled people to achieve their potential. The ideology of nursing draws heavily on theories of psychoanalysis and humanistic psychology, essentially that of Carl Rogers(1983) which also influences the delivery of education.

The role of the personal tutor can be likened to that of a nurse. The qualities and emotional style which the personal tutors have can be viewed as "good" or "bad" care. Each of which will have a long-lasting effect. Rogers (1983) in his book 'Freedom to Learn' suggests the essential qualities of a teacher are:

- genuineness, that is the facilitator of learning must come across as a real person rather than as some ideal model;
- trust and acceptance, that is the student is seen as a person in her/his own right who is worthy of respect and care;
- emphatic understanding, that is the ability and willingness to put oneself in the students' shoes in order to see and understand things from her/his perspective.

At this point it is timely to quote Bramley (1977) who said that some tutors still have not realised that their own personality is their principal tool in the tutoring job. Rogers' (1983) however further states that the essential qualities are only the building blocks for the personal tutor role. It is important to bear in mind that these characteristics alone are not sufficient. The personal tutor in Nurse Education needs a professional and academic credibility in order to be respected and heeded by the students. Akinsaya (1992) went on to add that personal tutoring is like any other relationship and it involves a number of qualities and values on the part of the tutor. S/he may be didactic or 'socratic'. The former is dependent on the tutor's overall control through input, direction and development of experience for the student, while the latter approach equates to that of giving the students responsibility for learning through personal experience backed by judicious guidance.

The Journal "Pastoral Care" whose editor Professor Ron Best and colleagues are some of the academic writers who have written on aspects of pastoral care, and students' support in relation to the personal tutor role have shown greater insight and in-depth analysis of how some personal tutors assume "*loco parentis*" responsibilities for their tutees. Best et al's research on "Pastoral Care: Concept and Process" is thorough, useful and focused on pupils in secondary education. Nonetheless, the pastoral element of Best's (1984) writing on pastoral care can serve as a useful guideline to define the nature of the welfare element of the role of a personal tutor. I had experienced some difficulties in finding current and up-to-date

literature on how lecturers experience the role of the personal tutor. The students' experience has not been documented. However, Bramley (1977) wrote "personal tutoring in higher education" from the standpoint of tutors and tutees. Most of the studies were done in the late 1970's and therefore the academic rigour of their writings cannot be substantial but archival searches have been used to look at existing literature on the topic of the personal tutor role.

## **2.4 Historical Development of the Personal Tutor Role**

When Oxbridge school was founded in 1957 it was decided to organise it on similar lines to a boarding school whereby there would be a working as well as a family relationship fostered by the tutors (Blackburn, 1984 cites Crown Woods School). The Head of the House or Head Tutor was charged with 'the care and guidance of each pupil' and 'safeguarding the welfare of individual boys and girls throughout their school life' (Blackburn, 1984:56).

Crown Wood School was based on Eton school's boarding structure where subject teachers knew their pupils but it was the House-master who had an overall picture of how well the "boarders" were progressing and s/he was able to offer guidance and support.

In 1963, Robin Pedley reported that comprehensive schools were following the Crown Wood School and pointed out:

*"a personal tutor was watching over the interests of each child.... Collecting and assimilating information.... Guiding his pupils in the choice of courses and personal*

*problems of school life... Care of this kind is needed. It would transform the effectiveness of our education system.*” (Blackburn, 1984).

It is critical to highlight that the focus of the above is on secondary/comprehensive education. There is a requirement that someone will assume “parental” responsibilities and offer support and guidance to the students. However, Higher Educational (HE) has a different age groups of students. Interestingly, Jean Civil was commissioned to conduct research into the management of student services because colleges were reported to be “less caring”. When the Education Reform Act became a reality, staff with responsibility for student services were anxious that there would be financial cutbacks directly effecting them, since their work does not show tangible benefits. Civil (1991) did a questionnaire survey to identify what support tutors were offering to students. The findings were produced as the Combe Lodge Report (1991). It looked at the personal tutor role in Further Education(FE) and it suggested that personal tutors respond to students’ needs of both a vocational and personal nature. It went on to advocate that personal tutors are fundamentally important in the management of student services.

The context of tutoring in HE can still be viewed as similar to comprehensive or secondary education that covers from 11-16 plus, but for HE the students are over 18 years old. At this age they may have left their parental home and they may be living away from home for the first time and they may still be adolescents. Bramley (1977:5) commented that ‘late adolescence’ refers to the age group of roughly 17-25 and in our liberal society during this period young people are expected to grow to



full independence in all aspects of their life. They will have previously been a large fish in a small pond at school, they are now a very small fish in a frighteningly large pond. Jacques (1992) reported that students who come to see personal tutors or counsellors with what appears to be psychiatric symptoms, that is, feeling isolated or lonely can be viewed as casualties of the institution. Bramley (1977:14) supports Jacques by saying that many students are labelled 'depressed', 'withdrawn' with a loss of 'motivation' that can be seen as social, personal and interpersonal deprivation. Jacques (1992) went on to outline the four key elements which constitute personal tutoring; They are:

- To be a friendly parent to students who feel lost in the comparative anonymity of higher education
- To act as an agent at the interface between the personal and the academic
- To keep a watchful brief on problems that the students are likely to encounter
- To support and facilitate the students in progress through the stages of personal development.

Leicester University (1995) conducted a survey called " A psychological Health Project" which showed that the most important source of help and advice for students is their friends and family, closely followed by their personal tutor. As a

result of the survey, Leicester University states: “ it is not *in loco parentis in relation to its students* , but it does have an *important duty of care*”.

Recently, the Guardian ‘Education Supplement’ Tuesday, January 8, 2002, published an article entitled: “ Nobody’s Children”. It stated that the UKCOSA, Council for International Education is developing practice guidelines in relation to institution ‘s duty of care towards students on overseas placements. In line with this, many academics have seen a growing diversity of students in HE. Many of them are overseas students, UK students are often mature entrants, part-timers and women students (Dearing, 1997:5). This diversity within the student population and its increased numbers means tutoring is acknowledged as an important aspect of the student’s education, and this is underlined by the *Charter for Higher Education (DfEE, 1993)*. The charter explains the standards of service students, employers, and the general public should expect from Universities and colleges. On personal tutoring, it suggests that students should receive well-informed guidance from tutors and career staff and appropriate access to counsellors.

## **2.5 The important role of the Personal Tutor**

With the government’s intention to expand the number of students entering university from any background this means that there is a real need to have a good support system for each and every student, it is not an optional service but an essential component of education. Wheeler and Birtle (1993:3) on the question of

“why do students need personal tutors?” outlined the necessity of the personal tutoring system by stating:

*“the purpose of having a personal tutoring system is primarily to provide an anchor on which the support system of the university rests. The personal tutor is needed by all students, including those who enjoy a relatively straightforward passage through university. The existence of this system in itself may reduce student anxiety. Personal tutors also provide assistance for students in need, an important aspect of this work is attention to academic work when difficulties are experienced. There is also a welfare component and students may seek advice on a wide range of matters including housing, finance, emotional and relationship problems.”* (Wheeler and Birtle 1993:3)

Wheeler’s and Birtle’s writings were on the general aspect of personal tutoring in HE and they did not state if they had researched the subject.

The term “personal tutor” was likened to a course tutor by Wheeler et al (1993) and a more specific definition is a tutor to whom students can go with their personal ‘problems’ as well as their academic ‘problems’. Students’ personal problems were: financial, family relationship issues, homelessness, drug or alcohol abuse, lack of experience in dealing with some issues in relation to work and study, health issues and sexual identity problems. Academic problems were scholarly difficulties, such as anxiety when required to write a project or examination worries.

The Coombe Report argued that the personal tutor is a key figure in the institution who has to deal with a wide range of student problems. S/he is expected to deal competently with student problems of an academic and personal nature and there is rarely a defined job description to assist the tutors in their role. The tutors have received little or no training in the skills necessary to assist students with the variety

of problems they present. Civil (1991) concluded that the term “support counselling or developmental counselling” would best fit the role of personal tutor. She also advocated that in financial terms it would be well worth spending money on support systems to prevent students from dropping out.

## **2.6 The Current Context of Student Support**

Students are seen as “consumers” of education. Jones et al (1997) argued that the idea of a student as a consumer stems in part from the pressures on institutions to meet recruitment targets in order to avoid losing resources. They added that consumerism has been encouraged and codified in the *National Charter for Further Education* (DfE, 1993a) and (DfE, 1993b). They assert that students learn more effectively when good support systems are there to help them cope with the transition between the academic world and their previous experiences.

The further Education Unit (1993) found that 79% of further education colleges have a counselling service on site. The UK HEQC’s guidelines (1995) state that institutions are responsible for ‘supporting and co-operating with student-led organisations and services providing support, information and practical services to learners’ (Jones et al, 1997:44). The personal tutor is part of the network of student support services within a university. Wheeler et al (1993) point to the fact that the role varies between universities. It is dependent on a number of factors, for example, on the nature and breadth of the student support services within the institution. This is reflected by the degree of commitment a specific university has in relation to

student welfare. Some universities place student welfare as a high priority with the department which caters for the students being staffed by a student counselling service, accommodation and welfare officers, medical and nursing personnel, chaplain and their equivalent from a variety of religious denominations and a career advice centre (Wheeler et al, 1993:5).

Wheeler et al (1993:15) report that universities which place student welfare as a low priority may find personal tutors working in isolation with the sole responsibility for the welfare of students. They argue that in such a setting the role and expectations placed on tutors is more demanding and the personal tutors are often acting in a number of roles such as academic adviser, friend, confidante, de facto parent, advocate and counsellor. They go on to describe what a personal tutor is and what the responsibilities are. They state that the role of the personal tutor is:

- To facilitate the personal development of their tutees.
- To monitor the progress of their tutees.
- To provide a link between the student and the university authorities.
- To be the responsible adult within the organisation, in whom the student can confide.

- To intervene with the university authorities on behalf of their tutees.

The personal tutor role has been modelled on that of the Oxbridge colleges where a member of staff is assigned to each student in the capacity of moral tutor and has a responsibility *in loco parentis*. S/he provides ‘parental’ guidance to young people living away from home. (Wheeler et al 1993) further stated that the model of education and the pastoral care system of Oxford and Cambridge Universities have had an historically significant influence on other higher education institutions throughout Britain.

In the current, economic climate, “parental guidance fast becomes a thing of the past”. The Oxbridge tutorial system where individual’s learning was shaped and managed through regular one to one dialogue was effective but it is impossible to sustain this arrangement in this modern era. The support provided at Oxbridge can be viewed as a ‘Pastoral’ or ‘Mentoring’ model of personal tutoring.

### **2.6:1 Alternative forms of student’s support**

Students are supported in clinical practice areas by mentors or preceptors. A mentor is seen as a protégé, a friend, a supporter and a facilitator. The mentorship is usually a long-term relationship that has been applied in modern use within the contexts of both an apprenticeship and the business world (Cerinus and Ferguson, 1993).

Mentoring is defined by some writers as the giving of support, assistance and guidance to a student in learning new skills, adopting new behaviours and acquiring new attitudes. So, a mentor is considered someone who is appropriately qualified and to whom a student can turn for advice and guidance about their learning and development.

A preceptor is a transmitter of precepts or principles governing conduct, actions or procedures to one or more understudies (Bowles, 1995). Preceptorship focuses on individualised teaching and learning, role modelling, the acquisition of knowledge and skills and is a relationship of short duration (Cerinus and Ferguson, 1993)

Mentors and preceptors are practitioners who play a part in helping students learning in the clinical practice settings. They provide nursing students with guidance during their clinical education experiences.

However, confusion continues to exist about the concept of preceptorship and its relationship to supervision and mentorship (Chief Nursing Officer, 1998). Arguably, they are involved in supporting the student nurses in one way or the other.

Phillips (1994) argued that the terms 'mentor', 'preceptor' and 'supervisor' confuse the teacher's role as they all fulfil a pastoral function. She went on to say that a teacher may be a supervisor, mentor and personal tutor to the same student at any one time. Some authors have drawn a distinction between 'mentor' and 'preceptor'

in the manner of Armitage and Burnard (1991); mentorship being seen as a broader, longer-term relationship aimed at guiding the student towards an established place in a profession (Zwolski, 1982) while the emphasis with preceptorship remains on individualised teaching and support.

Phillips (1994) suggested that there are many similarities between the role of academic supervisor and the personal tutor. A supervisor is a teacher who is assigned to a student undertaking a research project. However, it is appropriate to say that there is a maze of descriptions and definitions of titles given to teachers in various supportive situations and that they all have considerable similarity and overlap in the functions that mentors/preceptors/supervisors/personal tutors perform. Critically, one could counter argue that the personal tutor – student relationship is formalised in the sense that it is a teaching/learning strategy initiated and implemented from the curriculum in the same way as that of an academic supervisor. The relationship is formal in nature where each student /personal tutor is allowed to negotiate the parameters of the partnership which best suits the individuals needs. Essentially the relationship is ‘academic’ with an element of pastoral care in the form of friendship and support. All of which are desirable if an individual learner is to realise her/his full potential as an adult learner within an overall framework of anthology, which facilitates student-centred learning.



## 2.6:2 Models of personal tutoring

Earwaker (1992) outlined three approaches to personal tutoring. These are pastoral, professional and curriculum.

- The ‘pastoral’ approach is the Oxbridge Model where a member of the teaching staff is described as a moral tutor and traditionally gives guidance on personal and moral issues as well as academic support ( Wheeler and Birtle, 1993:15). This has also been discussed in the above.
- The ‘professional’ model is that on approaching staff, all students will be referred immediately to professional counsellors, welfare rights workers or housing officers.
- The ‘Curriculum Model’ which has an emphasis on the curriculum itself and attempts to provide support through the courses which students follow (Earwaker, 1992) said that the curriculum model stems from the University of South Carolina when it presented the Freshman Seminar and was later known as University 101. University 101 aimed to introduce students to the institution, show them what was expected of them, help them towards a better understanding of their own learning processes, act as a mutual support group and, when necessary, how to seek expert help and advice (Earwaker, 1992:116).

However, there is no reported definitive model or approach exclusively used in any university. They may all claim to have a model but on the whole it is up to the individual lecturers to identify the model they will adopt. Some may use a single

model or a combination of the three models depending on what is seen as acceptable by the student and by the personal tutor.

## **2.7 The Personal Tutor Role as specific to Nurse Education**

An exploration of the personal tutor's approach to personal tutoring student nurses forms the main focus of this research study. Since the introduction of Project 2000 by the UKCC in 1986, which led to the move from the Schools of Nursing being closely linked to the local hospital to being part of HEI there has been major changes in Nurse Education. For example the academic level of pre-registration changed from being 80% clinical practice and 20 academic to 50% academic and 50% clinical. It required students to be supported in their academic progression to become knowledgeable and competent practitioners (UKCC,1986). The move also led to the modularisation of the Nursing programmes to provide students with a sound theory and knowledge base, research awareness and communication skills. Great emphasis is placed on what a nurse does and how s/he does the caring role.

Virginia Henderson's (1966:15) classic definition established the nurse's function as being concerned with the individual at the interpersonal level and she wrote:

*"the unique function of the nurse is to assist the individual, sick or well, in the performance of those activities contributing to health, or its recovery (or to a peaceful death) that he would perform unaided if he had the necessary strength, will or knowledge."*

In the nurse-patient relationship, the nurse and patient work together to enhance a sense of belonging, social connection, health and wellness. Similarly, in a teacher-

student relationship, the students of nursing are helped to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes to effectively function in the nurse-patient relationship. Nursing knowledge is embedded in clinical practice (Benner, 1984). Supporting student nurses is also dependent on the tutor-tutee interactional relationship.

In the Nurse Education setting, a combined model of all the three approaches identified by Earwaker (1992) are used to support the nursing students. As consumers of education there is a need to explore the effectiveness and quality of the support systems currently in place for Nursing students.

Considerable interest has been shown in monitoring student nurses attrition rates, both in the nursing and public press due to recent concerns about recruitment and retention of qualified nurses throughout the UK. The Royal College of Nursing, (1998), Council of Deans and Heads (1998) felt that there is a need to investigate the causes of students' drop out rates which is also related to the wider politically based issue of accountability within public services. This particular area has not been researched, other than what the consequences are. In financial terms given that the cost of educating one student nurse has been estimated to be £35,000 (National Assembly for Wales, 2000), Coakley (1999) used a focus group and teacher interviews to identify possible barriers to completion and the factors that are perceived to be important in overcoming these barriers. She reported that pre-course career advice and information were inadequate, and selection procedures needed modification. The role of the college tutor was reported to have a strong influence on

the student experience, for example a successful relationship was valuable in 'getting them through bad times'. Conversely, other students felt unsupported at times when they most needed help.

A personal tutor system to provide support to students became a compulsory requirement for the Nursing Education Institutions. This was advocated by the ENB (1998) but it did not set clear guidelines on how the personal tutor system should be operationalised and different systems are used in different organisations and even within organisation (Richardson, 1998). However, it should be noted that nursing lecturers work as autonomous practitioners and are never held to account in terms of how they support their students. It means that there is no on-going monitoring of the effectiveness of the provision of personal tutoring.

### **2.7:1 Previous research into the personal tutor role**

Richardson (1998) used documentary analysis and reflective student interviews to investigate the nature of the role of the personal tutor. She reported uncertainties and confusion about the role and advises that misunderstandings exist through the taking for granted of apparently shared concepts between lecturers and students. She also found that there were many individuals who are currently responsible for providing student support. Namely, they are personal tutors, students counsellors, module leaders and course leaders. In accepting the above from my personal experience, when students did not feel supported they often came to seek help from me and as a result of which, as a Course Director/course leader for the pre-registration

programme I felt that there was a need for me to investigate the student support systems. As a Course Leader I became quite concerned by the fact that students feel dissatisfied to the point that they came to not only voice their concerns but also request a change of personal tutor. It led me to set up this study to explore the personal tutoring encounters and what were students' expectations.

Education systems that do not prepare individuals to play predictable roles like cogs in a machine will not benefit society (McNair, 1996). Rather than helping people to fit into predetermined slots, the education system is promoting individuals to help them to interact with the changing environment without providing them with the tools to assist them because they are expected to be adult learners and be self-directed.

Aware of the changing system of education, DfEE commissioned staff from seven Higher Education Institutions to review the "Guidance and Learner Autonomy" (GALA) programme in 1996. McNair was one of the staff participating in the DfEE project. He claimed that the last twenty years have given rise, throughout the developed world to a more complex, individualised and volatile society and economy. In Higher Education, most individuals are expected to be more self-sufficient and are required to manage their lives with less support from the state and public institutions. There is a call for life-long learning, which is becoming the norm and institutions are offering a more complex range of opportunities to a larger student body. *"The student body is itself becoming more diverse, in age, experience,*

*motivation and learning need*” (McNair, 1996:8). This brings with it the concern regarding how will academics enable students to become life-long learners, do more for themselves, learn as well (or better) with less, or different and still gain support from increasingly scarce numbers of academic staff.

The GALA programme argued that the development of autonomous individuals is a key objective of higher education and guidance helps to achieve this. It went on to say that it is normal and proper for all learners in higher education (both students and staff) to need guidance from time to time, to help them to find ways of learning in order to meet the challenges of change (McNair,1996:9).

Guidance has many interpretations. It could include the activities of listening, advising, informing, assessing, counselling, advocating, tutorials and enabling students to achieve their goals in education. The Dearing Inquiry (1997) states that the arrangements for student support should be fair and transparent and HEQC published a quality framework for guidance and learner support demanding that there are overt systems for ensuring the quality of support provision within HE Institutions.

It is reasonable and of significant value to have a policy framework to enable an institution to establish threshold standards to avoid significant differences in student experiences. Flexible policies are needed to allow for differences in student bodies, in modes of study, in cultures associated with various disciplines and professions,

and in the skills and preferences of staff and students (Tallantyre 1996:72). Nowadays, student bodies are more diverse, 50% are now over 21 years old and their needs differ to those of 18 years old. Mature students have a complex range of concerns on how to fit their study into their personal circumstances, e.g. work, childcare, marital stress, dependent relatives, finance, health etc.

Tallantyre (1996:74) reports Earwaker (1992) as saying the personal tutorial system was designed primarily with the 18-year old school leaver in mind and that,

*“ There are issues that might be raised about the appropriateness of this model in a situation where the student is an adult, has long since become independent of his or her parents and has in many cases more experience of life than the tutor ”.*

Tallantyre from the University of Northumbria in Newcastle reported Bangor's Tutorial Scheme Review which found that “mature students are likely to spend longer with tutors, and to be more likely to discuss personal matters”. Additionally, there are an increasing numbers of overseas students in the UK HE system. They bring with them a complex range of needs, and moreover, cannot be treated as a homogenous group but demonstrate vast cultural diversity. They have some typical needs which include ‘meet and greet’ services, sensitive and secure accommodation provision, additional language support, guidance and availability of familiar food supplies or relevant places of worship and support with the, study approaches used in UK HE (Tallantyre, 1996:76). She went on to suggest that one of the key responsibilities of guidance and support systems are to exercise a special vigilance to avoid racism on the campus. She reported that male and female students often experience different issues in their personal lives and study circumstances associated

with their gender. Bangor's research established that "of female students with male tutors, 43% felt able to discuss personal matters, whereas for female students with female tutors 75% felt able to do so".

## **2.8 Personal tutors' perceptions of their role**

The English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting stress that the role of personal tutor is central to the achievement of learning outcomes in nurse education programmes (ENB, 1997). Bramley (1977) suggests personal tutoring should be primarily about teaching and the providing of a supportive and stimulating environment. In the nurse education context the term personal tutor means a lecturer who is assigned responsibility for the student throughout the entire undergraduate nursing course.

A nurse lecturer is:

*" ... a teacher who has been assigned the responsibility of guiding a student, or group of students towards meeting objectives. These objectives may be formal as indicated by the course curriculum, but also more subtle and personal to assist each student to maximise personal potential..."* (Phillips, 1994:217)

Phillips went on to add the three key elements within the role of the personal tutor are teaching, counselling and supporting. She also suggests that the personal tutor acts as a facilitator, advisor, critic, friend and examiner.

In 1992 (Dobinson), I conducted a small scale research study into "Nurse Teacher's Perception of the Personal Tutor Role" and reported that lecturers were spending an average of 4 hours per week on counselling students. This finding was also



supported by Crotty and Butterworth (1992) and Callego et al (1990) who documented that teachers were spending 2.8 hours per week on counselling students. Dobinson argued that tutors were indeed spending a high proportion of their working time on the provision of pastoral care to their tutees. For example one tutor spent an average of 3-4 hours per week in providing support to tutees who had emotional problems and difficulties. Often these tutors said they were adopting a 'quasi-counsellor' role, as they had not received any training in counselling skills, but they had to support the tutees with emotional support when they were in a distressed state. The tutors who were from a General Nurse background were often overwhelmed by the problems that the students presented. However, those tutors who had a Mental Health Nurse training and qualification said they were equipped to deal with the pastoral nature of the personal tutor role but they did not welcome the idea that they had to act as counsellors to the tutees. The report concluded the justification, that in terms of cost and benefit analysis, the school of nursing should appoint trained counsellors to support students who were experiencing personal problems.

The small-scale phenomenological study from my Masters Degree dissertation had maintained my interest in taking forward a more in-depth study to find out the approaches that tutors adopt when providing support and guidance on a broad range of students' personal, clinical and academic issues. From my tape transcripts it became evident some lecturers were in a way acting as "do-it-yourself, quasi-counsellors" and Bramley (1977) had also stated a similar conclusion in her

monograph on personal tutoring in Higher Education. The tutors were therefore offering counselling, even though it is better when it is provided by trained counsellors because their relationship with the students is not complicated, unlike theirs. However, they had no choice but to provide pastoral support to a number of students even though they have no training in counselling. This was due to the enormity and complexity of the personal problems that the tutees were bringing to the tutors.

The advantage in having trained counsellors can be enormous as they can develop the individual nurses' strengths and self-esteem by encouraging them not to internalise the difficulties of their work or study or to blame themselves entirely when things go wrong. Nurse lecturers are not in a position to do this because of the conflicting roles such as being an 'examiner/assessor', and, an academic and pastoral supporter for the students.

Dobinson (1992) also found that some nurse lecturers said they felt they had to show a "good, caring and nurturing approach", that is to treat tutees in the way they would treat patients, with kindness, respect and dignity and to listen to them. They stated that they have been nurses and are now nurse lecturers; therefore they have to be good role models to their tutees. Her participants, the tutors, felt they are expected to be "good carers and lecturers" to their tutees, in the same way as when they worked as clinical nurses. They felt they were expected to be "good carers", good

communicators, record-keepers, spiritual guides, skilled technicians and counsellors, which often caused them to experience a role conflict.

Counselling and communication are issues that concern both, the nurse, as a person and, the nurse, as a worker. These two aspects of the nurses experience are often viewed and treated separately, even though they are interdependent and influenced by each other and extremely important. The nurse tutors are important points of contact in students' lives and can provide warmth, encouragement, sympathy and support. Savage (1986) says the tutors' role should not be confused with that of a trained counsellor, whose relationship with the students is not complicated by hierarchical or disciplinary power. The personal tutor role is conflicting because personal tutors have the responsibility to provide support and guidance to the students and at the same time they also monitor or police the students' academic and clinical development. If there is some cause for concern in terms of professional behaviour s/he may even have to initiate the disciplinary process. It is indeed difficult to institute disciplinary action against a tutee when one knows s/he is affected by personal or academic problems.

Quinn (1998) defines a personal tutor system as one in which a student nurse is assigned to specific teaching staff. He identifies the personal tutor's role as: informing and advising, encouraging and supporting, monitoring and coaching, disciplining and representing, negotiating, record-keeping, referencing and counselling. The ENB, Bramley and Quinn (1998) see the personal tutor role as an

essential component of the education process for nursing. However, the current context of Nurse Education has a personal tutoring system that does not now follow the Oxbridge or any other model, in order to guide the personal tutor when providing one to one personal support and guidance.

### **2.8:1 No clear guidelines on how to support the students who leave**

The Schools of Nursing have no clear guidelines on how the personal tutoring system should be operationalised, each individual tutor operates a system when supporting their tutees. For example at a major London University many lecturers are currently responsible for supporting the students. These include Course Leaders, Module Leaders, personal tutors, Welfare Adviser, Counsellors, mentors and preceptors. This may be seen as quite confusing as there is no clear indication about who are ultimately responsible for students' guidance and support.

When Nurse Lecturers are assigned the role of personal tutor there appears to be no set criteria used in assigning the personal tutors to the students (see Appendix 3). On occasions an imbalance in the student's diversity and ability occurs. Lecturer(s) may get a cohort of 10 overseas students on top of existing numbers, which could be about 15-20 students, pre and post-registration. All the lecturers have a responsibility for the students throughout the entire course.

Teacher's facilitation of learning is an essential component for the students' experience. Nurse lecturers also work as the link teachers and mentors and they aim to facilitate the students' learning in clinical practice. Napthine (1996:623) states:

*“ the quality of nursing education is dependent upon the quality of a student's clinical experience. Clinical placement experience is central to the development of nursing practical skills”.*

Nurse lecturers act as facilitators. They offer support to mentors, particularly where there may be a lack of knowledge surrounding the curriculum or students' practical assessments. Corlett (2000) reported that there exists a perceived lack of communication, relationship building and information exchange between institutions and clinical areas. Preceptors and mentors said they received limited information about students' courses, their stage of training and the theory students received prior to their placements.

Link teachers work in collaboration with all clinical staff and support them when they are involved in facilitating the students' learning. Their role overlaps between the university and the clinical practice.

## 2.8:2 Overlapping of role

White (1995) reported the varied roles that practitioners played in helping student learning. She reported that roles were not ‘uniformly understood’ nor ‘tidily enacted’ and summarised them as:

*“assessors did more than assess; some supervised. Supervisors did more than supervise; some assessed; others mentored. Mentors not only mentored; some supervised; yet others assessed.....a semantic maelstrom (p108-109).*

But she did not comment on what the link teacher or personal tutor did. This led me to explore the theories of learning.

## 2.9 Theories of Learning

Barrow and Woods (1988:8) cite Peters to have asserted that the “word” education has “normative implications”, it has a criterion built into [it] that something worth while should be achieved”. They went on to quote:

*“it implies that something worth while is being or has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner” (Barrow and Woods, 1988:8)*

The word “educare” or “edu-care” is derived from the Latin word to mean “lead out”. Hence it is said that a teacher leads out or brings about a change in an individual’s behaviour and attitude. Barrow and Woods (1988:100) likened the teacher to a gardener tending a plant, rather than a craftmans making a product. He encourages the natural flowering or development of the individual, rather than attempting to mould him.

There are theories of learning and theories of teaching. While theories of learning deal with the ways in which an organism learns, theories of teaching deals with the ways in which a person influences an organism to learn (Gagné, 1972:56). Knowles (1990:66) went on to add that the learning theory subscribed to by the teacher will influence her/his theory of teaching. On nursing education McFarland and McFarlane (1989:549) added that the ability of the nurse to identify and help correct a knowledge deficit is heavily influenced by her or his understanding of teaching and learning theories. It is therefore, reasonable to assume in the case of personal tutoring that it is a tutor who provides academic, pastoral and clinical support that will greatly influence the learner.

### **2.9:1 Behavioural Theories of Learning**

There are several ways to explain how people learn and many theories have been proposed. For brevity, these are summarised under broad categories of behavioural conditioning and cognitive theories. Those related to conditioning are based on associations between an organism receiving a stimulus and producing a response. The well-known theory of classical conditioning described by Pavlov who was interested in digestion rather than education when he conducted laboratory-based experiments which showed that dogs salivated in response to food; and that this was an innate response, as the dogs were not trained to do this (Jarvis et al, 2003). Pavlov found that if he rang a bell before the dogs received food he could train them to salivate when they heard the bell even in the absence of food.

### **2.9:2 Classical conditions of learning**

Theorists who studied animals' and humans' behaviours in learning were: Pavlov (1849-1936), Watson (1878-1958) and Thorndike (1874-1949) who showed how animals learnt and behaved in a laboratory settings. They applied their findings to human ways of learning. However, they did not take into consideration individual's or human feelings when applying their 'animal' learning' to how an individual may feel when s/he is learning. It was very much an 'instrumental approach' and they put forward the 'stimulus- response' concept. They suggested that the higher the stimulus, the more responses you would get. The frequency of stimulus will correspond with the responses. Children will continue to work harder when they get more praise from parents or teachers but if they are criticised or shouted at, the less likely they will be to want to learn. When a problem is presented to animals or people they use a ' trial and error' method to solve the problem.

Lovell (1980) said that while classical conditioning is a simple type of learning it plays an important role in the acquisition of emotions. Thus, it could be argued that if a tutee experiences anxiety as a result of being rebuked or "belittled" then this student may become reluctant to seek support from the personal tutor who had previously dealt with her/him.

A further expansion of the conditioning theory of learning is "operant" conditioning, a behavioural form of learning formulated by Skinner where training could be



extended to get an animal to operate a lever in order to receive a reward, usually food.

Skinner (1904-1990) was another theorist who proposed a programmed learning method by putting forward the '*operant conditioning*' concept. An example of operant behaviour in an experimental condition is exemplified when a rat operates a lever to obtain food pellets that act as a reward, this (the pellets) then become the '*reinforcement*'. The obtaining of food pellets is categorised as 'positive reinforcement' if however, an electric current is applied each time the rat touches the lever and therefore, feels an electric shock, the rat will cease to press the lever. This is then classed as negative reinforcement. Skinner's theory has been applied in computer-assisted learning. Some of Skinner's propositions can be applied to learner nurses.

For example, learning processes must be short and should grow out of previous learned behaviour, that is learning simple procedures such as taking and recording a patient's blood pressure then moving on to more complex tasks or procedures, for example measuring the haemodynamic status of patients with a central venous pressure monitoring device. Learning that is rewarded by the teacher and acknowledges the student's effort. The learner could then be given an opportunity to discriminate the most likely path to her/his success. Learners will value 'good' constructive feedback or good grades in an exam that shows they have achieved a

good understanding of the subject being examined. Gagné (1975) further expanded the behaviourist approach to learning by advocating a teacher-centred approach.

Gagné suggests that the learner has the capabilities that are internal to them but the stimulation is outside them, such as the teacher's input.

The provision of positive or negative reinforcement is a useful component of learning. Positive reinforcement involves giving a reward following a particular response. In the case of the tutee and tutor relationship, it can be argued that the most frequent form of positive reinforcement is praising the tutee for her/his hard work in achieving the learning goal or outcome. A negative reinforcement can be viewed as withdrawing support or being unapproachable. Both positive and negative reinforcement increases the likelihood of a behaviour occurring. Trial and error (Thorndike, 1949) and Law of Effect is another form of operant conditioning which emphasises the importance of some form of reward in acknowledgment of learning (Lovell, 1980).

### **2.9:3 Cognitive Theories of learning**

Other theories of learning are more complex forms. They are known as cognitive theories of learning. According to Ogier (1989:117) "cognition is a term given to the mental processes such as thinking, problem-solving, remembering and perceiving". This form of learning is known as 'Gestalt' to mean that one experiences something and one attempts to make sense of the event in whole (or gestalt) terms, by looking

for the overall structure or patterns which link things together and by comparing the new experiences with other existing thought structures. Assimilation theory was proposed by Ausubel (1969) who put forward the notion of the interactive role that existing cognitive structures play in the process of learning.

The behaviourist approach was not discarded but 'bits and pieces' of behaviour were teased out to demonstrate how learning and teaching fit together. Studies into children's cognitive development elaborated how learning occurs. Bruner (1966) disputed Skinner's theory by saying that cognitive development was not considered adequately and he sees learning not merely as a passive unit of behaviour that is elicited by a stimulus, either strengthened or weakened by a reinforcement, but it is an active process in which the learner is actively involved. Bruner said that at first the learner acquires information, transforms and manipulates the information into a suitable form for dealing with the task in hand and then tests the adequacy of the information that s/he has received. Therefore, the learner achieves transformation by codifying and classifying incomplete information (Fontana, 1995).

For an adult to learn s/he will employ three modes to 'transform'. These are the '*enactive*', the '*iconic*' and the '*symbolic*' modes (Bruner,1965). The '*enactive*' mode is the 'doing' through action, for example, a motor skill such as learning how to record a patient's blood pressure, the student observes how the teacher takes a blood pressure reading and then s/he re-enacts the skill. The '*iconic*' mode is the use of imagery, it is the visual and other sensory experiences, for example the '*lub-dup*

*sounds*' heard upon placing the stethoscope on the brachial artery to listen to the heartbeat. This represents the concept and the '*symbolic*' goes further than in the imagery stage, the learner employs representation, language, thought, learns abstract skills and engages in reflective skills. Bruner and Aglin (1973) suggest that we should consider three important variables when planning to teach. They are '*the nature of the learner*', '*the nature of knowledge*' and the '*nature of the learning process*'.

### **2.9.3:1 Cognitive style of learning**

Cognitive processes involved in learning were developed within Gestalt Psychology. It suggested '*insight or intuitive learning*'. It is a perceptual approach to learning. Witkins (1962) had proposed the concept of '*field dependent*' and '*field independent*' by saying that people vary in their perceptual styles. For example '*field-dependent*' learners are better at cognitive tasks and they are more assertive and independent. '*Field independent*' learners may be unable to solve problems easily and become reliant on step- by- step instruction. Therefore, perceptual discrimination is seen to be more than just the sum of sensory experiences (Child, 2001:109). Child suggests that our interpretations are distorted by the characteristic of our culture, that is we learn how to look at things and what to look at as an outcome of our cultural inheritance. However, if the contents or materials for learning were presented in an organised and clear manner, then there would be little room for ambiguity. Confusion would be reduced. The teacher can help the students to see relationships and how to organise their experiences into meaningful patterns.

It is suggested that learning can be assisted if one moves from the 'known to the unknown', that is, the organisation of the course of learning in meaningful units, the units themselves will relate to an overall concept or experience. Likewise a course curriculum is built around this 'Gestaltist' view of learning it involves the development of a trainee nurse who at the end of her/his training will be able to provide holistic care to a patient or client.

From this 'gestalt-orientated' approach, one considers the learner's mental ability and development. For example, can the learner organise or re-organise learning material in her/his inner world of concepts or memories? It is important to consider how an individual interprets the learning experience and makes sense of it. The cognitive approach sees an individual as an active agent in the learning process. 'Gestalt- oriented' teachers stress the meaningfulness and understanding that enables the learner to see how the parts must always be related to a whole. This will have meaning for the students. The relationship between the teacher and student is characterised by a 'give-and-take' relationship.

### **2.9:3.2 Argument on the cognitive development of the learner**

Paulo Freire (1972) considered teaching and the learning process as a dialogue in which the teachers are also learners and the learners teachers. Jarvis (1995:7) suggests that human beings are not passive recipients of their cultural heritage, they do not have it imprinted upon a '*tabula rasa type of mind*'. In fact, Paula Freire (1972) was the one who argued that the mind is not a blank slate (*tabula rasa*). The

mind receives information and processes it. An individual will select some elements of the knowledge, modify others and reject some of the information that was presented to her/him. The selected knowledge is further proactively processed in pursuit of values and ideas pertaining to the culture in which it was presented (Jarvis, 1995:9). As a consequence of this, it is often said that human beings are active participants in the learning process. Throughout their whole life they are learning and interacting with the environment, the nature of the relationship with the teacher and the culture of the society.

Society changes, it does not stay static, the culture changes too slightly, and human beings adapt to the change in the society. For example, previously nursing students gained most of their learning in the clinical setting as an apprentice would learn the trade of the job or task. Nowadays nursing is a highly skilled job, where theoretical knowledge has to be combined with practical skills before one can call oneself a professional nurse. This type of learning is classified as formal education.

John Dewey (1916:8) had classified formal education as being necessary if society was to transmit all its achievements from one generation to the subsequent generation. A similar concept was proposed by Emile Durkheim (1956) when he suggested that the adult generation influences those that are not ready for social life. At this juncture, it is necessary to point out that learning does not stop once the transmission of knowledge is stopped. In fact, it continues throughout adulthood. Piaget (1896- 1980) conducted research into children's cognitive development and

he said that children develop sophisticated patterns of thinking and analysing problems but these are based on their maturation and the type of interaction they have been exposed to. The concept, that is the idea that a child has about something for example an object or events are grouped together on the basis of what things have in common (Child, 2001:52). But this developmental process is greatly influenced by the biological maturation and the environment that is provided to the child. Thus, a child is seen as an active participant and s/he is greatly influenced by the environment and by the experiences that are presented to her/him. Then the child continues to seek information to continue to grow and develop. Jarvis (1995:9) also stated that human beings are lifelong learners and that they are also meaning seeking animals.

### **2.9:3.3 The intellectual development – how it develops from early childhood**

Although Piaget's theory contributed to the understanding of how a child learns, he had critics who partly disagreed with what he postulated, that is, a child's intellectual growth was as a manifestation of the child's unassisted activities (Wood, 1988:24). The Piagetian's model of learning sees a lone child struggling on her/his own to strike some equilibrium between assimilating the world that s/he can acquire knowledge alone and independently without any individual's social presence (Smith, 1996:110).

Bruner (1985:25) claimed that too often, human learning has been depicted in the paradigm of a lone organism pitted against nature. The learner is considered as a

‘solitary knower’. Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) also disputed the Piagetian’s view that there are psychological structures in the human mind that are essentially independent of context, task content and social factors. Vygotsky took the view that children’s abilities are built up in the interactions with the opportunities and guidance provided by the environment. He said that competent adults can help the child by guiding her or him repeatedly through the relevant behaviour, thus providing a ‘scaffolding’ within which the child can act as if competent and by doing so develop a strategy that is needed to reach a successful solution (Child, 2001:64). A central concept in Vygotsky’s social learning is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). It provides an explanation for how the child learns with the help of others.

Vygotsky suggests that ZPD is the distance between the child’s actual developmental level and his or her potential level of development under the guidance of expert adults or in collaboration with more competent peers. So, children learn from other people who are more knowledgeable than themselves. The expert’s intervention enables the child to learn but it must be within the child’s existing development level, it must provide a challenge; and still be comprehensible. The interaction between an individual child, the significant people in her immediate environment and her culture play a great part in learning. This interaction requires speech which Vygotsky came to view as a mediational tool or a mechanism for attaching meaning to an object. He defined two forms of speech, the ‘intrapersonal’ and the ‘interpersonal’. ‘Intrapersonal’ speech or internal speech, Vygotsky argued



promotes higher mental functions of problem framing and solving. By interpersonal speech, Vygotsky suggests that learners are able to meet personal needs through other objects or subjects. A cyclical chain of events seems to operate where there is a constant revisiting of actions and increasing use of comprehension. These are facilitated by 'intrapersonal' and 'interpersonal' speech. It starts at the intra-individual domain where the child learns, through the media, parents, teachers and peers the framework for making sense, s/he moves onto the socio-cultural domain, where there is co-ordinated peer action and interaction with teachers and she filters the cultural framework. But this interaction is defined by the culture and then through the interpersonal domain the child continues to experience concepts in practice and through the negotiation of meaning.

Even though, much of the writing on learning theories has been focussed on children's developmental and learning processes, the same could be said to operate in professional learning situations with adults.

#### **2.9:3.4 Learning in practice**

Workplace learning such as nursing depends very much on every day social interactions (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, Lave & Wenger, 1991). The student nurse may have acquired a great deal of 'formal' knowledge but when s/he is faced with the messiness of the task at hand such as when a child is sick, crying and vomiting, the student will rely on informal or tacit knowledge and coaching from an experienced nurse on how to cope with the sick child. It does not mean the student

nurse rejects all 'formal knowledge or thinking' but in that instance s/he has either learnt from other nurses or even her parents how to 'practically' cope with a tearful child who is unwell. Later on, once the child has calmed down, she considers the 'formal education' to ascertain what may be making the child sick. This professional action of the nurse is also dependent on her proximal zone of development (PZD), that is from a novice to an expert (Benner) (see Appendix 4 - Benner's framework) that is used for assessing student in clinical practice.

### **2.9:3.5 A planned process of action and outcome**

The learner embarks on the process of learning. First, s/he must have the motivation to learn. Ausubel (1969) outlined three components in achievement motivation. They are the '*cognitive drive*' which means that the learner is task-oriented, in a sense s/he is attempting to satisfy the need to know and understand the reward that in doing the task lies getting the task completed. For example, a learner nurse wants to be a nurse, s/he feels an inner drive to help an individual who is in need of health care and the act of caring for an individual brings its own satisfaction, reward or recognition. This feeling of status and prestige is what Ausubel considers to be the second component, it is the '*self-enhancement*', it is ego-centred and leads to a feeling of adequacy and increases one's self-esteem. Finally, there is the '*affiliation*' component, this is dependent on others' approval. For example, an individual nurse may use academic success as a means of recognition from tutors or parents on whom s/he depends for reassurance.

An adult reflects on incidents that may or may not have had an influence on her/him. Motivation plays a big part in how an adult learns. It could be '*intrinsic*' that is it comes from within an individual or '*extrinsic*' whereby an imposition is placed upon the person to learn ( Fontana, 1995). Intrinsic motivation is based on the inner needs to learn or explore new material. For example, an individual may come to school to acquire new knowledge or skills that s/he did not have before. The extrinsic drive would be to do with job prospects for promotion and more money. Money is the incentive.

Thorndike ( 1874- 1949) put forward the '*Thorndike's law of Effect*' which is similar to positive reinforcement proposed by Skinner, a behaviourist, that is, satisfaction or gratifying outcomes from a response are more likely for an action to be repeated. It means satisfaction reinforces the 'Stimulus- Response' bond and dissatisfaction does not extinguish the bond but makes the individual want to seek alternatives to the solution of the problem by a 'trial and error approach'.

A note to heed is that, adults and children differ. They employ different tactics to learn. For example, children may attach more significance on the rewards or incentive than learning, the motivational intrinsic will shift to extrinsic. Teachers in initial (primary) education are encouraged to offer some types of reward for doing well in class, such as awarding a gold sticker and so on, this then acts as an encouragement to the pupils to set themselves goals to achieve. Adults vary in their approach, they are more interested in the enjoyment of the 'task in hand',

participation in learning, knowledge of results or feedback and success, whether it is promotion or better job prospects. Thus, it can be said that the educational learning experience is a premeditated process (Jarvis, 1986) and the learner can evaluate the knowledge, skills and attitude gained from the experience.

### **2.9:3.6 The significance of learning theories**

As a result of that experience or process the learner shows cognitive and behavioural 'change'. Jarvis adds that the participants in an educational process have the opportunity to realise and develop their humanity through it, or else it is not education. Learning leads to a relatively persistent or permanent change in an individual. It suggests that learning changes an individual, the change occurs as a result of the learning experience and that her/his behaviour and, attitude have been changed also as a result of this experience thus s/he has acquired a new set of skills.

Behavioural and cognitive psychologists have argued that learning transforms an individual. It is necessary to say that not all learning manifests in a change, learning may have occurred but no obvious change is observed and no explicit behavioural change noted in an individual. It is not a physical development but a maturation process that may or may not transform an individual. For example, a person may have learned something but s/he does not give an indication that s/he has learnt something. I would categorise this as 'redundant' knowledge that I may use if I need to. Similarly, not all learning results in a change for an individual irrespective of what Hilgard and Atkinson (1967:270) said when they stated that learning is more or

less a permanent change in behaviour as a result of the experience. Acquisition of knowledge need not result in behavioural change.

#### **2.9:4 Theories of teaching**

Education is often thought of under the umbrella term of learning and teaching. Jarvis (1986:1) stated that if you asked someone what is education, people would respond and associate it with childhood. They will relate it as an activity that happens as a result of schooling. The term education is derived from the latin word '*educare*' to mean draw out (Jarvis, 1986). However, there is no further expansion to say 'draw what'. So education seems quite a difficult word to define. Jarvis preferred to use Stuart Mill's suggestion that education is found in a culture and each generation purposely passes it on to others. In a sense, it is a socio-cultural transmission of knowledge and skills. One such example is, in primitive times, cavemen and women passed on survival skills to their young. This type of learning still persists but is not wholly adequate to meet modern requirements. In modern times, adults teach the young a variety of skills, for example socialising skills, communication skills, writing skills, reading skills and so on. Heyes and Galef, (1996) state that the cultural transmission of knowledge enables an individual to save considerable time, energy and risk. It also enhances survival chances.

Emile Durkheim (1956) a French sociologist and educationist suggested that the adult generation has a powerful role to play and said that education is under the influence and exercise of the adults. They impart knowledge and skills to those who

are not yet ready for social life. It is an '*inter-generational process*'. At this juncture, a differentiation of cultural/social and imitative learning is needed. According to Tomasello, Kruger and Ratner (1993:496), cultural learning means that the learners do not just direct their attitudes to the location of another individual's activity, rather they attempt to see the situation in the way others see it; from inside the other's perspective, as it were. It means that the learners can qualitatively do things in a different way. They are able to learn not just from another person's action, but also through their own action (Tomasello et al, 1993). Furthermore, if one were to observe a person talking and there is an audience listening to that person, then the audience must comprehend what the 'talker' is saying, that is they, the audience must understand the significance or intentional meaning of the talk, for example, what it is for? What do we do with what is being said? (Tomasello, 1999) and Bailey (2002) say because people are human, from an early age they are able to understand others as living mental and intentional lives.

#### **2.9:4.1 Role Modelling**

Imitative learning proposed by Bandura (1986) is a form of modelling, for example children frequently imitate adults, peers or cartoon characters. It is based on the behaviourist approach to learning which has three assumptions: stimulus, person and response. People only demonstrate what they have learnt by imitation when they are motivated to do so and there are two kinds of learning- enactive and vicarious learning.

Enactive learning occurs by doing and then experiencing the consequences of one's action and vicarious learning is when a person observes another person or character such as a television character or a 'real' individual. Meltzoff (1996) suggests that there are three features of imitation in human infants. First infants are 'imitative generalists' that is they imitate a range of novel and arbitrary acts. Second, the imitation is intrinsically motivating for the young and finally the imitation is often bi-directional, that is parent and infant reciprocate and match each others behaviour but it is not 'mimicking'. Imitation is not a passive but an active form of learning. Bruner (1996:26) states that people are inter-subjective species par excellence, that is they have the ability to understand other people's minds.

(Jarvis, 1986:6) and Peters (1966) had further highlighted that education is not a term for example analogous to gardening, a particular activity in which one cultivates a piece of land, sows some seeds and watches them grow. It is much more than that. If education is taking place something must be happening in the person for them to come out as an educated woman or man. Therefore, education is associated with learning and teaching. Learning therefore, is a mental activity that cannot be observed to be happening. Likewise, the 'school of nursing' imparts knowledge and skills to nurse learners. The nurse teachers/lecturers are engaged in the process of assisting and delivering the learning to the students. It can then be said that education is about a process of learning and understanding knowledge, skill or attitude development that has as the end result a knowledgeable, skilful and caring nurse. Jarvis (1986:4) emphasised that learning occurs as a process. by a course of

actions that are provided by the teacher through a series of incidents; a method; an action of law and an outgrowth.

#### **2.9:4.2 Professional Education**

Jarvis (1986:20) defines the education of a profession . He says that the mere fact the practitioners of any occupation or craft ‘profess’ anything implies to mean they have status and a greater degree of knowledge. He identified Cogan’s (1953) suggestion that a profession is a vocation, whose practice is founded upon an understanding of a theoretical structure of some department of learning and science that is valuable to society (Jarvis, 1986:21). Nursing fits well with this definition. It has a professional and a vocational strand to it. Schumacher (1977) advocates that few occupations are performed ‘in vacuo’ and says that knowledge of how to relate to members of the role-set of professional practice is very important. It has a moral value embedded in the professional knowledge in order to undertake the professional practice. Skills are performed to demonstrate sound practice. The performance of skills such as nursing relies on the ‘doer’ or ‘performer’ having a certain degree of professional knowledge.

The skills or nursing procedures that are acceptable to the profession are prescribed by the Nursing organisation. In the case of nursing, it is practised under a code of practice outlined by the NMC. Before a student nurse can claim that s/he is a nurse, a set of competencies that relates to knowledge, skills and attitudes are assessed. Jarvis (1986:37) reports that competency shows an individual’s levels of ability that is considered to be at an acceptable standard and it varies from one training



establishment to another. Nonetheless, a professional competency is viewed as a level of professional practice that provides a service appropriate to the needs and wants of the clients.

Jarvis (1986:35) outlines the elements of professional competency to be:

- Knowledge and understanding of the academic discipline, the psychomotor elements of practice, the interpersonal relationships that are necessary and moral values that pertains to that field of practice.
- Skills to perform the psychomotor procedures such as giving a patient an injection and interaction with others, such as the patients, the multi-disciplinary team consisting of other nurses, doctors, dietician, physiotherapist and so on.
- The professional attitudes that are assessed on the knowledge of the profession. It shows an emotive commitment to the professionalism and willingness to perform or practice professionally, that is the health care professions practice to deliver care according to the professional code of conduct as stipulated by the NMC.

Eraut (1999) discusses three kinds of knowledge that make up professional expertise. These are propositional, process and tacit knowledge and he recommends that process knowledge be given high priority in both academic and practice settings but without neglecting the contribution of propositional and tacit knowledge to the process. This is essentially about knowledge of how to do things and how to get things done (Eraut, 1999:120) and they must relate to the wholeness of the practice

discipline. He further argues that there is an overemphasis on theory and a neglect of structures and opportunities for integrated practical experiences for students in spite of the frontloading of theory which is extremely inefficient (Eraut, 1999:12).

#### **2.9:4.3 Teaching requires a teacher to engage and communicate**

Smith (1996) suggests that teaching is not learning. It is the promotion of learning. Fenstermacher (1993) advocates that teaching is designed to enable learning to take place; but the quality of learning that actually occurs through teaching is quite another matter. It is dependent on communication - the mutuality of understanding and respect (Smith, 1996:118). Riseborough (1994) observes that good interpersonal relationships between students and a teacher results in increased motivation and confidence in the students. Furthermore, Marriot (1991) identified that a good interpersonal relationship between student and teacher was rated higher by students than any other teaching behaviour. Brown (1993) and Morgan & Knox (1987) demonstrated that students and teachers cannot expect ongoing respect: it has to be earned. This can happen in a variety of ways. Teaching is the imparting of knowledge or the facilitation of learning which many humanistic theorists had proposed is based on the 'facilitator' being helpful, understandable and approachable. Carl Rogers (1983:18) in his book 'Freedom to learn for the 80's' wrote a quote he borrowed from Martin Heidegger which says:

*"teaching is even more difficult than learning... and why is teaching more difficult than learning? Not because the teacher must have a larger store of*

*information, and have it ready. Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn”*

The primary task of the teacher is to permit the student to learn, to feed her or his own curiosity and learning how to learn is always of value. Rogers emphatically argued that the facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities in the personal relationship between the facilitator and the learner. The essential attitude is the realness or genuineness of the facilitator when entering into a relationship with the learner, without presenting a front or façade (Rogers, 1982:121).

#### **2.9:5 The processes that underpin the personal tutoring role**

For a theoretical explanation or discussion on the process of the personal tutoring role, I shall focus mainly on the course of actions and series of incidents that I consider to be pertinent in the understanding of how academic and pastoral support contribute to the learning and the development of a student nurse. The definition of education suggests that it is a planned series of incidents that have a humanistic basis and are directed towards the learner(s’) learning. An earlier review on the role of the personal tutor had shown that a ‘humanistic’ approach does indeed have an impact on the students’ learning. I introduced the ‘Rogerian’ perspective on education, in that he suggested that people have a need for ‘*positive regards*’. In other words, they all need to feel good about themselves. To feel this they are naturally dependent, to some extent on the reactions of other people to their actions or behaviours. Logically speaking, if one were to consider what Rogers says, then it is right to assume that people exist substantially with conditional positive regards.

They operate to a standard that they perceive to be either rightly or wrongly what other people wish them to achieve. These are known as ‘*conditions of worth*’, that can be observed in any nurse education setting. Learner nurses achieve academic standards, behave professionally and demonstrate certain attitudes of values when caring for a patient.

#### **2.9:5.1 Personal tutors’ facilitating style**

Rogers (1969) proposed a concept of ‘*student centred learning*’ as an approach that allows individuals to express themselves freely. The essential feature of ‘Rogerian’s’ approach is an emphasis on ‘doing’ rather than sitting down and learning. He refers ‘doing’ to mean the quality of student-teacher relationship. Rogers (1969) had summarised a collection of studies indicating that students actually learn more in classrooms when teachers are student orientated and empathetic. The components are empathic understanding, that is understanding the world as the student sees it, and positive regards which means respect for the student. The ‘*experiential learning*’ method of teaching outlined by Kolb (1984), suggested that individuals whose learning styles did not match the environment in which they were learning were less satisfied and felt more alienated than those whose styles matched the environment. Seldom, do teachers consider students’ styles when teaching them. Most teachers may be aware of the concept of learning styles, and they were probably introduced to them when they undertook a teaching course, but they do not use student’s learning styles to pace their teaching. Practically they do not apply or

ascertain a tutee's learning styles when they facilitate learning. Learning styles have been further investigated to understand how students learn.

Kolb (1984), an experiential learning theorist described learning as a cyclical event based on four types of competencies. They are:

- Feeling – this refers to concrete experience competencies. For example, a tutee meets her personal tutor for the first time. The two of them strike up a good rapport when they interact. That would be a concrete experience.
- Perceiving- this is a reflective observation competency. The tutee reflected on the meeting with the tutor and felt 'valued'. S/he felt that the tutor was interested in her/his development and was keen to sustain the motivation to learn and so on.
- Thinking- this is an abstract conceptualisation of competencies. The tutee is not embarrassed to tell the personal tutor that s/he has a 'mental block' and could not understand the assessment guidelines. She felt 'safe' that she would not be ridiculed.
- Behaving- this is the active experimentation competency. Here the tutee has a go at interpreting the assessment guideline, draws out a plan and gets it checked by the tutor.

De Young (1990:3) pointed out that students agree on the quality of a good teacher. It is based on their own individual style, goals and personal needs. She found that students emphasize the personal and social aspect of the teacher's behaviours rather than the intellectual characteristics. These were reported by Yamamoto and Dizney (1996). Therefore, an effective teacher is skilful in interpersonal relationships by demonstrating a personal interest in the students and by being sensitive to their feelings and problems.

This is very much an interactive process with the tutee, the environment and the tutor. The learner is not passive but active and so is the teacher.

#### **2.9:5.2 Students' learning style**

Laschinger (1990) reviewed Kolb's four learning competencies and suggested that there are some learners who possess concrete and reflective skills and they tend to be '*divergers*'. '*Divergers*' prefer concrete experiences as distinct from theoretical ones and they tend to be more person orientated. Then, there are those who are strong concrete experimenters and they are said to possess active experimentation skills, they are '*accommodators*'. '*Accommodators*' are better at carrying out practical plans and at the same time they will seek out new experiences. These individuals tend not to be particularly analytical but they may be more instinctive in their actions. Laschinger (1990) reported another group of individuals who are '*assimilators*'. They have highly developed abstract conceptualisation and reflective competencies, they tend to be better at forming concepts through experiences.

Finally, there are some who are '*convergers*', they have strong abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation skills and they tend to exhibit skill in problem solving.

It is important to remember that individuals have differing learning styles and these can be used effectively only if they have consented to be tested, in order that their needs for support can be offered and tailored to their needs. It would be unethical to match individuals' learning styles with that of the teacher when neither of them had consented to be tested. Still, tutors could consider students' learning styles when facilitating the students' learning.

### **2.9:5.3 Facilitation of learning and supporting style**

Child ( 1997:326)) reports that

*'learning style in education is important because it incorporates those human attributes which help to determine and characterise a person's approach to problem-solving'*.

From an anecdotal point of view, once again personal tutors do not encourage tutees to problem-solve. They in fact look for or suggest a course of action to the problem when the tutee comes to them for academic or pastoral support. Due to time constraint the tutors who have their own learning styles and who have acquired their individualised techniques for solving problems provide a solution to the tutees problem, rather than assisting them in a process of problem solving that would develop the tutees ability in this area, but unfortunately would take much longer to do. Thus, in the real or practical work-place no match can be made with tutors' and

tutees' styles. This exercise would prove to be an unworkable practice and would be indeed very time consuming on the part of the HEI. But it is worth noting that Child (1997:326) says: *'it's not only what you do, but it's the way you do it'*. He suggests that style is the manner of doing something. It is opposed to the manner in which a person is working. Style has to do with personality and motivation, as well as thinking tactics used for problem solving.

#### **2.9:5.4 Conclusion**

The literature review chapter has identified various theories of learning and teaching. They informed and clarified the role of personal tutoring by identifying some of the key attributes which contribute to effective teaching and learning. The attributes are self-awareness, good communication skills, credible professional standing, sound knowledge base and good interpersonal skills. It placed personal tutoring in the situated context of learning and teaching in order to provide academic, pastoral and clinical support to student nurses. Carl Rogers and Quinn (1986) highlighted the characteristics of teachers that promote students' learning. Cognitive and behavioural theories of learning have been discussed because personal tutoring cannot be removed from the context of learning and teaching. The literature has highlighted the key concept about how students learn and how teachers skilful interpersonal relationships and professional competence can be used effectively.



The next chapter will outline the assumptions and aims of the study into the processes of personal tutoring.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Focus of the Research: Aims, Purposes, Assumptions and Research Questions**

This chapter describes the focus of the research and discusses the aims, purposes and assumptions that underlie the way in which the study would be designed. It will outline the research questions that guided the research and the assumptions made by me to illuminate the experiences and encounters of the tutees and personal tutors when they engaged in the personal tutoring role. The purpose of the study is to provide and reveal the meanings of what it is like to be a tutee and a tutor.

#### **3.1 The Focus of the study**

The study considers the nature of the problem and the intentions of the research identified in chapter one and two. As a member of the academic team I fulfil the role of Course Director/Leader for pre-registration nursing students and play a full part in teaching, course planning, course leadership and administration and giving the students the tutorial support they need in order to complete the nursing programme of study. Course leaders often function as Course Tutors and Earwaker (1992) reported following a study based on semi-structured tape interviews that there were a number of Course tutors who were actually trying to act as the first person that the students should turn to. Some of them had more than 100 students and it took a large proportion of their time even when the problems were relatively trivial and quite frequently students brought problems that involved acute personal distress. This led me to question why if Higher Education has a personal tutorial system in place are

so many students not accessing their personal tutors? Why should Course tutors become overwhelmed by the demand to act as “rescuer for the students”? I made an assumption that for whatever reason some tutees were not being supported by their allocated personal tutor(s). It was an observation that needed to be explored into why some students do not access their assigned personal tutors.

### **3.2 My assumption of the tutor-tutee relationship**

The demands from nursing students who for unknown reasons frequently did not access their personal tutors but instead came to seek academic and pastoral support from me led me to assume that there may be a breakdown in the working relationship between the student and their tutor, and that the personal tutoring system is providing an inaccessible and inequitable service to some of the students.

Some lecturers feel quite “weighed down” (Earwaker, 1992) and some prefer to keep a professional and distant relationship from their tutees. Thus, it leaves someone else to meet the needs of the students and in my experience the course leader is acting as a ‘rescuer’ and a ‘sponge’ to the tutees problem. All lecturers experience a tension between teaching, examining and supporting students. This may result in an imbalance or a shift in the workload in order to provide students’ the support they require. Also when a support system is in place, it has to be fair, transparent and equitable.

### 3.2:1 An imbalance of workload and power

The students who turn to other lecturers instead of their allocated personal tutors create a tension and a role strain within many of the lecturers. Tutors feel that to possess some confidential information about a student imposes an intolerable burden (Earwaker, 1992). Students come to lecturers saying: *“I trust you but don't tell X or my personal tutor that I have been to see you”*. Occasionally, lecturers may find out some pieces of information that might have a bearing on the student's work and permission is not given by the student to disclose anything about the interaction that took place. Earwaker (1992) wrote on “Helping Students – different levels of disclosure”:

*“... there are many different ways in which the recipient of confidential information can handle it. One response is simply to say ‘my lips are sealed’. This is a form of secrecy which may be sometimes hard to maintain, i.e. even under close questioning from a trusted colleague the tutor will give away nothing – not even the fact that he or she is privy to some information which could conceivably shed light on the student's performance” (p74).*

Additionally, Earwaker went on to say that the attempt to operate like blotting paper, single-handedly soaking up other people's troubles, is misguided and even dangerous. Hence, I believe that the exploration of personal tutors and tutees' experiences and encounters will illuminate any role strain in terms of how the tutor's or tutee's relationship develops or whether anyone is caught “on the horns of a hopeless dilemma” (Earwaker, 1992:76).

Hastorf et al (1958) noted that social psychology had failed to provide an effective structure for the examination of interpersonal relationships, they encouraged researchers to make attempts to examine perceptual categories that are actually used

by, and thus relevant to, the participants under study. The study into the domain of teaching and learning might make more impact if at least two 'criteria of relevance' were met, and they urged firstly:

*“ a shift of focus from the “trait” approach to the study of how people categorise other people; to what are the relevant characteristics of other people? (Hastorf et al: 1958:282).*

Therefore, in order to study the qualities of the experience of tutees and tutors the verbal reporting of their experiences will elicit characteristics of good and “not so good” encounters on personal tutoring.

Hastorf et al (1958) had argued that studies of social perception should always have at the forefront of their consideration the relationship of the perceptual act to some aspect of the social behaviour of the perceiver. It is generally accepted that teachers and others involved in HE or schools spend a great deal of time observing, evaluating and acting upon indications drawn from the social behaviour of the students.

From the literature that I reviewed it appears that the impression of the student's personal traits occurs informally, tends to be taken for granted and there has been little examination of what is involved particularly in the area of the professional relationship between tutees and personal tutors. What professional attributes and expectation does each have of one another? Hargreaves (1975), Boud and Griffin (1988) and Oates (1994) advocate investigation of the perspectives of those actually involved in an education interaction. All the views and the nature of the problem

and intentions of the research will determine the formulation to the research aims, purposes, assumptions and questions to be examined.

### **3.3 The Formulation of the Research aims, Purposes and Assumptions**

As a Course Director for the pre-registration curriculum it seemed that Module tutors and personal tutors are experiencing an increased workload, they have made their own transition into HE and have to work in the context of HE. The student nurse/learners who must work and study at HE and clinical practice have to demonstrate learning to two 'masters', that is the personal tutors who monitor their progress in clinical practice and in the school, and to the mentors in the clinical practice who also assess them. Personal tutors assist the tutees to make the transition from HE to clinical practice since they are trained nurses and registered Nurse Tutors. Tutor and tutee are involved in a complex interaction process when they meet in a personal tutoring session.

Nursing has often been described as a vocation, it certainly demands effective learning, the development of attitudes and values. I believe that the personal tutor role is an important one to facilitate the tutee's growth and development in the field of nursing. As nursing training has acquired a different educational ethos, since the integration into HE, we (the tutors) do not know how personal tutoring is working in this context and there is a dearth of literature on the topic, for example how each participant experiences the role.

Therefore, an exploration of the learning support in a context of the transition would unfold the processes that are being experienced.

### **3.3:1 Research Aims and research questions**

The aims of the research are:

- To describe qualitatively the variations of the experience students and teachers' have about the personal tutoring context.
- To gain an understanding why some tutors provide more support to their tutees than others.
- To explore tutees' help seeking behaviour and their approach to learning.

#### Research Questions

- Do Personal Tutors and Tutees have a shared understanding of the phenomenon of support?
- Do Personal Tutors understand their tutees need for support?
- What aspects of the tutoring role present a challenge to personal tutors when supporting tutees?

- What is the nature of the relationship that tutees have with their personal tutors?
- What is the nature of the relationship that personal tutors have with their tutees?
- What makes one tutor better than another?

The overall objective of the study is to illuminate the nature of the personal tutoring role and its significant meaning within a Nurse Education context.

### **3.4 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the justification to undertake the study. I identified a range of issues. The issues relate to the educational process and can inform the practice of the personal tutoring system. It will focus on the support that is offered and should be offered to the students who may be vulnerable given their prior academic experience when they are expected to learn a new profession and to behave professionally. In some cases, they are away from home for the first time, and require academic, pastoral and clinical support from personal tutors. They have to study in a different environment and make sense of learning as there will be an expectation on them to develop transferable skills and become lifelong learners. The personal tutor interface is a key role in facilitating this learning. It is 'interpersonal' learning as found in those universities with a tradition of well



established tutoring systems such as Oxbridge. Now, in the context of a system of mass education, the personal tutor role has to be reconsidered. The research aims and questions are presented.

The following chapter will go on to discuss the research methodology that I will adopt in order to answer the research questions.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

This chapter comprises of four components. Firstly it aims to provide an explanation of the philosophy guiding the research. Secondly, an outline on the history of phenomenology, its philosophical standpoint and the Husserlian phenomenological conceptual framework used to add new knowledge to the role and experiences of personal tutors and their tutees, which will be discussed. Thirdly, the practical design of the research study population, sampling, data gathering and data analysis will be presented. Fourthly and in conclusion, the ethical dimension of the research to gain access and data collection and presentation will show that ethical principles were strictly adhered to.

#### **4.1 Approaches to Research**

The existence of a multitude of different research methods and strategies within social enquiry led me to explore several qualitative methodologies. The arguments for selecting qualitative rather than quantitative methods will be discussed briefly in this chapter. The appropriateness of the chosen method, that is ‘Husserlian’s phenomenology will be made on the basis of the theories and analysis of the different perspectives that I considered. Reflexivity on my research journey will also be exposed.

## **4.2 The research philosophy and the rationale for choosing a qualitative method**

I wish to explore the experiences of being a personal tutor and a personal tutee? In order to understand the reality of the experience, the ‘lived’ experiences, quantitative methods will not be considered within this study but will be discussed briefly later on. Instead, I chose ‘Phenomenology’ as my main philosophical framework, a qualitative research methodology to unravel the subjective and objective nature of the phenomenon, the personal tutoring process and the experiences. I used data triangulation such as the use of Focus Group interviews as a tool to assist me in the development of an interview guide and to enable me to conduct an adapted version of a pilot study before proceeding to an in-depth exploration. The objective was to explore personal tutees’ and tutors’ experiences of the personal tutor role and illuminate their perceptions and expectations.

The philosophical framework and the paradigm from which “ontology”- the nature of being (a personal tutee and tutor) and the best means of revealing the relationship and the “epistemology” how we come to have knowledge and understanding of that experience, will be stated in the discussion under Transcendental Phenomenology.

## **4.3 A qualitative research approach- phenomenology**

The term qualitative research has a general feature, in that it takes an holistic approach to questions – a recognition that human realities are complex (Munhall, 2001: 67) and it has an emphasis on understanding. One example of qualitative

methods is phenomenology. Oiler, (1986:99-102) states that the purpose of qualitative research is in regard to establishing a phenomenological baseline that would be a thorough description of the life-worlds of the people who have experienced a phenomenon. Phenomenology was first described as a study of “phenomena” or “things” by Immanuel Kant in 1764 after a reaction to the reductionist approach to science, which tended to explore factors in isolation and in an abstract fashion (Cohen, 1987). This is based upon the belief that the social world is actively constructed by human beings and we are constantly making sense of our environment.

**Table 4.3 Phenomenological perspectives**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Belief</b>
1 Phenomena (the support)	Objects and events as they appear assuming that there is a world, and that it is social in nature
2 Reality (the role of personal tutor)	This is assumed to be subjective and perspectival, reality is a matter of appearances
3 Subjectivity (the tutors and tutees)	Being in the world, the world becomes real through contact with it. Knowing shapes experience.
4 Truth (tutors'/tutees' experiences)	A composite of realities, access to realities is a matter of locating and using forms of expression, these give us access to a subject's reality.

Adapted from Oiler, (1982)

Phenomenology takes an holistic approach and it is a method rooted in investigating what is important to nursing, education and the social setting. It investigates subjective phenomena in the belief that essential truths about reality are grounded in lived experience (Spiegelberg, 1965, 1975). What is important is the experience as presented by the tutees and personal tutors. An holistic perspective and the study of the experience as lived will serve as a foundation for the phenomenological enquiry in this study.

Cohen (1987) reports that Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is the founding father of phenomenology. The starting point of it is with “things” themselves, which Husserl saw as the true example of what a phenomenon is. He said that phenomenon cannot be separated from the experience of them and therefore to access the phenomenon is through pre-reflective descriptions of it in the person’s own words. Husserl coined the words “lived experiences” a phrase that has become the catchphrase of the phenomenological method (Beck, 1992, Cohen, 1987 and Omery, 1983).

The operational beliefs and tactics used to discover the experience of a phenomenon was further expanded by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1998). Oiler (1982) suggests that beliefs about the nature of phenomena, reality, subjectivity and truth are the foundational features of the approach that will guide the study. These are shown in Table 4.3:3.

In terms of social scientists whose grounding is in ‘hermeneutic’ as a science for the understanding of meanings, Blakie went on to quote Palmer, 1969:87 as saying:

*“We understand the meaning of an individual word by seeing it in reference to the whole of the sentence; and reciprocally, the sentence’s meaning as a whole is dependent on the meaning of individual words”*

(Blakie 1993; 29).

Blaike also quoted Dilthey (1893-1911) as developing concerns on ‘human studies or human sciences’. Dilthey had argued that the study conducted should be based on a method of understanding (*verstehen*) to grasp the subjective consciousness of the participants.

#### **4.4 Research Approach - Phenomenology**

The philosophy of science known as *Ontology and epistemology* ought to be defined before I progress to writing about the type of field work that I undertook to achieve the aim of my study. (*Ontology*) refers to the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality – and comprises, what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other” (Blakie, 1993:6). “*Epistemology*” is the theory or science of the method or grounds of knowledge or it could also be referred to as claims or assumptions made about ways in which it is possible to gain knowledge of this reality, whatever it is understood to be; claims about how what exists may be known.

In the study of personal tutoring, I aim to gain an understanding of the tutors and tutees experiences and encounters and to add new knowledge on the social activity and reality of the experiences of tutees and tutors. I will seek to understand the nature of their interpersonal relationship with each other, how do they feel about each other, what does it mean to be in the professional relationship of tutee and tutor and how does it promote learning and teaching? I wish to learn about the lived experiences of these individuals. I see learning and understanding people’s subjective experiences to be of multi-faceted importance, because it has practical applications. Nursing is a “helping” profession (Crotty, 1996:24). Tutors are not merely educating nursing students on how to care for patients but they are also

imparting knowledge and values to effect change in the tutees' behaviour and attitude.

Paulo Friere (1973) placed great emphasis on the teacher-learner and the learner-teacher dialogue and he added that the teacher facilitates the experience of learning upon which reflection occurs. This then becomes the learning process. The teacher stimulates the learning process rather than teaching the correct knowledge and values that have to be acquired (Freire, 1973). Peters (1966) in his book: 'Ethics in Education' said education means that something worthwhile has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner.

#### **4.5 The rationale of using phenomenology**

Phenomenology is a way of thinking what life experiences are like for people (Powers and Knapp, 1990). It is a philosophical understanding developed by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl was a mathematician and he developed a philosophic system rooted in subjective openness (Moustakas, 1994:25).

Husserl was however often criticised and laughed at, but he remained strong and he wrote that his critics held on to their own fixed philosophies which viewed his philosophy as weak, inadequate and of no value. However, Husserl argued that the critics had closed their minds as they had not known '*the despair of one who has the misfortune to be in love with philosophy*' (Husserl, 1931:29).



I do not concur with Husserl's critics but instead consider his philosophy to be applicable to my desire to understand why people behave the way they do, I often reflected on what I had seen and heard from tutors and tutees, for example, why are some students labelled as 'manipulative' and why do some tutors say that students are "grown-up and mature and therefore, should not seek support and guidance from them".

Throughout my education since childhood I have concentrated on what makes a teacher who cares "kindly" in the way that s/he relates and what experiences the pupil has with that teacher and what does it mean for the tutee. I would say that, I followed Moustakas' (1994:26) steps when he said that he placed himself in transcendental phenomenology when he was studying '*Loneliness*'. I took the stance that while I recognise my own knowledge and experience, in a free, and imaginative sense, ultimately I would need to determine the core ideas and values of personal tutoring as they are experienced in the lived world by personal tutors and tutees.

Husserl did not claim that transcendental phenomenology is the only approach to a knowledge of human experience, but rather it emphasises that it is a '*science of pure possibilities carried out with systematic concreteness*' (Husserl, 1917:72). It is a scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them as they appear to the consciousness (Moustakas, 1996:49).

Kockelmans (1967:24) further adds that phenomenology is a science that describes what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience. The process leads us to an unfolding of phenomenal consciousness through science and philosophy "towards the absolute knowledge of the Absolute" (Kockelmans, 1967:24).

The search for the meaning of personal tutors and tutees' experience led me to fully understand Husserl's thinking before I could adopt his approach. Under the influence of his teacher Betano (1838-1921) Husserl went on to reform philosophy by developing it into a rigorous science given over to serve the best interests of humanity (Powers and Knapp, 1990:105). He critiqued positivistic science as abstract and incapable of dealing with human experience because of its refusal to consider anything other than observable facts. Husserl wanted to grasp, above all, what was essential and not just the factual aspect of an experience (Crotty, 1996:58). He focussed on the objective reality and argued for a 'return to themselves', to the essences that constitute the pre-scientific world of human consciousness and perception. He conceived the concept of life-world (*lebenswelt*) or 'lived experience' as it came to be known (Powers and Knapp, 1990:106). It is the natural world we live in. Husserl was in search of the pure essence that makes experience of any kind possible (Crotty:59).

#### 4.5:1 'Return to the things themselves' – Husserl's aim

Merleau-Ponty (1962) posits that we should return to direct and primitive contact with the world (Crotty, 1996:54). To return to the things themselves is to return to that world that precedes knowledge. Phenomenology aims to illuminate precise human experience and feelings. According to Crotty (1996), there are two types of phenomenology. 'New phenomenology' is the Heideggerian approach ('Being in the World') that gathers people's subjective meanings and the sense that they make of them, for example, what does it mean to you to be struck down with rheumatoid arthritis? The other called 'Mainstream', is Husserlian's phenomenology that elucidates, first and foremost, the phenomena to which people attach meaning. It pursues, not the sense people make of things, but what they are making sense of; for example, what is personal tutoring as a phenomenon to them (personal tutees and personal tutors), the experience '*before they make sense of it*' (Crotty, 1996:3). Kaelin (1965) suggests we take a trip back to the facts of our perceptive knowledge, and thus, one often hears the term: 'back to the things themselves' or 'a return to the things themselves'. Before we are able to get to the object of the immediate experience, we need to look at it, as it presents itself to the human consciousness. Husserl said: "*reality could not be divorced from consciousness*" (Crotty, 1996:30) and this led him to be known as a 'Transcendental Phenomenologist'.

#### 4.5:2 Transcendental Phenomenology

Speilgelberg (1965) said that Husserl's enterprise was the triumph of objectivity over subjectivity. It is the establishment of objectivity of the experience as it presents itself to the consciousness. Kockelmans (1965:18) suggests that we should renounce all principles and ideas that are insufficiently explained or incorrectly founded, reject all arbitrary ways of thinking and all prejudices, and be guided by the 'things' themselves in order to uncover essential structures of reality.

Brochenski (1974:135) emphasises that we should '*get at the things themselves*'. It is a fundamental rule in the phenomenological method, which is neither deductive nor empirical but consists of '*pointing to what is given and elucidating it... fixes its gaze directly upon whatever is presented to the consciousness, that is its object*'. To reiterate this further, Husserl, (1931:129) said: '*what is given in our perception of a thing is its appearance, yet this is not an empty illusion. It serves as an essential beginning*' in seeking valid determination of an experience which would be open for any one to verify. Husserl believes that a sharp contrast exists between facts and '*essences*' *between the real and not real* (Moustakas, 1996:27). Kockelmans (1967:80) claims that the transformation of individual's experience or empirical experience into essential insights through a process of what Husserl called '*ideation*', means the object that appears in consciousness mingles with the object in nature so that a meaning is created, and knowledge is extended and therefore a relationship exists between what exists in conscious awareness and what exists in the world.

### 4.5:3 Consciousness of an experience.

To understand consciousness we need to understand the intentionality of the mind, which is different to intentional. For example, why am I reading about Husserl. I am reading because I want to understand and adopt his philosophy to conduct my research. This is an intentional act. There is a purpose for my action. Therefore, intentional has nothing to do with intentionality. Intentionality is about reaching out into the object which is consciousness and Brentano (1973) speaks of 'reference to a content or direction towards an object and he expressed it as the object of knowledge that comes to 'dwell within the knower'.

According to Kantian's theory, we may know the appearances (*phenomena*) but we never know the things in themselves (*nouema*). For example, when I see a student who comes to me to assist her with some personal problem, I make an assumption that she prefers to come to me instead of going to her personal tutor. Therefore, I did not grasp the reality of that experience for her nor did I look deeply into understanding what it meant for her to come and see me, and what it meant for her not to go to her personal tutor. Crotty (1996:39) suggests that '*every thought is a thought of something, every desire is a desire of something. Consciousness is always and essentially related to object*'. By intentionality it means that human experience always points to something beyond itself. It is essentially related to phenomenon – to the object of the experience, to what is experienced (Crotty, 1996:40).

Husserl (1931) clarifies intentionality by offering an example of an object as it appears to the consciousness and the objective in nature. An example of this would be: I see a coal fire glowing red in the lounge, it is surrounded by a marble hearth; this is, what we call a concrete experience and when I sit near it, I feel warm, cosy and I do not feel cold any more but if I touch the fire I will get burnt. This example can be categorised as having the warmth and cosiness of the coal fire to be a ‘*noema*’- not a real object but the phenomenon, not the fire but the appearance of a fire, which is perceived from whatever angle or background of an experience I wish to see it from. Whereas, a ‘*noesis*’ is seen as the essential nature of the fire, that has a meaning to me, it is not any other type of fire but one which is burning coal to make a fire. And what I perceived is the noema the red glowing fire that provides me with warmth, comfort and makes the cosiness of it all. The knowledge that I have of it, that it will burn me if I touch the red, glowing coal, that is the ‘self-evidence’, that is also a noesis.

Merleau-Ponty (1968: 32) says that phenomenology explores the mystery and paradox of experience: that something that is strange and ‘other’ is yet able to enter one’s consciousness and become part of it. Phenomenology is about understanding the experience as it is presented to one’s mind or consciousness, experience cannot be separated from its object. We need to comprehend the essential relationships, ‘*the essence*’. For my research I wish to explore the essences of the processes in personal tutors’ and tutees’ role and relationship, that is, gain the meaning of their experiences as they had experienced it in the personal tutoring process.

#### 4.5.4 Intentionality and Essence

How can I get to understand the meaning of the experience, the interpretation, the totality of personal tutoring? Dilthey (1833-1911) was the philosopher who wrote on 'human studies', and 'human sciences' and he asserted that the foundation for understanding human beings is in life itself and not in metaphysical theories. He argued that the study of human conduct should be based on the method of understanding (*verstehen*) to grasp the subjective consciousness of the participants (Blaikie, 1993:30). Human sciences are grounded in the connections of life, expression and understanding.

Under the influence of Husserl's phenomenology, the study of human phenomena that focuses on the lived experience; Dilthey's words were quoted by Outhwaite (1975) as saying:

*"every word or sentence, every gesture or form of politeness, every work of art and every historical deed are only understandable because the person expressing himself [sic] and the person to whom are connected by something they have in common; the individual always experiences, thinks, acts, and also understands, in this common sphere"* (Blaikie, 1993:31).

Kockelmans (1967:24) states that *phenomenology* was a term used in 1765 in philosophical and Kantian's writings and he writes:

*"phenomenology referred to knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness of experience. The process leads to an unfolding of phenomenal consciousness through science and philosophy "towards the absolute knowledge of the Absolute"*.

As such phenomenology is seen as a method to investigate an experience. Descartes (1977) and Husserl (1917) believed that it is crucial to return to the self to discover the nature and meaning of things as they appear in their essence. Lauer (1967:155) purports this by saying: *“only one source of certainty exists, what I think, what I feel, in substance, what I perceive”* and Husserl added:

*“ultimately, all genuine, and, in particular, all scientific knowledge, rests on inner evidence: as far as such evidence extends, the concept of knowledge extends also (1970:61).*

As a qualitative researcher, I am interested in the reality of the experience of the tutor and tutees involvement with each other and what the relationship means for each of them when experiencing and engaging the role of ‘personal tutor’. Schutz (1973:207) wrote that the origin of reality is subjective; whatever excites and stimulates our interest is real. To call a thing real means that this thing stands out in a certain relationship to ourselves.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) adds that the world is assumed; experience in it and knowledge of it, however are always through the subjectivity of presence in the world and the body is one means of natural access to it. He suggests that the human gaze reveals that aspect of the object through our bodily involvement in the world, which in turn determines the objective horizon structure, both spatially and temporally, available to us (Boyd, 2001: 77). This concept is similar to looking through the window of a house to see how the furniture is laid out in relation to its usage.



#### **4.5:5 The search for meanings**

Husserlian phenomenology is transcendental. Which means that it is bound up in the concept of intentionality which Moustakas (1994) stated has its roots in Aristotelian philosophy and the term

*“intention” indicates the orientation of the mind to its object; the object exists in the mind in an intentional way (Moustakas, 1994:28).*

Thus, I shall endeavour to bring to light the intentional experiences of consciousness as perceived by the personal tutors and tutees and meanings they assigned to the experience of personal tutoring. Transcendental phenomenology would assist me to arrive at the essence (core structure of personal tutoring) and help me to grasp the essential element or essence of the nature of the support, what is the meaning of the experience from the student nurses and the personal tutors encounters and how they experience the support. Thus, I see that by studying the personal tutors’ and their tutees’ experiences one will illuminate the *‘object-subject relationship’*.

#### **4.5:6 Bracketing my assumption**

Before I could explore the personal tutors’ and tutees’ experience, I needed to consider my ‘intellectual baggage’. Crotty (1996:19) cautions that researchers bring a great deal of intellectual baggage to the task they undertake, obtaining genuinely subjective data from the research participants and preserving its subjective character may be of paramount concern. I, for instance in my role as a nurse lecturer and Course Director have acquired *‘intersubjective’* experience of the personal tutor role. I have self-insights and subjective experience of what is real for a tutor and to some extent what is real for the tutee. Husserl (1970:91) asserts

*“I experience the world (including other) and, according to its experiential sense, not as (so to speak) my private synthetic formation but as others than mine alone (mir Fende), as an intersubjective world, actually there for everyone, accessible in respect of its Objects to everyone”.*

Husserl said the method through which others become accessible to him is by empathy, ‘*a thereeness-for-me of others*’. I experienced the tutees and tutors’ experience too and as Husserl (1970:109) would say that the other and I would be the same and thus my relationship with them (the other: tutors and tutees) is that of co-presence which means I am aware that there is another body co-existing with my body and of similar appearance. An alternative way of viewing empathy is what Husserl calls ‘*pairing*’ as a way in which I experience someone else and in ‘*pairing*’ the other is within me and I within the other. My presence and the others presence are co-existent, co-present in an intentional communion (Moustakas, 1996:37).

I cannot carry my intellectual baggage with me when I am seeking my participants’ meaning of their experience. Moustakas (1996) suggests that first we must explicate our own intentional consciousness through the transcendental processes before we can understand someone or something that is not our own. Husserl called it ‘*epoche*’, a Greek word to mean refrain from judgement. It requires us deliberately to look for a new way of looking at things, a way that requires us to learn to see what stands before our eyes, what we can distinguish and describe (Moustakas, 1996:33). And so, we need to set aside our understanding and judgements of the phenomena and re-visit the phenomena freshly, naively, in a wide open sense, from the vantage point of a pure or transcendental ego ( Husserl ,1931:144). This is also known as transcendental phenomenological reduction because it moves beyond the everyday

to the pure ego in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time. Each experience is considered in its singularity, in it and for itself and ultimately we will derive a textural description of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon (Schmitt, 1967:67).

#### **4.5:7 Phenomenological reduction – ‘bracketing’**

What will phenomenological reduction achieve for me? I will have an insight into the participants’ view of the world from their perspectives. It will allow my informants to construct and give meaning to their own reality. As Montbriand and Laing (1991:327) and Rose (1990:59) said:

*“we would gain entry into the conceptual world of those informants and discern it fully. In this way, the data are accepted uncritically as given and they are not tainted”*  
(Rose, 1990: 65).

However, there are critics who argue that it is impossible to set aside our presuppositions or suspend our judgement. One such critic is Hauck (1991:81) and he suggests that it is better to identify *‘investigator’s assumptions’ rather than rid herself of them’*. Montbriand and Laing (1991) said it is difficult to ‘bracket’ and argue that the researcher’s frames of reference are imbedded in the interpretation.

#### **4.5:8 ‘Bracketing’ – a difficult experience**

Whenever, possible, I tried to suspend my understanding and assumptions fully when I collected data, but on a few occasions I succumbed to the weaknesses that have been identified by Montbriand et al and Hauck, that it is difficult to ‘bracket’.

There were times when I could not bracket. So, I considered what Kirby and Slevin (1992) said that nursing is by its very nature a unique presence in the world, and a most unique way of being with another person. I felt what Husserl (1970) called 'pairing', I too experienced the feeling of hurt, the feeling of joy and the disappointment of my tutees and tutors participants. Feeling what my participants felt, I could argue that I was cognisant of Heideggarian sceptics, in that, if bracketing could ever be achieved there will be conflict between the researcher's and participant's values, beliefs and culture and would only serve to prevent knowledge development (Neilson, 1990).

On some occasions during my data collections I felt the tutees participants' angst, their despair and their feelings of abandonment when they re-lived the experiences of their communication with their personal tutors. Also, I had a few colleagues, nurse tutors who became emotional and showed some signs of distress with tears pooling under their lower eyelids and their voice became faintish with emotion at what they were revisiting or re-living.

How can I justify my feelings for them? I looked for a way to resolve the conflict that I was experiencing during and after the data collection. It is a form of introspection, reflexivity and I needed to make explicit my presupposition whilst recognising the difficulties and arguments of undertaking the process of '*epoche*' or bracketing. I could not make myself remote or detached from the study completely. After all Mallow (1966:45) asserts that there is no substitute for experience, and he

advised researchers to enter a process of self-dialogue and discovery. Thus, to resolve this, I considered and undertook Hall and Stevens' (1991) notion of adequacy.

#### **4.5:9 Adequacy**

Adequacy includes criteria such as rapport and honesty (Hall and Stevens 1991). Rapport reflects how well participants' reality is accessed (Agar, 1980). Elements of rapport such as trust in the relationship, length of contact, my sensitivity to the language, connotation and lifestyle (Sandelowski, 1966; Denzin; 1978 and Mishler, 1986) will indicate the process and validity of data. Also, Acker et al (1983) pointed out that unless a relationship of trust and honesty is developed there can be no confidence that the research accurately represents, what is significant to the participants in their daily lives, whether bracketing takes place or not. I needed to expose the difficulties I was experiencing with bracketing during my research journey. If I did not 'bring to light', then I would be preventing an explication of the tutees and tutors' uniqueness of their experience. I see it as an attempt to generate an aesthetic awareness of a very personal and powerful concept, a concept experienced by those who are in the personal tutoring process.

Thus to conclude this part of bracketing, I am in sympathy with Oiler Boyd (1988) that suspending my presuppositions was a difficult process, even though I allowed myself plenty of time to 'strip away the layers of meaning (Schutz, 1970) and I used Paterson and Zderad's (1976) advice by repeatedly asking myself, 'what am I taking

for granted?’ Walsh (1995:335) supports my view by saying: ‘those researchers who begin their research with the data of their experience seek to ‘embrace their own humanness as the basis for psychological understanding’. Moustakas (1994) also states that researcher’s own reflecting, intuiting and thinking are used as primary evidence to ask the research questions.

#### **4.6 Why I chose Transcendental over Existential Phenomenology**

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) who studied under the tutorship of Edmund Husserl also believed in the maxim: “*to the things themselves*”. He moved transcendental phenomenology a stage further into existentialism. Heidegger’s goal, the development of a second branch of phenomenology is not that of exploring ‘the meaning of everyday practices’ but instead he wishes to explore the meaning of ‘*Being in the world*’ and the notion of *Dasein*’. *Dasein* constitutes the locus where ‘Being’ is encountered (Crotty, 1996). Whereas the Husserlian’s phenomenology has a ‘*Cartesian: Mind and Body split*’. Husserl had believed in the principle of ‘*intentionally*’ which refers to the directness of the mind towards objects (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1987). It is based on the assumptions that our consciousness is one thing we can be sure of , which is an awareness that we could be certain of (Koch, 1995). So the building of our knowledge of reality should therefore start with the conscious awareness. Husserl hoped to come face to face with the essences of consciousness and his directives that it should ‘return things to themselves and to the essences that constitute the consciousness and perception of the human world (Koch, 1995). Koch further argues that the search for essences makes Husserlian

phenomenology objective in that it draws upon the Cartesian metaphor where the body is viewed as a container of the mind, and within the mind symbolic representation takes place. And so, it means that it presents a systematic view of the mental content and assumes that this is possible if symbols representing the world are manipulated in the mind, as these manipulations permit the external world to be brought into internal consciousness by cognitive processes.

#### **4.6:1 The differences between the two schools of phenomenology**

In the comparing and contrasting of the approaches of the two branches of phenomenology, Heidegger (1989-1976) commenced on the philosophical journey to the *'path of the question of being'* (Annells, 1996). This led him to move from epistemological emphasis of Husserl to an emphasis on the ontological foundation of the understanding which is reached through *'being-in-the world'* which he claimed is pivotal of human everyday existence: 'Dasein' – a German word which signifies the situated meaning of a human in the world. For Heidegger, 'Dasein' is where 'Being' reveals itself – a 'clearing' as he apparently liked to say, as in the midst of a dense forest, where Being is lit-up and becomes unconcealed (Crotty, 1996:78).

Heidegger believes in the notion of *'temporality'* and *'co-constitution'* as strong themes with hermeunistics. 'Heideggarian Hermeustics' is a method for studying human beings and its aim is not 'to develop a procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place (Gadamer, 1976). Temporality is viewed as connected. The Dasiem concept "the person being in the

world” is co-constituted, this being an indissoluble unity (Koch, 1994). As such, man makes sense of his world from within his existence and not that which is detached from it. He is at home in the world and the world is already there prior to analysis. Human existence and the world co-constitute each other (Koch, 1995). Heidegger (1962: 58) used a phrase, tautological in a sense by saying: *‘to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself’*. He rejects Husserl’s transcendental reduction by saying that *‘one does not bracket existence when one is seeking Being through Being’*. Heidegger brought the notion *‘of background to understanding’*.

Background meanings, skills and practices can never be made completely explicit. Background is handed down and presents a way of understanding the world (Benner and Wrubel, 1989). Heidegger also uses the term *‘pre-understanding’* to describe the meaning and organisation of a culture (including language and practices) which are already in the world before we understand. He said that human beings always come to a situation with a story or a pre-understanding which needs to be brought into focus in order to be understood (Koch, 1995). This is not something we can eliminate or bracket, it is already with us in the world. Heidegger wanted his philosophical enquiry to be rooted in the things themselves and not rooted in *‘free floating constructions’* or *‘accidental findings’* or *‘pseudo-questions’* (Heidegger, 1962:50).



Crotty (1996:79) suggests that Heidegger wants researchers to reflect on the shadowy pre-understanding, they must bring to 'Being' itself to reveal the way of 'Dasein', for Heidegger, 'Being' is and must remain, the *'first and the last-thing itself of thought'*. Heidegger's Hermeneutic: *'a making manifest of what manifests itself'*. As a research process hermeneutics emphasises the human experiences of understanding and interpretation which is presented as people's detailed stories (thick descriptions) which serve as exemplars and paradigm cases of every day practices and 'lived experiences (Wilson and Hutchinson, 1991).

#### **4.6:2 Heidegger's debate on Husserl**

Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology challenges Husserl's two ideals. Firstly, that meaning can be seen in terms of an independent reality, and secondly, that theory can be generated from the standpoint of an observer who stands outside the situation (Koch, 1995). From this perspective, the observer can never be objective and the notion of bracketing is thus refuted. Heidegger (1962) believes that we are dealing with people and not things, the word he uses is not care or concern but solicitude (Crotty, 1996:84). Heidegger's meaning of 'solicitude' corresponds to our use of concern and is a term for existential, solicitude is grounded not merely in our 'Being-in-the world' but in 'our being-with' which too is existential (Crotty, 1996:85). It means to say *'our way of being is to be with others, and therefore solicitude proves that we are in a state of Dasein's Being'* says Heidegger (1962).

For me as a researcher studying the personal tutors and tutees' lived experiences I felt I needed 'not Being- in- their worlds' as I would bring too much of my intellectual and emotional baggage into my study. Thus, I rejected Heideggerian's hermeneutic as I did not wish to bring myself into 'their thick descriptions' and I wanted my participants meanings to be unsullied by my interpretation of my own normative goals, assumptions or view of the world. For a contrasting difference of the two phenomenological school of thought see Table 4.6:2

**Table 4.6:2 Summary of the contrasting of the two phenomenological of thoughts**

<b>Comparing and Contrasting Two Theories of Interpretation</b>	
<b>Husserlian phenomenology</b>	<b>Heideggerian phenomenology</b>
Transcendental phenomenology	Philosophical hermeneutics Hermeneutic phenomenology
Epistemological	Existential Ontological
Epistemological questions of knowing	Questions of experiencing and understanding
How do we know what we know?	What does it mean to be a person?
Cartesian duality: mind and body split	Dasien
A mechanistic view of the person	Person as self-interpreting being
Mind-body person lives in a world of object	Person exists as a 'being' in and of the world
A historical	Historically
Unit of analysis is the meaning of giving subject	Unit of analysis is the transaction between the situation and the person
What is shared is the essence of the conscious mind	What is shared is culture, history, practice and language
Starts with reflection of mental states	We are already in the world in our pre-reflective selves
Meaning is unsullied by the interpreter's own normative goals or view of the world	Interpreters participate in making data
Participants' meanings can be reconstituted in interpretative work by insisting that data speak for themselves	Within the fore-structure of understanding interpretation can only make explicit what is already understood
Claim that adequate techniques and procedures guarantee validity of interpretation	Establish own criteria for trustworthiness of research
Bracketing defends the validity or objectivity of the interpretation against self-interest	The hermeneutic circle (background, co-constitution pre-understanding)

**Source: Koch T (1995). Interpretative Approaches in Nursing Research: the influence of Husserl and Heidegger. In Journal of Advanced Nursing, 21. 827-836**

#### **4.7 Summary of the philosophical framework for this research study**

In summary, my research and my orientation of thinking about what it is like to be a personal tutor and personal tutee, I chose the Husserlian phenomenology. I am influenced by his concept of the 'life-world' or 'lived experience'. Some of my justification could be viewed on the basis that I showed in Table 4.6:2. Husserl claimed this 'life-world' is not readily accessible because it constitutes what is taken for granted, or, those things that are commonsense. Like Husserl, I too, wanted to bring to light the ultimate structures of the consciousness (the essences) of the personal tutoring processes and to 'evaluate critically the role these essential structures or essences play in determining the sense of it all' (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1987), that is what is the personal tutor role, how does a tutee experience the role and how does the tutor experience her/his role?

Thus, I intend to ask about the 'meaning of the human experience'. Even though, I made explicit some of my difficulties with suspending my awareness of the experience, I felt that I had not been alone in this process. There had been other researchers such as Swanson Kauffman (1996) who said she lived, walked and talked and slept her study. Dunn (1991) reported that she took on the emotions, and even the physical symptoms of the women who had been battered by their husbands. Rothman (1986) found herself distraught over her project on women who had had amniocentesis and Johnson and Scott (1997) wrote about Scott's strong emotional reactions which were aroused when she worked in a child-protection study. Scott

felt a sense of helplessness witnessing the distress which she could not alleviate and felt unease with the inherent voyeurism of the research observations she had undertaken and it led her to see the experience in a new way. Finlay (2003: 9) argues that a psychodynamic researcher reminds others to explore how conversation or text affects them and to reflect on what they bring to it ourselves. Parker (1997:488) also permits researchers to make their feelings explicit by saying that:

*'we need to be aware of ourselves as the dreamers... unlike instances of other people telling us their dreams, we understand and share, partially at least, at some level, the story'.*

I am not proposing that over identification and sympathy should be accepted on the basis of what previous researchers have reported, but what I am pointing at, is that in phenomenology, experience is not limited to sensory awareness as it is in traditional science. Instead experience incorporates multiple modes of awareness as integral evidence which Husserl (1962) refers to as the 'principle of intentionality'.

Intentionality is based on the assumption that our own conscious awareness was one things of which we could be certain (Koch, 1995). I fully agree when Finlay (1998:455) who warns that reflexivity should be 'neither an opportunity to wallow in subjectivity nor permission to engage in legitimised emoting'. The reason for using reflexivity for me is not just for my own introspection, personal revelation' or an end in itself but as a springboard for interpretation (Woolgar, 1989:22) to expose the 'real world' and to provide an insightful meaning of tutors' and tutees' experiences and their encounters, that is, the 'Reality is their life-world'.

#### **4.8 Phenomenological Understanding and data collection**

I followed Van Manen's writing (1984) in 'Phenomenology and Pedagogy' that as a researcher, I needed to orientate myself to the phenomenon, I mean, the personal tutoring process in Nurse Education and formulate phenomenological questions, for example: what does it mean for a tutee to feel unsupported by her/his personal tutor in order to explicate my assumptions and pre-understandings, to explore the tutee's and tutor's personal experiences, locate experiential descriptions in literature, and consult phenomenological literature, in order for the essential themes to emerge and expose the nature of their experiences. These experiences as they have been spoken by the participants would provide greater insight into what personal tutoring is in reality.

As a researcher I shall make a psychological interpretation of the data collected. It will involve placing myself within the mind of the social actors in order to know what the person knows. Sociological and sociopsychological research emerged as a result of wanting to understand human interactions. The subjective meaning individuals attribute to their activities and their environment becomes a focus of the study. Flick (1998) reported that Bulmer (1969) had categorised this interpretation of the environment as 'symbolic interactionism'. He based it on three premises:

- The first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.

- The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.
- The third premise is that the meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person dealing with the things he encounters.

Insights of symbolic interactionism which focuses on Mead's (1894-1931) philosophy of a person's sense of self, emerges through social interaction. The relationship between self and society is an on-going process of symbolic communication. Through the processes of interaction between people's social behaviour and social roles (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996) a sense of self develops as people imagine themselves in social roles and see themselves through the eyes of others. Bulmer (1971) adds that symbolic interactionism explains how individuals attempt to fit their lines of actions to those of others, take account of each others' acts, interpret them and re-organise their own behaviour.

Mead (1934) was a proponent of symbolic interactionism and said that "self" is seen as a social rather than a psychological phenomenon. In a Nurse Education setting this is explicit, lecturers and students are members of an organisations societal norms which effects the development of a person's social self by what is expected of them and how they influence each other's behaviour. Mead went on to say that members of a team anticipate the behaviours of the other players and can therefore play their own role. The observation of the interacting roles are a source of data.

Denzin (1978) advised that symbolic interactionism requires researchers to enter the world of interactive human beings to understand them. By doing this, they will see the world from the perspectives of the participants rather than their own perspective. This could be uncovered by interviews, diaries and participant or non-participant's observation of the individuals in the natural settings.

#### **4.8:1 Obtaining Data in Phenomenological approach**

In gathering data Crotty (1996:20) advises researchers to ensure the subjective character of the data is left intact and untainted. The opening question or questions are designed to elicit descriptions of subjective experience. Before, contemplating the type of questions I would ask, I felt I needed to understand the various approaches to data collection that I could use in a qualitative methodology.

#### **4.8:2 Data collection tool**

Three major components of data collection in qualitative research are:

The data can be obtained from interviews, observations, documents, records, and films. In this study interviews will be the main form of data to be collected, with some documentary analysis in the form of a survey questionnaire on institutions that provides support on students' progression and academic development.

Observations of the tutors and tutees is not possible because it would be an intrusion into their social interaction. Also the participants may behave differently when



observed. The observed individuals may not depict their truthful manner or the way they normally interact. This is known as the “Hawthorne Effect”. Powers and Knapp (1990) define this effect as a phenomenon whereby people who know they are participants in a study behave differently from the way they would behave without the knowledge they are being observed. Film or video recording would be another form of invasion of their privacy and may give rise to concerns over confidentiality (Gross, 1991) and was therefore not used.

#### **4.8:3 Interviews as the data collection tool**

The procedures that researchers can use to interpret and organise data, depends on how the research is conceptualised, through a series of propositional statements. Interviews are commonly used in qualitative research and they are “conversations with a purpose” (Burgess, 1984), which will range from formal to informal questions. Conversations have certain rules in turn-taking or control by one or other of the participants, but the rules of the research interviews are stricter (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996). The research topic will guide the interviews towards the discovery of participants’ feelings, perceptions, thoughts and experiences. May (1991) said that interviews can be formal, that is pre-planned for the express purpose of eliciting information, with one-to-one interviews being the most common form of data collection. Focus groups and open-ended interviews as described by (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996; May, 1989 and Becker et al, 1961) were to be the main method of data collection.

To explore the meaning of the experience I chose open-ended interviews. Under the umbrella of qualitative research, they take the narrative form of data that are collected in natural settings. The stories that emerge from the subjects are analysed for patterns and themes (Doordan, 1998). There are several methods that one can choose to study human behaviours, experiences or social interactions. Namely, they are: phenomenology – social enquiry and interpretation of lived experiences, ethnography- which originates from anthropology whereby the researcher observes the behaviours and conversations of cultural groups in the natural setting, case study/research studies - a person or a group of people describe in detail their experiences and grounded theory - an inductive approach to research whereby hypotheses and theory will emerge out of the “data”. I have already pointed out that observation of a tutorial encounter would be an invasion of privacy and would be unethical.

The data collected during the phenomenological interviews will be more likely to resemble “the reality” of the lives of the personal tutors and tutees. The participants’ concepts and perceptions will be based on their experience. It will offer insight, enhance understanding and provide a meaningful guide to action (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The data obtained from participants in the phenomenological study is not supposed to take an evaluative strand to identify factors that contribute to positive, successful tutor/tutee’s relationships, but will illuminate the experiences as they were.

I aim to study the phenomena of personal tutoring on its own ground to achieve an experiential understanding and provide an elaboration of what it is and make its meaning or essence clear for tutors and tutees in order for them to appreciate each others role and relationship (Bennett, 1991; Bowman, 1991 and Elfert et al, 1991). After all, phenomenology aims to describe experience, and seeks to understand the nature of the experience (Beck, 1991, Bennett, 1991 and Elfert et al, 1991). What is experienced by the tutors and tutees? This phenomena is both (humanly) and consciously experienced. The participant will describe the experience to me thereby giving me access to the experience. According to Bowman (1991) it is the phenomenon that is experienced and if we can obtain a description of the experiences and analyse them, we will uncover the phenomena.

It is important to distinguish that in a phenomenological approach, experience is not about 'mundane' or 'everyday' understanding of experience (Crotty, 1996:12) and he criticises nurse researchers who have their sights set firmly on everyday understanding of everyday experiences. Nurse researchers tend to describe experience as understood from the individual's perspectives or frame of reference or point of view, that is, the participants' experience as they see it. It is a subjective and personal experience with significant meaning for people personally, but what is needed is to look for the 'the first person's description (Watson, 1991:11). I was very much in a similar position to what Crotty said on nurse researchers. I too, had on some occasions forgotten to conduct 'the phenomenological enquiry' properly and I had not obtained rich data from a few of my participants. On a few occasions, I

did not probe into the feelings of my participants on how they felt about an experience, for example, a tutee would say: “*when I went to see my tutor, she had left, I had made an appointment..*’ I should have asked: “how did you feel when your tutor did not keep the appointment?”

Everything came to a standstill during my preliminary data analysis, (see Appendix 5 – Key Concepts) when my independent ‘expert judge’ Dr Bob Price reviewed some of the verbatim’ transcripts. He pointed out to me that I needed to ascertain the meaning of the experience from my participants. I realised then, that some of my interviews were weak and that I had collected exclusively themes and shared experiences. I had focused on the commonalities of the experience rather than the peculiar experience and the meaning it had for my individual participant. I used an interview guide (see Appendices 6, 6a – Interview guides) when collecting data.

#### **4.8:4 Interview guide**

An interview guide developed following the focus group interview will consider issues raised by the students. It will ensure that I collect similar types of data from all informants and reduces the drop rate as is common when using un-structured, open-ended interviews. The interview guide will also enable me to focus on particular aspects of the subject area. It can be quite long and detailed, although it need not be followed strictly and Burgess (1984) warns that the longer the questions, the longer the answers. An example of an interview guide used with students and tutors can be found in Appendices 6 and 6a. Field and Morse (1985) advise that

interviews should not be continued beyond 1 hour. The length of period will be specified to my participants, that it will be 30-45minutes and that it will depend on the informants.

Further elaboration of my method of data collection will be discussed under the heading of “Fieldwork”- data collection. The interviews will be audiotaped after gaining participants’ permission. If anyone denies permission to record then note-taking will be employed. It is important to consider that writing notes and keeping eye contact with the respondent can be difficult and it can be disturbing for the participant who might wonder about the contents of the notes during the whole interview (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996). The writing up of notes will be done soon after the interview is finished to capture the flavour, behaviour and words of informants and my concomitant thoughts in the form of reflexivity and reflection. (Listening to the tapes sensitized me to the data.) It will also uncover ambiguities within the interviewing process and theoretical ideas will emerge.

#### **4.9 Data Conceptualisation and data analysis**

Literature claims that if the procedures used to analyse data are adequate, validity can be ascertained (Knaack, 1984, Oiler, 1986 and Banois, 1988). Some structured approaches to data analyses are : Spiegelberg (1976) who wrote on seven steps which include ‘*investigating particular phenomena, ‘investigating general essences’ and apprehending essential relationships and essences’* and Van Kaam (1959) in his study of ‘*really being understood*’ which uses five steps, as does Paterson and

Zderad (1976). These researchers differ because it depends on which aspects of the research process they were concentrating on. Spiegelberg lays emphasis on the 'emancipation from pre-conceptions', others such as Giorgi (1970) and Colaizzi (1978) concentrate on the actual analysis. I chose Colaizzi's method of data analysis as it occurs concurrently with data collection.

The process of conceptualising, reducing data, elaborating on them and relating them are referred to as '*coding*' (Becker, 1970; Charmaz, 1983, 1995; Lofland, 1971, Miles and Huberman, 1994; cited by Corbin and Strauss, 1998:12)

The *Coding procedures* are noted to have the following purposes:

- *Build rather than test a theory*

From data collected, it would be possible after microanalysis to understand how theory will emerge. One student may say: "my tutor does not care". This could then be re-examined from the perspective, what is caring, what sort of value/definition does one hold about caring, how does an individual experience being cared for? How did the student feel when experiencing a feeling of uncaring or neglect?

- *Provide the researcher with the analytic tools for handling substantial amounts of raw data.*

At this stage it may be possible to ask questions and make comparisons. Corbin and Strauss have given specific labels to the types of questions that will help the research. They identified that the researcher needs to firstly ask sensitising

questions, this will tune the researcher into what the data might be indicating (Corbin and Strauss, 1998:77) Secondly, theoretical questions to help me see the process and variation in the experience and its meaning on the theoretical aspect of learning and teaching. I would then be able to make connections among the concepts. (Corbin and Strauss, 1998:77). One such example might be “my tutor is always helpful and supportive”. I may wish to compare the concept, the nature of helpfulness and support in relation to teaching and learning what does it mean, to experience a tutor’s helpfulness in the context of education. What does it feel like for the student?

Further writing on data analysis will be shown after the discussion on sampling, and fieldwork. Fieldwork and the sampling processes that were applied within this study will be discussed in the sections, Fieldwork – Sections 4.9:3; 4.9:4; 4.9:5; 4.9:6; 4.9:7; 4.9:8; 4.10; 4.10:2; 4.10:3; 4.12; 4.12:3; and 4.13. Data gathering and reflection took place simultaneously.

Van Manen (1990:8) suggested that the presentation of the phenomenological findings is characterised by the passion and aim that inspires the research process, the words that describe the experience are the primal telling, an original singing of world and the language speaks the world rather than speaking of it.

#### 4.9:1 Collecting the data – my preliminary analysis and reflection

In pursuit of separating personal issues and experience of the personal tutoring process, I favoured the term “*methodolatry*” proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (1998;48). They advised ‘methodolatry’ as a way of moving away from understanding the actual experience of the participants and for the qualitative researcher to focus on the substance of the findings. Denzin (1989) suggests Husserl’s concept of “*bracketing*” which is to hold the phenomenon up for inspection and advises researchers to follow these steps:

- *Locate within the personal experience, or self story, key phrases and statements that speak directly to the phenomenon in question.*

[The reflective use of language “I” used to show reflexivity]. On several occasions I hear lecturers commenting on tutees’ behaviour by saying for example: “*my personal tutees think I am their surrogate mum or buddy*” and “*tutees are like little children*”. Glasser and Strauss, (1967); Lincoln and Guba, (1985) and Taylor and Bogdan, (1964) advise researchers to write notes, or memos which can be referred to in a diary or journal which will serve as a researcher’s personal record of insights, the beginning of understanding, working hunches, recurring words or phrases, questions, thoughts, concerns and decisions made during the research process. Finally, this diary (my reflective journal) can become a useful part of data collection in the analysis process.

- Interpret the meaning of these phrases as an informed reader. Do the personal tutees want an intense parental style of relationship with their personal tutors? Do they want their tutor to be their buddy? How do tutors perceive their personal tutors



style? What does it mean to have a personal tutor who adopts a parental or 'buddy' style to the tutees?

- Obtain the participant's interpretation of these findings.
- Inspect these meanings for what they reveal about the essential, recurring features of the phenomenon being studied [personal tutors and nursing students sharing their experiences]. As a preliminary data conceptualisation I outlined the key issues that emerged. (See Appendix 5.)
- Offer a tentative statement or definition of the phenomenon in terms of essential features identified in (See Appendix 5 –Key Concepts and Appendix 7 – A Sample of Categories). (Adapted from Denzin and Lincoln, 1998 ;48)

#### **4.9:2 Reflecting and reflection of the findings**

My colleague, Isa, who shares my office continually encouraged me to reflect on and articulate my experiences with the phenomenon under study. As I talked about my study and the fact that the tutees are telling me that they feel 'uncared for by their personal tutor', she would frequently ask me to challenge my preconceptions and assumptions. This led me to ensure I continued to keep a reflective diary to reflect on my personal feelings following a set of data collection of the phenomenon in question. For example, one lecturer said she considers her tutees *'to be like patients in hospitals' they (tutees) need tender loving care, and to feel nurtured and*

*cared for, in order to grow and develop*'. It was a genuine expression and the audio-taped interview could not capture the way it was said. It was said as if it came from "the heart" with a glow and a bright smile on her face. This led me to go beyond the reality of my presuppositions and like Drew (1989) argue that such attention permits new understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The thoughts and values of the participants and my personal reaction/subjectivity also became a source of data (Lipson, 1984, 1991), I was able to build a relationship that could empathise with my participants.

Holloway and Wheeler (1996) suggest that the qualitative researcher recognises the reality that is socially constructed and depends on culture, time and place as well as the individuals who observe the situation and interpret it. They report Munhall and Oiler Boyd, (1993) as saying: "objective reality is grounded in our subjective experience of the world" (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996:190).

#### **4.9:3 Fieldwork 1**

Fieldwork 1 – gaining ethical approval from my work place which involved two meetings with Deans for Students and submitting my research proposal to the University Ethics Committee. (See Appendices 8 –Letter to the Dean, 8a – Ethical Submission, 8b – Ethical Permission and 8c –Letter of Ethical Approval.)

For the purpose of **confidentiality the names of the setting of the two Higher Education Institutions and the participants will not be identified. Details will be**

**kept to a minimum** when describing the settings where the study was conducted. Suffice to say that a research proposal was submitted to the University Ethics Committee to gain permission to conduct the study prior to setting up the field-work. The ethical issues will be discussed under ‘ethical consideration’ **Section 4:21**.

#### **4.9:4 Focus group interviews – rationale for their use**

This section of the chapter will explain the rationale for using focus group interviews, data obtained and content analysis of the findings in respect of student nurses’ experiences with their personal tutors in a Nurse Education setting. The primary aim of the focus interview with students is to assist in the development of an interview guide (See Appendix 6), to identify what were the good experiences, why they were good and if they were bad experiences, then what was bad about them. The objective of the study is to map the quality and variation in the tutees’ and tutors’ experience that will provide a deeper understanding of the personal tutoring provided to nursing students in higher education.

#### **4.9:5 The Study Population**

The theme of the study is about students and personal tutors’ experience. A Focus group as a means of data collection is viewed as an appropriate procedure to use when the goal is to explain how people regard an experience (Kruger, 1994). Focus group interviews as a means of collecting student Nurses’ experiences with their personal tutors will produce a valuable insight into what personal tutors’ attributes most students value, in an environment which is permissive and non-judgemental.

Morgan (1988) advocates the use of focus groups because it brings several different perspectives into contact and it is the very nature of the group experience that sets the method of qualitative data collection.

Maykutt and Morehouse (2000:103) add, the purpose of a group interview is, “*a group conversation with a purpose*”. It is to understand what people experience and perceive about the focus of enquiry, through a process that is open and emergent. So, the researcher (me), even though I have been a Course Director/Programme Leader will not be in a position of power or influence. But I can encourage them to comment on both positive and negative experiences. It will enable me to see how tutees construct their worlds in ‘public’ (within their own peer group) instead of them reporting their dissatisfaction to me when they come to me on an individual basis. Morgan (1988) believes that group interviews are especially useful for investigating what people think and for uncovering why people think as they do. A Focus group is also referred as a group interview that emphasises dynamic group interactions (Krueger, 1988: Morgan, 1988).

The commonality and homogeneity of the participants’ experience will produce useful data to develop an interview guide for my data collection during one-one interviews with tutees and lecturers. Moreover, a focus group has an important distinction over face-to-face interviewing because it enables the researcher to observe students’ interactions, their specific attitudes and experiences. Parachoo (1997) supports the use of a focus group interview by saying that it provides an

opportunity to brainstorm for the purpose of generating items for a questionnaire and it can be used to check question wording and format and provide an opportunity to “pilot test” an instrument fairly quickly and cheaply. I did not develop a questionnaire but I used it for the development of an interview guide.

Focus interviews can permit a detailed exploration of content of information on experiences and familiarise me as the interviewer with a prospective on recruited potential interviewees (Parahoo, 1987). However, I had to be aware that I could sacrifice the observation of interaction for greater amounts of detail on various attitudes, opinions and experiences (Berg, 1998:104). Berg adds researchers may never learn how subjects might discuss these issues among themselves. There is also a disadvantage that dominant personalities can monopolise the discussion and express their views at the expense of others. It is worth mentioning that Carey & Smith (1994) warn that group effect may lead to conformity or to convergent answers. As group members interact, one or two individuals may dominate the discussion and influence the outcome or even introduce bias and other members become compliant (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996:151).

This can be overcome by individual interviews when participant’s real feelings and experience are explored in more depth. Merton and King (1990) stress the importance of homogeneity where group members have similar educational backgrounds. This would enhance contribution and interaction from the group members. In support of a group interview Maykutt and Morehouse (2000:105)

purport its usage by reporting that it has another benefit, in that it provides participants with the opportunity to check out the researcher. If the researcher is pursuing an area of inquiry that is especially personal or likely to yield socially desirable responses, then the group interview will provide the researcher with a chance to demonstrate his or her sensitivity to the views and experiences of the participants. This proved to be valuable when I wanted to conduct individual-follow-up interviews with the group members. I found my non-judgemental and trustworthy attitudes became crucial in encouraging the participants to volunteer themselves and to share their experience with me.

#### **4.9:6 The field work 2 – Focus Group - sampling**

In January 2002, I met with a cohort consisting of 120 Undergraduate Pre-registration Nursing Students (Diploma and BSc nursing students: Adult, child and Mental Health Branches September 1999 Cohort See Appendix 1). They would all be qualifying as Registered Nurses within five months. The meeting took place at the end of a Lecture teaching session, Module L. The Module Leader's permission was sought in advance to check that it was okay for me to come to the class at the end of her session. She agreed. The students knew me as their Course Director, so an introduction about who I am was not necessary. I gave a brief outline of the purpose of the study and I issued them with 120 copies of invitation letters together with consent forms. (See Appendices 9, 9a and 9b – Invitation letters for focus group interview and consent form.) I told them that I would leave an invitation letter with a reply slip together with a self-addressed envelope (SAE) and for them to drop it in

a post- box. which will be left in the classroom. I would collect the post-box, at the end of the day. I felt I needed to give all the 120 students an invitation letter so that they felt included in the research and I had requested that I needed at least 20-24 of them to participate in the focus group. (See invitation letter in Appendices 9, 9a and 9b.)

#### **4.9:7 Recruiting the participants for the Focus Group interviews**

I told them that I wished to recruit for 2 Focus groups of 10-12 each to participate in a group interview. At first, they were unsure what a focus group was. So, a brief outline of what it was, that it is similar to conducting an evaluation or market research of the experiences they have had with their personal tutors was provided, 2 dates were identified from their classroom timetables, lunch periods followed by independent study time were used to minimise the use of students' time. They were told a free lunch and non-alcoholic drinks will be made available over the lunch break.

I had discussed this with my supervisor to make sure that it was not going to be seen as a form of 'bribery' or incentive. My supervisor told me that I could offer the free lunch to my participants since they would be forfeiting their lunch period in order to be present in my focus group interview. The lunch had to be from the University where I worked as I could not employ or get food from outside caterers for fear of litigation if I subject the students to Salmonella poisoning. It had consisted of a

selection of freshly made- sandwiches, fruit juice, fruits and chocolate obtained from the university's caterers.

The 2 focus group interviews were scheduled to take place on two separate days during 12.30-13.30hrs. An hour was allowed for each group discussion when the students had a free period. Which ensured they would not be in a rush to get to class for a lecture or lesson. Each group had 10 students.

Out of the cohort I asked for 20-24 volunteering participants to collect one of the reply slips which would be left in the classroom all day until the end of their last session. The module leader offered to remind the students during the day that their support is needed for the study. I told them that if they did decide to participate then they must complete and sign the reply slip. They needed to post the reply sheet to me in the (Self-Addressed Envelope) provided. I called round before the end of the lecture/school day to see if anyone had volunteered, I was surprised to see that although they appeared very interested and enthusiastic when I saw them in the morning there were only 6 reply slips from the students.

#### **4.9:8 Negotiation with students**

The module leader allowed me to spend another 10 minutes to brief them again. I had to tell them it is an important study with an aim to improving students' lives in nurse education, and if they felt they are not going to personally benefit they should recognise that by participating, they would enhance future students' experiences in a



positive way. As a group of students they have a better understanding of what a personal tutor is and can do for them. The personal tutors will also know what factors contribute to a workable, successful relationship and what have been their experiences to-date with students.

They became enthusiastic and agreed to participate. Berg (1998) suggests that the attitude toward the interview process strongly affects the quality of the resulting research. At times, students were sceptical and needed to be convinced. Sceptical potential subjects asked “why do you ask us and not someone else or another group, *“why have we been picked”*? I offered them a direct response by telling them that it was a random selection procedure and they, as a group, have had a longer experience with personal tutors than any other cohort after them. As Berg (1998) said it is sometimes necessary to convince subjects that what they have to say is important.

#### **4.9:9 Students’ as a captive audience for researchers to access**

As I was re-introducing and briefing the students I found a 4 page questionnaire on the table. I asked the cohort if anyone else had approached them to participate in a study and they all shouted an audible “Yes”! The Module Leader was not aware that another researcher had accessed the students at lunch time, after my introduction in the morning. It was not surprising that they [the students] were experiencing “ a researcher participant’s role overload and strain”. As a Course Director for the Undergraduate programme I was not informed that another researcher from the University wanted the cohort to participate in a research study on a different topic.

They had been given a lengthy questionnaire to complete by the end of the week. It was the students' first day back after the Christmas break and the beginning of their final module leading to their completion and registration. I considered Goffman's (1967:77) writing on '*evasion tactics and deference ceremony*' where he suggests that researchers express a kind of intrinsic respect for the other's avoidance rituals. Berg (1998:74) advises:

*"The emergence of evasion tactics during the course of an interview is among the most serious obstacles to overcome – but overcome them you must!"*

I felt that researchers are unconsciously competing to recruit participants as if the students were a captive audience. After my second introduction and briefing about my study, 20 students voluntarily signed up to participate in the focus group.

The cohort had 20 male students and 100 female students. But to my surprise the 20 students who volunteered were females age range 20-35 years old. A third focus group interview to encourage male students to participate in my research was arranged following a discussion with my supervisor who advised that due to the fact that no male students had so far volunteered this may prejudice my findings. In April 2002, I met with the same cohort, specified to them that I needed another group of students to participate in one more focus group and that I would very much like to have some male students as volunteers. It was pleasing to see nearly all of the male students wanted to participate. I had to put all of the male students names and 10 female students' who had not participated previously into a hat. I asked the module leader to pull out 5 male and another 5 female volunteers. I had set up three focus

group interviews. A total of 25 females and 5 male students participated in the focus group interviews.

Krueger (1995:78) further reported that Axelrod (1975) had recommended against mixing sexes in a focus group because “men tend to perform for women” and vice versa. Krueger said that men may have a tendency to speak more frequently and with more authority when in a group of women. He calls it the “peacock effect”. During the third focus group interview, I did not observe that the male participants were dominating the group interactions. They were a cohesive group and they took turns to speak.

#### **4.10 Fieldwork 2 - Data collection with the focus group interview**

Prior to commencing data collection, the students were told that the University’s Ethic Committee had granted permission for me to undertake this study. I advised them they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or any penalty (See invitation letter and informed consent in Appendices 9, 9a and 9b). All participants came forward on a voluntary basis and they were not offered any token or cash incentives but lunch was provided for them.

##### **4.10:1 Valuing participants contribution when conducting the interviews**

Berg’s (1998:87-88) ten commandments of interviewing, the basic rules to be observed were heeded. He advocated the following:

- Never start an interview cold. The provision of lunch for the students allowed me to make informal conversation with the participants about their clinical placement and studies. Since having been in Nurse Education for 13 years I tend to frequently adopt the use of Malcolm Knowles' (1984) andragogy element which is "setting the climate for learning". This principle for teaching adult students requires the teacher to prepare the physical and psychological climate. This includes seating arrangements and décor and in respect of the psychological climate, such things as mutual respect, collaboration, mutual trust and supportiveness, openness and authenticity and a climate of pleasure and humaneness.
- Remember your purpose. After the initial 10 minutes small talk, I obtained the students' permission to audio-tape the conversation and advised that it will last for no longer than 45minutes, also I introduced Mick who was to act as a co-moderator. I explained to them that Mick was acting as my mentor to facilitate the focus group and that he had conducted several of these types of interviews. I had two audio-tapes in place to record the interviews to minimise the potential for technical failure. One student offered to ensure the audiotape was switched on and was recording. A small room which seats about 20 people was specifically chosen and booked for the purpose of data collection for the focus group.

- Present a natural front. This was achieved by my facilitative style and willingness to listen to students at any time. I felt relaxed, positive and confident because I had a very good rapport with the students as I had known most of them for 18 months. As the main moderator for the focus group I considered some ethnographic advice on conducting the focus group interview. Thus, I ensured that I had good rapport. Rapport between interviewer and the interviewee is an important feature in ethnographic interviewing (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:141). Spradley (1979) advises the interview to be seen as a “speech event” that shares many features with a “friendly conversation”. This can happen as I, the researcher, have already built up a good relationship and positive reputation within the nurse education setting.

Measor (1985) reinforces the importance of building a relationship and outlines various strategies for doing so, such as considering one’s appearance, and using shared interests and biographical experiences. I found that my personal style, that of an explicit demonstration of an empathic lecturer assisted my interactions with the students and enabled me to gain their support readily. I could relate my thoughts and feelings with how they had experienced the role of the personal tutor but could not share this empathetic understanding with them. I therefore wrote some reflective notes after the focus group interview. It is illustrated here. One student said:

*“ you always try your best to help us, we are glad that some-one like you has our interests at heart and we have enjoyed telling you of our experiences with our personal tutors ”.*

I had a sense that the participants reciprocated my interest in students' experiences; they valued my motives and sought to help and respond to the appropriate depth that a focus group interview will enable any researcher to achieve. The data collection shared the characteristics of “rapport interview” and some feature of “depth interview” (Massarik, 1981:202-3).

- Demonstrate aware hearing. Prior to commencing the audio-tapes I read out some specific ground-rules (See Appendix 10 – Ground Rules for Focus Group) which I requested they adhered to.
- Think about appearances I presented myself in my usual smartly dressed manner.
- Interview in a comfortable place. The small room that was booked was familiar to the students. There were no desks or tables and just comfortable chairs.
- Don't be satisfied with monosyllabic answers. The students were keen to talk about their experiences with their personal tutors. A couple of students were just quietly observing and they were encouraged to share their views without making them feel patronised. I said:

*“I can see you are listening to your fellow group members intently with a smile now and then, how about you telling us about your experiences?”*

They soon began to open up and share their experiences. One said: *“my personal tutor treated me as if I was stupid whenever I met with her”*. This conversation needed probing and I encouraged the student by saying that she can share her experience with all of us now or at a later time during a one-to-one interview. She replied: *“I can say it now, I found her so bossy and I avoided meeting with her”*.

- Practice and practice and practice some more. I found this advice useful and I found that I developed my questioning and probing style continually when I conducted other sets of interviews. This advice is also supported by Miles and Huberman (1994:51) who advocate early analysis which helps field workers to cycle back and forth between thinking about existing data and generating new strategies for collecting new, often better data

- Be cordial and appreciative. The students were thanked for meeting with me and sharing their experiences. They reciprocated by saying:

*“we are glad to have an opportunity to talk about our experiences, as you can see some of us have been lucky to have friendly personal tutors and some have had experience of tutors who did not give a toss and did not care about us or what we are doing”*.

#### **4.10:2 The Focus Group interviews**

The scheduled interviews went ahead as planned. My aim to use focus groups was to generate ideas for the development of an interview guide for the open-ended

interview. A laddering technique, See Figure 4.10:3, was used to gain first, second or third order questions during the open-ended interviews. Laddering enables the moderator (researcher) to penetrate the personal, hidden reasons for people's feelings and reactions on their experiences about the personal tutoring system. It identifies the consumer "hot button" on a particular subject (Greenbaum, 1998). This can be seen under Berg's advice : "*be cordial.....*".

An open interview technique was chosen on the basis that it should act as a search-and- discovery mission with the intent to detect students' experiences with their personal tutors. (Holtein and Gubrium, 1997). Prior to starting the focus group, I had prepared an *aide memoire*. (See Appendix 11 – Aide Memoire).

Holloway and Wheeler (1996) suggest that an *aide memoire* is used as an agenda or a list of topics to be covered in an unstructured interview. Unstructured interviews or open-ended interviews allow flexibility and enables the researcher to follow the interests and thoughts of the participants. Patton (1990) adds that this kind of interview is particularly appropriate when the researcher interviews a participant more than once, it provides the richest data, but it also has the highest 'dross rate'.

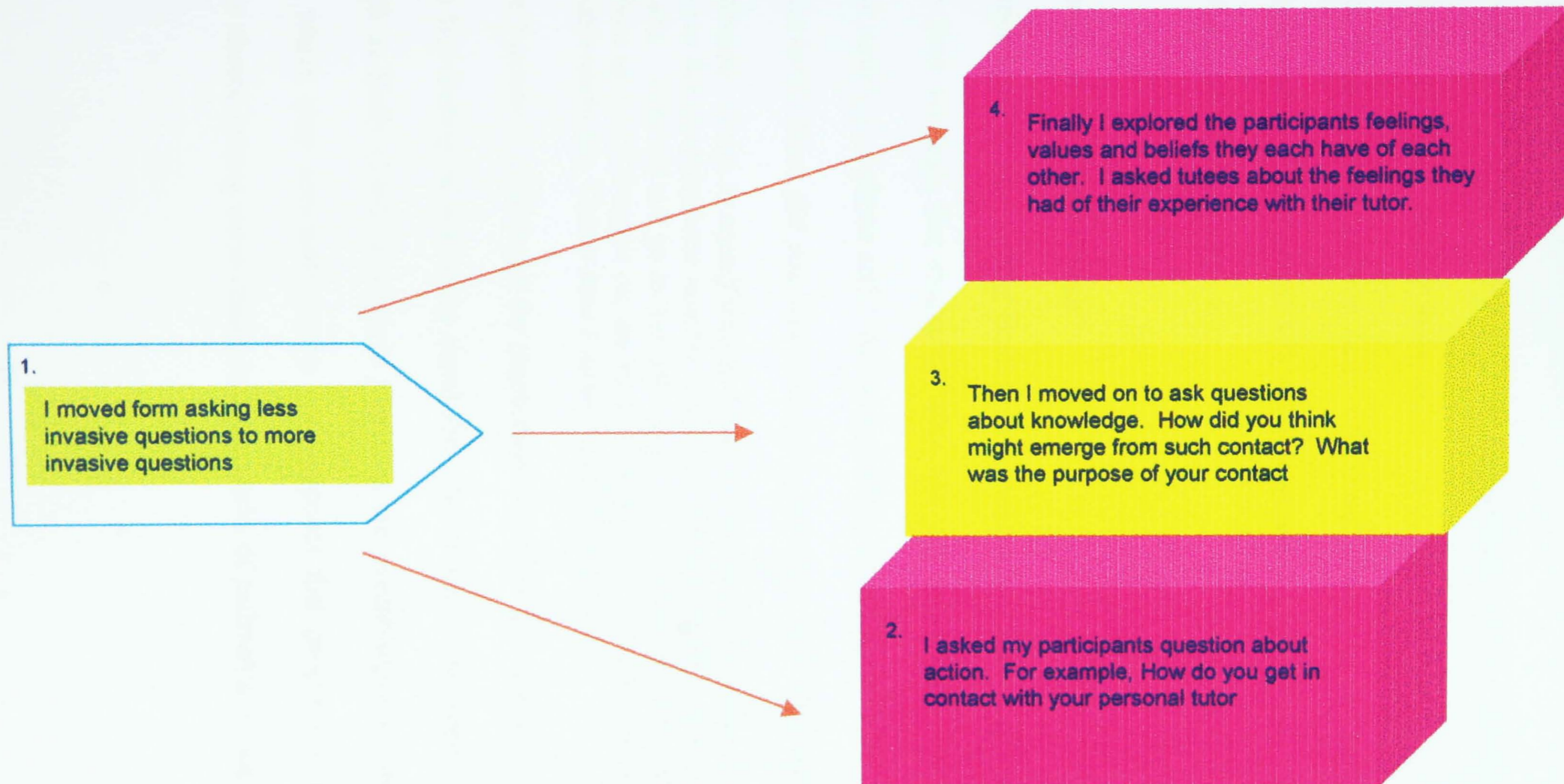
I was not concerned about the high dross rate since my goal in conducting the focus group was for me to gain some concepts and ideas on what constitutes a positive relationship with tutors and what were not "so good" in order to develop my interview guide. Nonetheless, open interviews can be unsatisfying, ineffective and



by no means sophisticated (Price, 2002), he proposes a simple framework such as “laddered questions” (see Figure 4.10:3). His suggested framework proved to be a useful reminder as to when to probe in order to deepen or expand the respondents’ sharing of their experiences. I began the unstructured interview as discussed below.

Figure 4.10:3

**A Step-by-Step Approach used during Interviews**  
**Adapted from Price (2002) Laddered Questioning Technique**



### **4.10:3 Fieldwork 2 – Data collection and Laddering Technique**

#### **4.10:3.1 First Level – “Action”**

At the start of the interview I invited the students to give me a description of their experiences with their personal tutor(s). This is less invasive and the purpose was to set the scene. For example, students were asked: “how have you been supported by your personal tutor?”. This question helps to collect contextual information and helps the respondent to feel assured that the researcher is interested in what they have been doing and experiencing.

#### **4.10:3.2 Second Level- “knowledge”**

This knowledge level of questioning is more invasive, such as encouraging them to elaborate on their feelings. For example, “what did you feel when your personal tutor does not return your phone call?” An excerpt below demonstrates this:

*ADH [Researcher]: What did you feel when your personal tutor does not return your call?*

*Anna (pseudonym): “I say to myself why do I take the trouble to phone her (personal tutor) and leave her my telephone number to call me back as she has never returned any of my calls. I should not go to her or bother her, she does not care about me. So, I have given up and I struggle on, on my own or go and find another tutor who is helpful and approachable. This is how I survive being in this place.”*

It is invasive because it challenged the respondent to review how she reasoned and deconstructs her feeling of not being cared for. According to personal construct theorists such as Kelly (1963) a person’s processes are psychologically channelled by ways in which they anticipate events and supposes that people’s actions are designed as a choice among these channels or networks of pathways, devised by the

individual, as a means of accomplishing desired ends and purposes. Thus, Anna seeks help from other tutors.

#### **4.10:3.3 Third level question “feelings/values”**

*ADH: “Anna, when your personal tutor did not phone you back and you get help from another tutor instead of going to your own personal tutor for support and guidance. How does it make you feel about approaching another tutor instead of your own?”*

*Anna: “oh! I do feel bad!. I usually apologise to the tutor by saying that I can’t get hold of my tutor, can you please help me with this problem?. For example, I am not sure what sort of things I need to write for this essay, can you please tell me if this essay outline looks okay to you”.*

Kitzinger (1994) suggests that the idea behind focus group processes can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one-to-one interview.

#### **4.11 Fieldwork 2 - Focus group data analysis**

This consisted of examining, categorizing, tabulating, and recombining the evidence from the interviews to address the initial proposition (Yin, 1984:99).

Spot checks of the tape recordings were carried out. After the focus group interviews I and my co-moderator talked about what data we had collected and we debriefed each other. Identification of common themes or ideas expressed and most noteworthy quotes and their usefulness were considered. It took 12 hours to prepare an abridged version of the 3 focus group interviews, note-based and memory analysis were employed. Emerging categories evolved following consideration of: the words participants used, the transcripts, internal consistency validated by my co-

moderator, Mick , the intensity of the comments made and the presenting big picture/ideas.

The emerging categories were:

- **Educational support/academic**
- **Clinical support/clinical supervision/mentorship**
- **Tutor's styles and attitudes**
- **Personal friendship/disclosure (holistic care)**

The students' own words were:

- **My personal tutor spied on me**
- **My personal tutor did not have any idea about my coursework or assessment guidelines**
- **My personal tutor had her "favourites" and often misled me**
- **My personal tutor took an interest in my study and me as a person.**

#### **4.11:1 Conclusion of Fieldwork 2**

In summary the focus group interviews were planned to obtain students' perceptions of their experiences with their personal tutors in a permissive and non-threatening environment. The open-ended style of interviewing enabled the students ample opportunity to comment, to explain and to share experiences and attitudes on the learning and support being provided to them by the personal tutoring system.

Krueger (1994) reported that focus group participants influence each other with their comments and when questions are asked in a group environment by skilful probing, the results are candid portraits of customers' perceptions.

Three focus groups were concluded in a period of 3 months, January to March 2002. The content analysis of the focus group work proved to be successful in my development of the interview guide for the open-ended interviews with students and personal tutors ( See Appendix 6). The next stage of fieldwork led me to apply for access to conduct the research study at another HEI that provides nurse education. A school of Health and Social Science department at a northern university was selected. The research proposal together with my local university ethical permission letter was sent to the Dean of the School. Permission was granted by a verbal response from a telephone call by the Dean to me. Further discussion will be presented under **Sample Selection Field Work 4 on 4.13 and 4.16- Northern University.**

#### **4.12 Fieldwork 3- Sample Selection for open-ended interviews at my work place a London university**

A purposive sampling was chosen to gain rich and in-depth experience as Patton (1991) suggested that qualitative researchers tend to use it more often. The selection of my participants involved critical thoughts and reflection. Cognisant of the warning of Field and Morse (1985) that although it is often easier to start data gathering with the more extroverted participants because they seem to have a more

dramatic account to offer, I was careful not to avoid the four tutees who were the less verbally expressive individuals I met during the focus group interviews. I wrote to the students and invited them to participate in a one-to-one open ended interview. Out of the three groups there were four BSc students who although encouraged to share their experience had only spoken minimally. I felt they had more to say but were reluctant to share their experiences openly to a wider group. (See Appendix 9a - a short letter of invitation to all tutees participants.)

#### **4.12:1 Fieldwork 3 and 4 – Purposive Sampling**

Within a positivistic paradigm, the purpose of sampling is to represent a population in a manner that one's findings may be generalised from (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) but in a naturalistic paradigm the purposive sampling is to maximise information and not facilitate generalisation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus I selected participants according to the needs of my study (Glasser and Strauss, 1967, Glasser, 1978) as I believed that they would facilitate the development of emerging theory or new knowledge into what it is like to experience the support offered by personal tutors and personal tutors with their tutees (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). Initially the high number of students in all the cohorts caused me some consternation.

#### **4.12:2 Dilemma in sampling**

At the outset one particular cohort which I identified the March 2000 cohort consisted of 100 Adults, 20 mental health branch and 18 child branch nursing students. I needed a sample of forty-six, as I felt a third would be adequate. The

total number of 138 divided by three would be 46 students. 46 was deemed appropriate and the 3 students who were from the focus group would give me a total number of 49 students.

One student from the focus group had been unwell and was not able to participate in an open-ended interview. 48 students would therefore be a large enough sample to expose the narrative to the rigours of qualitative enquiry. All the names of the students from the March 2000 cohort were placed in a cardboard post-box with a gap large enough for a hand to be inserted. A school secretary was asked to pull 45 names out of the box. There were 3 of my personal tutees and their names were not placed in the box to minimise bias from a total of 135 names. Therefore 45 names were drawn plus three from the focus group which resulted in a sample of 48. I wrote to them with an SAE enclosed and invited them to participate in an open-ended interview. A total of 29 students agreed to participate. 16 students did not return the SAE and I presume they did not wish to share their experiences. The non-respondents were mostly from the Child and Mental Health Branch. I believe the reason is I was unknown to the students, and they had little knowledge about me as I was an Adult Branch Course Director and I did not interact with them on a regular basis.

#### **4.12:3 Purposive sampling and typical case selection**

Purposeful sampling is often criticised on the grounds that the samples are biased by virtue of the selection process. Whilst Morse (1991) condones this criticism, in that



these methods facilitate a certain type of information being included in the study, she argues that used positively the bias will facilitate the research. However, she advised that the sampling frame must ensure that all sides of an issue are being presented and that it would be a serious error to exclude an experience because it is uncommon, or appears to be an exception to the developing theory.

I followed the same selection procedure for a purposive sample of lecturers at my work place. A total number of 50 lecturers' names from the Adult, Child and Mental Health departments were placed in the post-box, the school secretary pulled out 25 names. The research was not a correlational study and it was important to emphasise this in my invitation letter to students and lecturers. (See appendix 12 – Students Invitation letter and Appendix 12a – Tutors Invitation Letter.) 25 invitation letters were sent to lecturers, 20 agreed to participate, 3 declined and 2 lecturers did not return the reply slips.

LeCompte and Priessle (1993) advocate the use of typical-case selection where the researchers create a profile of characteristics for an average case and find instances of it. I printed the personal tutor list from the database of personal tutoring because I needed only those lecturers who are personal tutors to be selected. I needed a sample of lecturers who are heterogenous, males and females who have branch specific responsibilities, and it also included 2 un-qualified teachers. Patton, (1990), and Kuzel (1992) called this type of sampling maximum variation, as it involves a

search for variations in settings and for individuals with widely differing experiences.

Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1989:29) advocate the use of maximum variation as a deliberate hunt for negative instances or variations by questioning “whom do I know who sees things differently?” This question led me to approach another HE setting where there would be lecturers and students who may have also experienced the process of personal tutoring either similarly or differently.

Maykutt and Morehouse (2000) support the use of maximum variation when building a sample strategy by saying that qualitative researchers select people or settings with different goals in mind. I chose to select students and lecturers from another University to gain a deeper understanding of the personal tutoring process as I believe it involves complex human and social interactions between the giver and the receiver of support. Patton (1990) suggests the use of several sampling strategies with an aim to increase understanding versus generalisability. My goal was not to generalise my findings but to select people who I think represent the range of experience.

#### **4.13 Fieldwork 4– Sampling at the Northern University**

A formal approach to recruit a convenient sample was made in April 2002 to the Dean. In a telephone conversation she offered to grant me permission to recruit 12 students and 10 lecturers from her organisation. During a general enquiry and

discussion about the aims and objective of my research she requested that I did not use the word “negative” experience for fear that the students will recall only negative experiences with their personal tutors. I gave her a reassurance that I would not use the word “negative” and instead that I would re-phrase my question by asking the students and lecturers to tell me what aspect of the experiences could have been better. I wrote immediately to request a formal letter granting me access. The months went by and no letter arrived. In September 2002 I was presenting a paper on “Focus group interview” at the Nurse Education Tomorrow conference at Durham University and I met the colleague from the Northern university who was nominated to act as my facilitator. She was apologetic and reassured me that she would ensure I received formal notification granting access to her institution and a letter duly arrived in December 2002. (See appendix 13 –Letter from the Northern university, Appendix 13a – Response letter and Appendix 13b – Letter to facilitator at the Northern university).

#### **4.13:1 Access into the Northern university and Sampling**

In January 2003, I wrote to my named facilitator, Rose. She took my proposal to the Pre-Registration Committee Meeting and requested colleagues for voluntary participation. 10 Lecturers agreed to be contacted. Another copy of my research proposal was sent to the student representative council and 12 students put their names forward and agreed to participate. Rose sent me the students and lecturers telephone contact details. Convenience sampling was used by Rose to assist me with a sample from the Northern university. It is also known as opportunistic sampling. I

used the opportunity to ask students and lecturers from other universities to share their experiences of the personal tutoring process with me at a time when it was mutually convenient to me and them.

#### **4.14 Fieldwork 5 – A survey into academic and personal tutoring support.**

Following my attendance and presentation of a paper at the Nurse Education Conference at Durham University in September 2002, I learnt that some Universities also have an Academic adviser to support the nursing students. I discussed this fact with my supervisor and he suggested I conduct a small scale survey to identify which Universities have an academic adviser. A short questionnaire was designed, piloted at another London University following which minor adjustments were made. 25 Universities were identified from the Nursing & Midwifery Admission Service Applicant Handbook (2001). My supervisor assisted me by providing some “freepost stamped envelopes” to reduce my postage cost. 25 questionnaires with self-addressed Freepost envelopes were sent first class in November 2002. At the end of January 2003, 20 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 80% which was good. The questionnaires were collated and analysed quite simply to show which schools of nursing or higher education institutions are providing academic support as well as personal tutoring. (See Appendix 14 – Survey into the type of support provided by HEI and Appendix 14a – Results of Survey Questionnaire.) The findings of the questionnaires will be shown as another justification for conducting research into personal tutoring, the universities or schools of nursing will not be identified.

#### **4.15 Data Collection- open-ended interviews during Fieldworks 3 and 4**

The primary method of data collection within my own and host university was via interviews with students and lecturers. Two tape-recorders were used in case there was any technical failure during the process of data collection. The lecturers and students were contacted and a mutually convenient time was agreed for us to meet for a 30 minute open ended interview (see Appendices 8, 9a, 9b, 9c, 9d, and 12). Observational methods were not used as it would impinge into students and lecturer's privacy. Participant and non-participant observation which is historically used in anthropological and ethnographic studies is more difficult than interviewing and there are ethical issues involved and participants (students and lecturers) have to be protected when interaction are being explored ( Holloway and Wheeler, 1997:63).

A total of 44 open ended interviews with students and 36 with lecturers were completed between March 2002 to June 2003. My interview guide was drawn up following my focus group analysis, in that I formulated a list of general questions I would use during the interview, the sequencing of the questions was not in any order, I used the laddering technique as advocated by Price (2000). This was discussed earlier in the chapter. A preferred sequence and the wording of questions as the interview progressed was adopted. The advantage that I found is that by employing this method it allowed me to sequence questions in response to the interviewee's readiness and willingness to discuss particular topics (Denzin, 1989:106). Furthermore, I employed the words and terms used by the interviewee, a

practice that recognised individuals have a unique way of defining their world, and helped me to meaningfully understand their world (Denzin, 1989:105).

#### **4.15:1 Interview Venue and the interview process for Fieldwork 3 and 4**

The venue selection was important. Often at my own workplace, lecturers share an office. It was important to agree with the interviewees (the lecturers) if they would prefer to be interviewed in their office or elsewhere and if they preferred to be interviewed in their office if they could discuss with their office-mate whether or not they could have sole access of the office for an hour. The open-ended interview was only for half an hour but I had to allow for free casual “chat” before and the after the interview. It was necessary to conduct the interview in their natural setting as per the advice from Hammersley and Atkinson, (1995:140) who suggests interviews take place where the interviewee usually operates. It helps the interviewee to feel more relaxed (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 150) and it is more convenient for them to fit the interview into their daily routine.

Not all interviews took place in the lecturers’ office. The lecturers were based on two campuses. Occasionally, to fit into the lecturer’s work routine and diary, I had to book a room in advance and accept whatever room was available, the size of the room could not be chosen.

On one occasion, a large practical, clinical skills laboratory/room was offered. It felt quite open even though the doors were shut. The interviewee and myself identified a

small corner of the room in which to feel comfortable and for it to be conducive to conduct the interview- “conversation”. I called the interview a conversation because I wanted the interviewees to feel relaxed and comfortable in sharing their thoughts and experiences. Usually the interview took the form of a conversation with a purpose, I had a research agenda and I needed to control the proceedings. I had to be cautious as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:152) points out it was never simply a conversation. I maintained a flexible approach, I entered the interview room with a list of areas I wished to cover rather than a list of questions. The sequence of the questioning evolved as the interview progressed and developed.

The students’ interview was conducted in my office.

#### **4.15.2 Pilot study of the interview and the processes that followed**

The introduction to the interview process was important. It sets the tone. I conducted two pilot studies prior to embarking on doing the open-ended interviews on a large scale. On the first pilot, I used a digital tape recorder which was brand new and I was not confident with my technical skills to operate the equipment. I found myself pre-occupied with making sure that the equipment worked as well as I expected it to.

#### **4.15:3 Uncertainty over data collection equipment**

After the first pilot, I felt my pre-occupation with the functionality of the digital recorder interfered with my sense of satisfaction following the interview and I realised that I would be more comfortable with using a traditional, basic tape recorder. The participant in the pilot study was a work colleague called Ella, who

has known me for 8 years and knew me quite well enough to evaluate my performance as an interviewer and to offer me constructive feedback. She felt that I was avoiding eye contact with her and most of the time, my eyes were wandering towards the digital recorder. This needed to be avoided at all cost and she suggested that I use equipment that I was familiar with and that I was confident in using. On that comment, I resorted to using 2 small Sony Tape recorders with built-in microphones. Ella participated once more in the pilot study and the interview was more successful and enjoyable for both of us.

#### **4.15:4 Starting the interview**

At the start of each interview, I explained the nature of my research, that is I was seeking to gain an insight into personal tutors' experience with their tutees and also seeking to gain an insight into what students have experienced with their personal tutors, it was by no means a **correlational study**, I was not validating the students' experiences with their personal tutor and the objective of my study was to enable tutees to have a better understanding of the personal tutor role, what factors promote a successful professional relationship and also for personal tutors to gain insight into tutees' experiences that were positive and areas where they have felt disappointment and unsupported. I explained the nature and purpose of my study in order to seek their consent. A consent form together with a biographical questionnaire was given to them to complete. (See appendix 15 – Biographical Questionnaire for students, Appendix 16 – Biographical Questionnaire for Tutors and Appendix 17 – Consent Form given to participants.)



I read the consent form with them to ensure that they are willing to share their experiences with me. Spradley (1979:59) advocates an “ethnographic explanation” whereby the researcher continually offers explanations to the interviewee and that it is an important process in interviewing. After they had signed the consent form, I generally thanked the interviewees for taking part, explaining that I have had an interest in the personal tutoring role for almost twelve years and I wish to gain an in-depth knowledge, and insight into personal tutors’ and tutees’ experiences of the process of personal tutoring. I checked that they were happy to have the “conversation” recorded on tape, to which all of my participants had no objection to make.

I also asked simple questions of the students and lecturers for example, if they have had personal tutors before entering the University. It was a way of establishing a friendly “grand tour” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:270). Questions to tutors included: “do you recall having a personal tutor when you did your nurse training?” Questions to students included: “ Before you came to study nursing, did you have a personal tutor when you were in secondary education? Or if the student had studied previously at a University I would ask: “did you have a personal tutor when you studied for your degree?” These “grand tour” questions had a number of advantages. It helped the interviewee to feel relaxed, it initiated the interview process, it helped the interviewee to get used to answering questions and it gave me useful information. Often I found the introduction to the interview would provide me with

important cultural, social and environmental information such as their personal values and the expectations that the individuals have in relation to the nature of academic, pastoral and clinical support.

#### **4.16 Interview Venue at the Northern University – Fieldwork 4**

I identified 3 full days in March 2003 to conduct the interviews with the students and lecturers. In February 2003, I wrote (see Appendix 18 – Letter to facilitators at the Northern university and Appendix 19 – Letter to students at the Northern university) to all of the students who volunteered to participate to confirm that they are willing for me to contact their home telephone number to fix a time for me to meet them. I sent them an invitation letter explaining who I am and asked them to let me know a suitable time to telephone them, a self addressed envelope was included for them to return the response slip (See appendix 18).

##### **4.16:1 Overcoming the difficulty as an outside researcher**

It proved difficult to get a response from the student volunteers, whereas the lecturers letters which were sent, were responded to quickly and returned within a week. I waited for 3 weeks and no replies from the students were received. I began to wonder if Rose my facilitator had forwarded the letters of invitation to the students. I summoned some courage and phoned one student from the list that I had been given. The student (Elle) was friendly in her voice tone and said that she had not received an invitation letter.

I explained that Rose had forwarded me a list of students together with their home telephone contact number. Elle added that the students who agreed to participate had been away from the University Campus for almost eight weeks, the letters may have been posted in their “pigeon-hole” in the students’ common room. Elle volunteered to help and go to the campus to look for the letters and she would phone me the next evening. Elle did as she offered to help. She telephoned me the next evening to reassure me all the twelve students letters were still in their “pigeon-holes”. She said the group of the students would be coming to campus in a week’s time and she would personally hand them their letters. I thanked her for her support and she told me to go ahead and book my study days and to contact the students in a weeks time as I had such a short time to organise my trip up North. I followed her advice and was able to establish contact with all of the students by telephone. They were keen and helpful. Dates and times were agreed with them to fit in around the host lecturers’ interview time.

The school secretary helped me to secure a small tutorial room where I could conduct the interviews. As a visiting researcher I had very little choice in identifying the room. On my first visit, I had a quiet small room and on my second visit, there was no room available and eventually, I was allocated a small room next to the photocopier. There were some distractions and noises outside from the photocopiers when lecturers or school secretaries were doing multiple copies or having casual chats. Before my final and third day visit, I had established a good rapport with one

of the school secretaries and was therefore able to request a small room away from the photocopier.

#### **4.17 Terminating the interviews**

I was aware that I had informed my participants that the interview process will take only 30 minutes. I did not stick rigidly to that time. On most occasions the interview came to a natural end with tutees who had positive encounters or with tutors who were less open in sharing their experiences, for example, the interviewee, had to return to work or indicated that they had nothing further to add. Some students who had a positive experience spent less than 20 minutes to share their experience and some who had difficult experiences took about 45 minutes.

To ensure that the interview was completed I felt it was important to ask each interviewee if he or she had anything else to add. I found that student interviewees revealed what they expected from their personal tutor when I asked them “ tell me what is your ideal personal tutor, what sort of attributes do you feel, he or she should have”. A list of these attributes are collated and attached as an appendix (See Appendix 20 – Attributes of the ideal personal tutor) I asked the lecturer interviewees to “ describe in your terms, what is your style of personal tutoring?”. This question revealed their own perception of how they support their tutees and they often reflected their style or their approach to personal tutoring in the main content of the interviews. I felt it was important to demonstrate that I valued their contribution by thanking them for participating. Some lecturers felt more at ease to

talk after the tape recorder was switched off, they spent another 10 minutes on sharing their experiences.

All interviews were audiotaped. It had the advantage that I have a verbatim record of the interview that I transcribed and was able to review the taped interview as frequently as I wanted to. All interviewee participants agreed for the interview to be recorded without any hesitation. Burgess (1982: 118) indicated that if good rapport exists with the interviewer the tape recording will be accepted without hesitation by the interviewee. Maykutt and Morehouse (2000:98) add that the tape-recorder quickly fades into the background if the interviewer is adept at using the machines and the participants are engaged in the experience.

On the other hand the use of a tape recorder can act as a barrier, and threaten and inhibit (Spradley, 1979:74) and may constrain open and candid responses (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:272). There were hidden problems, as illustrated by the reflective notes I made immediately after the interview was completed. I noted that there were things that the tape recorder could not capture, such as facial expressions, body posture, mood and the avoidance of eye contact. An excerpt of my interview notes after interviewing a male colleague is shown next.

#### **4.17:1 An excerpt of my diary and respecting my participants.**

At the beginning of the interview G had a smile and agreed to have the interview audio-taped. For the first five minutes he stared at the tape recorder whilst talking about his style and process of personal tutoring. He did not appear nervous or uncomfortable but he had a tendency to mutter his words and not speak clearly or loud enough for me to hear him properly. He shuffled occasionally and he later relaxed and leant back on the seat. He directed his gaze at the ceiling when he spoke. I maintained a calm, relaxed approach and directed my gaze every now and then at the tape recorder hoping that he would project his voice towards the audio tape. He would momentarily do so and resume his stance of leaning back and look towards the ceiling. The interview lasted 30mins. As soon as the tape recorder was switched off. He let out a sigh of relief by saying: "Aah! Is that it, it was not too bad then"

For reasons of confidentiality G's identity cannot be disclosed nor could I talk about the interview process in great detail. The interview took place in my office, away from his office and campus. G chose to come over as he was attending a Course Management meeting later on that day. When he left I played the two audiotapes and found that the tape recorders had failed to capture his voice in a clear enough manner to be transcribed. I ended up making handwritten notes about the main content of what G had said on his experience with personal tutees.

I respected and valued each of my participants for sharing their encounters and experiences. This part of the research journey when tutees' and tutors shared their accounts of their lived experiences was enlightening and enabled me to see the complexity of the nature of the personal tutoring role.

#### **4.18 Phenomenological Data Analysis**

The jewel in the crown for phenomenologists is phenomenological analysis. The entire process of inquiry is embedded within the data analysis and as such this must

be the pinnacle of the study. So the purpose of analysis is to preserve the uniqueness of each lived experience of the phenomenon, whilst permitting an understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon (Banonis, 1988). Within Husserlian phenomenology, structured approaches can be used to analyse data. The literature claims that if the procedures used to analyse the data are adequate, validity can be ascertained (Knaack, 1984; Oiler, 1986; and Banonis, 1988). There appears to be many structured approaches to this. I considered several of them, namely Spiegelberg (1976); Giorgi (1970); Van Kaam (1966) and Colaizzi (1978). (See Table 4:18)

**Table 4.18 Comparisons of the steps of three phenomenological methodologies**

Giorgi (1970)	Van Kaam (1966)	Spiegelberg (philosophical) (1976)
<p>1. Naive description of the phenomena accomplished via an interview with the subject.</p> <p>2. The researcher reads the entire description to get a sense of the whole.</p> <p>3. The researcher reads the description more slowly and identifies individual units</p> <p>or</p> <p>4. The researcher eliminates redundancies in the units, clarifying or elaborating the meanings of the remaining units by relating them to each other and to the whole.</p> <p>5. The researcher reflects on the given units, and transforms the meanings from concrete language into the language of concepts of the science.</p> <p>6. The researcher then integrates and synthesises the insights into a descriptive structure which is communicated to other researchers for confirmation and/or criticism.</p>	<p>1. Preliminary consideration of a specific moment of experience.</p> <p>2. Research questions are evoked by the experiences. What are the necessary and sufficient constituents of this feeling? What does the existence of this feeling tell me concerning the nature of man?</p> <p>3. Awareness phase of explication. Implicit awareness of a complex phase becomes explicit formulated knowledge of its components through the collection of a number of crude prescientific explanations made by untrained subjects.</p> <p>4. <i>Scientific explication</i>: Listing or classifying data into categories. The data come from empirical data. i.e. a large random sample of cases taken from the total pool of descriptions. The final listing, a review of the various elements and their percentages must be agreed upon by expert judges. Reduction of concrete vague, intricate, and overlapping descriptions to more precisely descriptive terms. Here, too, intersubjective agreement among the expert judges is required. Elimination of those elements which are not inherent. Hypothetical identification of categories. Application of the hypothetical descriptions to randomly selected cases of the original sample. A careful analysis is done to determine if new hypothetical categories will appear. If they do, they must be tested against a new random sample of cases.</p> <p>5. Final identification and description validity lasts until other cases are presented which do not correspond to the necessary and sufficient constituents contained in the final listing.</p>	<p>1. Investigating the particular phenomena. Phenomenological intuiting. Phenomenological analysing: analysis of the phenomena, not the expressions that refer to them. Phenomenological describing, based on classification.</p> <p>2. Investigating the general essences: looking at the particulars to apprehend the general essences and their relationships.</p> <p>3. Watching the modes of appearing.</p> <p>4. Exploring the constitution of the phenomena in consciousness.</p> <p>5. Suspending belief in existence, i.e. bracketing.</p> <p>6. Interpreting the meanings which are not immediately manifest to our intuiting, analysing and describing.</p>



## Colaizzi method (1978)

The final methodology I identified and placed almost total emphasis on describing data collection methods. Specifically, Colaizzi emphasised matching the appropriate method for collecting data. Analysis of the data for Colaizzi occurs concurrently with data collection in the last two of the four types of methodologies that he discussed. The sources of data and the corresponding methods of data collection and analysis were as follows.

### *Written descriptions and protocol analysis*

Van Kaam's methodology is an example of this method of data collection and analysis.

### *Dialogue interview and imaginative listening*

This method requires the researcher to be aware of the subject as a total being, listening with more than just the ears, and using all of the senses. Upon receipt of the data, analysis is similar to the steps used in Van Kaam's methodology, but the perceptions of the researcher are included in the analysis. Giorgi's method is very similar to this process.

### *Observation of lived events and perceptual description*

This particular method of phenomenological research seeks to explain those experiences that are beyond human experiential awareness or to examine those experiences that cannot be communicated. The former types of experiences include all behaviours that are unconscious, behaviours that occur but cannot be explicitly described. These behaviours include such activities as typing and dancing. They might include those behaviours performed by proverbial human subjects such as children or non-verbal human subjects.

Data are collected through a process called perceptual description. This involves putting aside all preconceived notions of how the experience will proceed. The experience is approached by the researchers naively, as a whole. It is not to be perceived as an unfolding or building up of isolated units, but rather as a totality of several units of equal importance. The final product is a description of the total behaviour, activity, or social event as perceived by the researcher.

### *Imaginative presence and phenomenological reflection.*

This particular phenomenological method aims at describing psychological phenomena through a reflective process undertaken by the researcher. The method in this case is the result. Price and Barrell have envisioned what they perceive as a new research paradigm starting with this type of phenomenological method. Researchers would first reflect on their own experience, disclosing the meaning of the experience to the conscious reflective mind. From these meanings testable hypotheses would be generated. The established quantitative experimental methods would be used to test these experimental hypotheses.

Spiegelberg (1976) laid emphasis on the ‘emancipation from preconceptions’, others like Giorgi (1970) and Colaizzi (1978) concentrate on the actual analysis. Colaizzi (1978) specifically emphasises matching the appropriate source of data with the appropriate method for collecting data. I opted for Colaizzi’s (1978) method as the most helpful in guiding the data analysis. Beck (1974) identified thirteen studies in which Colaizzi’s method had been used. In four of these studies caring was investigated, and in three studies the focus was on the lived experiences of the nurse rather than the patient.

Although it is pertinent to note that according to Koch (1995) Colaizzi describes his framework as being derived from Heideggerian phenomenology, she argues that as structured approaches are anathema to Heideggerian interpretivism, he does not reflect true Heideggerian phenomenologist. Nevertheless, this confusion needs to be considered when analysing the data according to the Colaizzian framework.

#### **4.18:1 An Account of the data analysis process**

It is pertinent to note that the data analysis was not a linear process, but a process in which participants’ descriptions (conventionally termed protocols) were revisited many times as findings emerged. I attempted to analyse the early data concurrently with its collection but the majority of the analysis occurred after completion. I took the analysis with both intuition and reflection in order that I became sensitised to the emerging themes. I asked participants to clarify that the protocols were a valid presentation and that the themes and clusters were reflective of their experiences.

This is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) term as a 'member check' which provides evidence of credibility.

#### **4.18:2 Colaizzi's (1978) procedural steps of analysis**

The following seven steps from Colaizzi's method (1978) method were utilised:

##### **4.18:2.1 Protocol is another term used for the transcripts.**

I read all the subjects's descriptions of their experience, in order to acquire a feeling for them through listening and transcribing the tapes.

##### **4.18:2.2 Extracting significant Statements.**

I returned to each transcript and extracted the phrases or sentences that directly pertained to the investigated topic on the personal tutoring experience. From each transcript I wrote the significant statements on a 5 x 8 inch Index Card with a code signifying the section of the protocol it was extracted from. For example: (4):9:2:1 signified that the statement came from interview 4, page 9, paragraph 2, statement 1 to make cross-checking back to the protocol simple. (See Table 4.18:2.7) A full copy of two tutees' and two tutors' transcripts are shown. (See Appendices 21 – Female tutor transcript, 22 – Male tutor transcript, 23 – Female Tutee transcript (positive experience), 24 – Female tutee transcript (lack of support) and 25 – Male tutee transcript).

#### **4.18:2.3 Formulating meanings**

I formulated meanings from pertinent phrases as they emerged from the significant statements and I tried to spell out the meaning of each significant statement. This involved creative insight, which remains faithful to the original data. The meanings were validated by my critical reader who acted as an independent judge.

#### **4.18:2.4 Clusters of themes.**

I repeated the above steps for each protocol, and organised the aggregated formulated meanings into themes, clusters of themes and theme categories. I validated the cluster of themes by referring back to the original protocols to see if the data have been ignored or added to and if there were contradictory themes, which may reflect the real and valid experience. The data was not ignored or discarded. The themes, clusters and categories were validated by my critical reader who looked at the clusters of themes in relation to the original.

#### **4.18:2.5 Exhaustive description.**

The results of the analysis so far were then integrated into an exhaustive description of the investigated topic.

**4.18:2.6 Fundamental structure derived from the formulation of the exhaustive description of the phenomenon into a statement of identification of its fundamental structure.**

An effort was made to formulate the exhaustive description of the investigated phenomenon in an unequivocal statement of identification of its fundamental structure; and

**4.18:2.7 A final validating step.**

This was achieved by returning 10 Protocols to 10 tutor-participants and 10 tutee-participants and they were asked to analyse the described experiences. 4 tutors returned the transcripts stating that they were accurate analyses of their 'conversations with me', three of the tutees-participants added some more information to incorporate into the final product such as the Tutor should be readily available and accessible, this was not new data and in fact had already been incorporated. I phoned the remaining 6 tutors and 7 tutees to enquire if they had received the analyses of the data and they responded that they did not have any datum to delete or to add. See Table 1 – 4.18:2.7 below a representative sample of significant phrases or statements.

**Table 1 - 4.18:2.7**

**A Representative of original transcript which showed negative encounters**

*... could never see my tutor...<sup>4.3.5</sup> I find her patronising...<sup>8.2.7</sup>  
whenever I ring my tutor...<sup>10.5.6</sup> he is never there...<sup>10.5.8</sup> and he  
doesn't answer my calls...<sup>10.5.9</sup> . What personal tutor? ...<sup>9.7.3</sup> You  
never get to see them...<sup>9.8.5</sup> .. My tutor was invisible...<sup>12.4.9</sup> .  
Instead of supporting us, our tutor was always away doing high  
profile jobs...<sup>13.2.5</sup> My tutor was honest and said he didn't have  
time for me...<sup>14.5.4</sup> my tutor asked me to see her there and then if  
I called as she thinks I'm in the building when in fact I had left  
the ward to make a quick phone call to her...<sup>13.6.9</sup> I have turned  
up for a tutorial and found the tutor has left before I  
arrived...<sup>9.9.5</sup> I feel like I am on a conveyor belt...<sup>6.9.4</sup> no one  
cares about me...<sup>6.10.2</sup> . I often see other tutees get all the help  
with the coursework and exams....<sup>14.7.8</sup> . I get sent on a wild  
goose chase...<sup>14.9.5</sup> do this do that...<sup>14.10.6</sup> . And I feel it is  
deliberate by my tutor to misguide me....<sup>14.10.8</sup> My tutor does not  
smile or talk to me...<sup>2.8.7</sup> . My tutor shouts and accuses me for  
turning up late for appointments when I'm never late for  
anything...<sup>15.3.4</sup> My teacher is openly racist, he tells us, can't  
you lot write or read, where do you come from....<sup>16.5.7</sup>*

The majority of the interviews formed significant statements, although there also existed a small degree of irrelevant information. Field and Morse (1985) refer to this, though they were minimal in the tutees who had positive encounters but more when tutees reported negative encounters with their tutors. This could be due to them getting an opportunity to inform a tutor in a senior position of their plight and the hardship they had to endure while studying. However, I ensured that I preserved the contextual awareness as shown in table1- 4.18:2.7 of representative transcripts which showed significant statements.

The data analysis proved to be the biggest challenge to me (See Appendix 26 – Audit Trail – Reflective notes on data analysis).

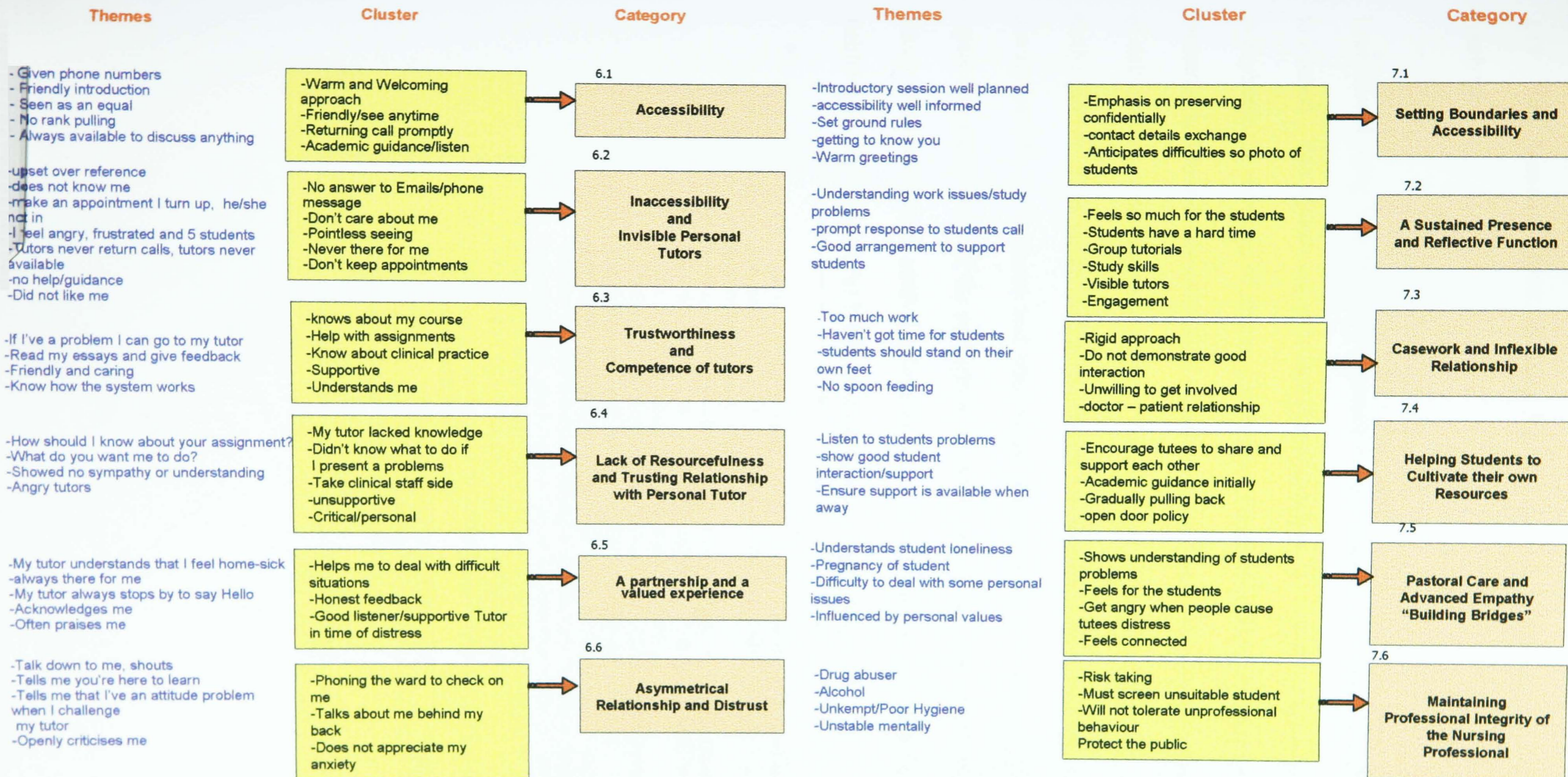
From the protocols 915 formulated meanings and 305 themes were derived. This was particularly time consuming and the cause of agonised and debated discussion with my supervisor and critical reader because I was determined that the account should contain as much primary data as possible. This led me to present my data as ‘narratives’ which is an unconventional approach to presenting findings and my justification is shown in Chapter 5.

The 915 formulated meanings were subsequently reduced to 205 themes and then organised into theme clusters. Data that did not seem to fit was not ignored since they could be ‘logically inexplicable but existentially real and valid’ ( Colaizzi, 1978). The themes were then managed into an arrangement of 45 themes clusters and finally 6 to 7 theme categories as illustrated in Table 2 - 4.18:2.7.

Figure 4.16.2 Tutor and Tutee Stories

Themes/Categories "Students' Story"

Themes/Categories "Personal Tutors' Story"





#### 4.19 Van Manen's (1990) Human Science Approach incorporated in Data Analysis

I considered using Van Manen's approach to data analysis as he holds similar view to Husserl . Van Manen suggests that phenomenology is a human science that aims to explicate the meaning of human phenomena. To understand the lived structure of meanings and to transform the lived experiences that I had collected as large chunks of data into a textual expression I felt 'Van Manen's 6<sup>th</sup> step' to be an appropriate method to use. This would help me to extract the essences into what makes a good description of an experience and what is the alternative to it in order to grasp the nature and significance of the participants' experience in a hitherto unseen way. Van Manen's six activities to analysing hermeneutic phenomenology are shown below:

**Table: 4:19 Van Manen's (1990) Human Science Approach**

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world (I am interested in the world of the tutees' and tutors' lived experience and encounters
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it. (When I collected the data, I bracketed all my pre-conceptions on the tutees and tutors observed and known experiences).
3. Reflecting on the essential themes to characterise the phenomenon. (I felt that was an enjoyable part of the data collection and analysis).
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and re-writing (this activity became immensely taxing, I needed more structured guidance to accomplish this and to help me to see the meanings within the data I gathered. It proved hard when re-writing the essential structure. Therefore, I resorted to another method such as Cortaizzi (1993)
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon (I did not attempt this activity).
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole. (*I was able to incorporate this in presenting my data as it will be seen in chapter 6 & 7 under Tutees' and Tutors' stories.*)

#### **4.20 Trustworthiness**

In all research it is important that rigour is maintained. Rigour in quantitative research is established by validity and reliability. There is a consensus of opinion that these concepts do not 'fit' a qualitative paradigm ( Lincoln and Guba 1985; Sandelowski 1986). The framework developed by Guba and Lincoln (1989) was chosen as valuable in establishing trustworthiness. This is based on the criteria of credibility, transferability and dependability.

Credibility is achieved when the participants involved in the research recognise the descriptions of the experience to be their own, even when it is in fact the description of another participant. To enhance the credibility of my research I continually checked, questioned and reflected on the findings. I also presented part of my data collection and findings at three conferences where colleagues had repeatedly challenged my assumptions, presuppositions and findings, that enhanced my 'craftsmanship'. Furthermore, my critical reader and independent judge ascertained the quality of the interview scripts. He identified gaps in my transcripts when I could have probed more for the participants to reveal how they felt.

For the transferability criteria, it is important to provide sufficient contextual information regarding the study and findings. I believe that I indicated clearly how the research was conceptualised and provided details on the sampling and the setting

where data were collected. The criteria for dependability is the audit trail for my data analysis and the challenges that I faced that can be noted from Appendix 26.

#### **4.21 Ethical Dimensions of Research access and adherence to ethical principles**

At all times I was aware that I was conducting research involving human subjects and I did not want to abuse the trust and confidence they had in me. Burns and Groves (1995:365-6) report that there is a history of research involving human subjects which is replete with examples of human abuse. I therefore paid careful consideration prior to developing my research proposal as I am aware that the Health Authority Ethics Committee monitors the quality of a research proposal to ensure it is ethical and non-abusive. My research did not involve patients or nurses in a hospital setting. Therefore, I could not approach the Medical Ethics Committee. I contacted the Dean of students in my work-place and sought his advice. He told me how to submit my research proposal to the University Ethics Committee and after a period of 4 weeks I received a phone call from the Secretary to the Ethics Committee asking me to clarify that I will not be engaging or interviewing the students' personal tutors when I collate my data, that it is not a correlational study and that the data collection would be separate. I re-sent my proposal highlighting what I had typed in bold in my original copy to say that I will not be approaching personal students and their tutors. See Appendices 8, 8a, 8b and 8c and a letter which granted me approval to conduct the study.

I have a moral and professional obligation that my participants are protected from any harm or risk.. I am professionally accountable to the UKCC which is now known as the NMC, the statutory governing body for Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors and to my employer which is the Higher Education Institution. I had to justify my research topic to the 'gatekeepers', the Dean at the Universities, my supervisor and my research participants. (See ethical approval letter in Appendix 21.) It was important to recognise that participants had a right to refuse participation or withdraw at any stage during data collection ( Holloway and Wheeler, 1996:39). The ethical principles outlined by Beauchamp and Childress (1994) were considered. They are the principles of respect for autonomy, principle of non-maleficence (no harm), principle of beneficence (doing good) and the principle of justice.

- **Respect** is a primary ethical concern. The research was conducted in such a way that it was respectful to those involved, in particular respecting individual's autonomy. Participants are given informed consent and their participation was voluntary and non-coerced. The participants had a right to accept or reject the invitation to participate, could withdraw and cease their participation at any time. I ensured that the students and lecturers were fully informed that the study was taking place.

They were invited to contact me if they had any concerns or had any questions. Regarding the interview, I gave a full explanation, which

included the purpose of the study, the purpose of the interview and an outline of what was involved. I also made a commitment to adhere to confidentiality and anonymity.

Additionally, I explained that I was not going to validate what I am told in the interview with the personal tutors or tutees. If they happen to identify the student or lecturer, the names will be deleted from the transcript to preserve total anonymity and ensure that they do not identify any student or lecturer's personal idiosyncrasies or characteristics.

Respecting students and lecturers autonomy implied that I had a sensitivity to the wishes of my participants through the study. There were some occasions where respecting the wishes of participants was of greater importance than the study. On one occasion, a highly experienced lecturer who is also a colleague of mine had spoken on several occasions about personal tutees on an informal basis and she requested that she could mention these informal references briefly during the interview but that I should not quote them when writing up my research findings. I agreed with the request. During the interviews I had to make some difficult choices, for example in this situation, I am being told an interesting, rich piece of data involving a personal tutor and her tutee but could not quote this interaction in my research findings.

My reflective notes (in italics) depicts how I felt:

*L talked openly about her style of personal tutoring by saying I treat them (my tutees) like my own children. She indicated that she did not want to say any more on the topic of “mothering”. From my point of view I felt it would have been useful to probe and find out what she actually does or says to her tutees but I had to respect her wishes. Once the tape recorder was switched off, L elaborated on what she meant about mothering and spoke about the problems she encountered with some of her tutees. She did not want to talk openly on the audio- tapes. Even though what she said was of great interest to illuminate the pastoral care aspect of personal tutoring, I had to respect her decision not to report what she had said or to be incorporated in my findings.*

- **No harm.** I was aware that some students or lecturers may get upset and show some of their emotions, especially if it had been a “bad” experience and reliving the experience brought back some distressing memories. In such cases, I had enquired from the Welfare Department at my University if I could call upon expert help from a counsellor. The Counsellor within the department agreed that I could contact her any time that I was concerned about any of my participants’ mental well-being. At my “host” university, Rose had agreed to put me in touch with the appropriate counselling service if I needed. Rose was contactable on her mobile telephone during the day when I was visiting the University to collect data.

I had only two episodes when lecturers became tearful when reliving their experiences. They said they did not want support from the counselling unit but they said they felt relieved that at last they were able to express their emotions openly without being judged by their managers for their over-involvement in a particular students’ crisis. The pause button was switched on to allow the

lecturers to regain their composure, have a drink of water and to gently wipe away their tears. I felt I could empathise with them and I asked permission if I could hold their hands as a form of therapeutic support.

I believe these two short “distressed situations” arose as Platt (1981) had reported that in an interview situation with peers and colleagues, the researcher and informant are in a position of equality. This helps the participants to “open up” and trust the researcher, but warns that there is a danger of over-involvement and identification with the participants. Some of the listening skills adopted in counselling such as eye contact and leaning forward assisted the participant to regain control and they expressed a wish to continue sharing their experience with me.

#### **4.22 The advantage of being an ‘Insider’ Researcher and respect for others**

Holloway and Wheeler (1996:58) suggest that there are advantages of interviewing colleagues, that is informant and researcher have a shared language, concepts are easily understood, there is less room for misinterpretation but misunderstanding can arise from the assumptions of common values and beliefs and they recommend that the researcher act as a “cultural stranger or naïve observer” asking the participants to clarify the meaning of their ideas and experiences.

**Beneficence.** I considered Tschudin’s (1986) two approaches in ethics, the normative approach (what I should do) and the descriptive approach (what I actually

do). At the outset, I made it explicit to them that if they (the participants) get distressed at any time that I have specialist people available to assist them from the welfare department. The UKCC code of conduct (1992) requires a practitioner to “*always safeguard the well-beings of clients...*”

I endeavoured to abide by the rules of veracity (truth-telling) to my participants. Beauchamp and Childress (1994) advocate the rules of confidentiality and privacy. I ensured that my participants were aware that what they related to me will be confidential and that any aspect of the lived experiences they had shared with me, which they did not want me to disclose to others I would agree to the request. To further ensure anonymity, the taped interviews did not bear the lecturer's or student's name. They were assigned pseudonyms. I kept the matching names separate from the audiocassettes in locked cabinets as advised by (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996). I was the sole person who had access to the signed consent forms and the recorded audiotapes. My supervisor was the only person who could ask to see the consent forms and audiocassette tapes. The participants were informed that the tapes would be erased after one year by me as suggested by (Patton, 1990). Prior to obtaining the participants' informed consent I informed them what the research was about and that the objectives were to enhance students' learning experience and for lecturers to understand tutee's expectations of their personal tutors. The participants were also told that I may quote excerpts of verbatim transcripts when I described my findings, minor details will be changed and the transcript will not bear their names to ensure total anonymity (Archibold, 1986). However, it would only be



them who would know about the exceptions, that is they might recognise what they had said.

**Justice.** I considered whether or not my study has any benefit to the students and lecturers. The ethical consideration took into account the worthiness of the project, my reasons and motives for doing it, and whether or not it reflected my personal values (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Additionally, utilitarian ethical theory places more emphasis on the consequences of actions and Beauchamp and Childress (1994) show that utility means usefulness. John Stuart Mills (1806-1873), a British philosopher put forward the principle of utility into a moral theory by saying that actions are right if they promote happiness, and wrong if they bring about unhappiness. The utilitarian theory suggests that it means greatest happiness for the greater number. I believe that I chose to explore the lived experiences of personal tutors and tutees because I thought it was an important area of study that was relatively little researched. There existed a gap in our knowledge on how personal tutors and tutees had experienced the process of the personal tutoring system. I felt that research into this area would be illuminative and would have the potential for social benefits. That is the study will provide new knowledge and insight, given the positive and ‘the not so positive’ contributions made by the personal tutors to their tutees regarding the personal tutoring system.

Although, I am sympathetic to the “partisan” ethical position as outlined by Silverman (1985:184) who says that the researcher is someone who seeks to provide

the theoretical and factual resources for change, I do not wish to suggest that my study is of an evaluative process, but it is intended merely to bring to light the reality of the tutors and the tutees' experience.

However, I would theorise and propose actions that academic colleagues and tutees can make changes to enhance their own practice, in the manner they support their tutees and for tutees to be aware that personal tutors cannot meet all their needs and that they should develop an emotional, practical and interpersonal intelligence in order to achieve their learning goals. These types of 'intelligences' will be defined in the section of data analysis. (See Chapter 8)

#### **4.23 Summary/Conclusion**

This chapter on research methodology has presented the rationale for selecting Husserlian's Transcendental phenomenology and has attempted to show how open-ended interviews were obtained and analysed by using Colaizzi (1978) 7 steps methods. The issue of 'trustworthiness' has been discussed to support the rigour of the methodology employed. The data collections were rich descriptions of experiences, Colaizzi as a primary method of data analysis was a suitable framework to use with Van Manen (1990) and Cortazzi (1993). According to Koch (1995) Colaizzi describes his framework as being derived from Heideggerian phenomenology which is at the opposite end of the spectrum to transcendental phenomenology but I came to consider how I will present, the exhaustive description of the phenomena, the sixth step of data analysis and to derive the fundamental

structure of essences of the experiences which all proved to be another hurdle to overcome.

Therefore, the following chapter to present the data findings, will need to show that the focus on the exhaustive description of the experiences as 'revealed' by personal tutors and personal tutees proved to be a challenge (See Chapter 5). I sought advice from my supervisor because I deliberated and debated on how best I could present my data, I did not want to lose the narratives of my tutees' and tutors' experiences.

My supervisor suggested that I should do a hermeneutic analysis. Some discussion followed that it pertains to an existentialist approach a Heideggarian; phenomenology , whereas in my methodology I had adopted a Transcendental Husserlian's phenomenology. This required me to revisit and review some of my transcripts that were indeed "thick descriptions" of experiences and to consider other data analysis methods. The review made me aware of how limited and inadequate it would be, if I were to present the data as a description of experiences with short quotes or vignettes from the transcripts. The research findings will not illuminate the phenomena fully and they may project a disjointed and an unverifiable body of evidence such that the readers of this research will experience an information-overload. It made me choose a pragmatism and existentialism approach. Reason and Rowan (1990: 126) suggest that pragmatism is an appropriate response in areas of enquiry where there is more information than can be handled rationally.

Existentialism begins with experience, phenomena, and existence as these are perceived. Concepts arise out of the process of perceiving and gestalt (pattern) forming. I ought to present the meta-concepts of the personal tutoring relationship. Reason and Rowan (1990) consider 'Meta' to mean the freedom to formulate as well as I can, to be understandable, but I had to be aware that at the same time 'meta' highlights the uncertainty to generalise assumptions. It was not my objective to generalise the findings. Human inquiry is based on existential meta-concepts formulated by choice and commitment and existence precedes essence (Reason and Rowan, 1990:126). During my contemplative state on how to handle so much data, it led me to think that in order to make sense of large chunks of data, it might be helpful to present the 'thick descriptions' of the findings as narratives (story-telling) in order to preserve the uniqueness of the lived experience.

Before I present the "story telling" or narratives data presentation it is necessary to write and justify why I opted for 'story telling' to illuminate the tutees' and the tutors' encounters and their experience and hermeneutic analysis in a short Chapter 5 before preceding to present the chapter on data presentation and analysis.

## Chapter 5

### How to tell a story? How to illuminate the phenomena?

This chapter briefly provides an overview to justify that some of my participants' related stories need preservation to show the uniqueness of their experiences. During the open-ended interviews, the participants adopted a stance of story telling. They related a story on their experiences, in their own way and talked about some "painful" moments of being a tutor or a tutee. I felt they knew how to tell their stories and thus, I allowed them to direct the interview themselves and the outcome was indeed a very rich, thick description of their experiences.

#### 5.1 Justification for narrative presentation of data

I experienced a dilemma on how best to present the narratives which emerged from the open-ended interviews. Although, I probed occasionally during the interview when I wanted an elaboration of the experience a few participants became cathartic. They released some of the painful emotions they had about their experiences on what it had been like or meant for them. I am aware some of my critics may challenge me by saying how do I know they are being truthful in their story-telling, well, I am inclined to say that my own personal belief is that what an individual says needs to be considered and valued and I have a strong leaning towards the philosophy of 'human-centredness'. Therefore, I am very much in agreement with Carl Rogers' belief that:

*" what mattered was not some concept of objective reality, whatever that might be, but the way in which a given person perceives reality. ... the surest route to*

*understanding a person's behaviour is to come to a knowledge of that person's subjective awareness of himself or herself and of the world in which he or she exists. Such an approach takes as its basic assumption that a person's subjective experience is worthy of the deepest respect even if to others it may appear bizarre or misguided" (Thorne, 1992:24 on Theory of experience)..*

## **5.2 My participants' Story Telling – a similarity with Hawkins' phenomenological drama**

Hawkins (1998 :61) wrote how he immersed himself in the writings of Husserl, Heidegger, Ricoeur and Ihde and came to conclude that phenomenologists are so hard to read because they try and do so many things inside their heads. They sit still in their chairs trying to do six things at once and they end up disappearing into a transcendental ego which takes them off into the realms of philosophical abstraction. The phenomenologists become unearthed from tangible sensible reality and lost in cerebral formulations. Hawkins suggests that if you try and become your data, reflect on it and reflect on your reflecting on it, all inside your own head, you will disappear into a mind loop. In a way, the reader can assume that when I looked at all my data and when I tried to present the findings, I too, became lost in a mind loop and what I am trying to do here is to uncoil the loop as my intention is to remain truthful to the essence of my participants' experience.

I had been through Husserl's *Epoche 1*, I became aware of my preconceptions and assumptions, so I "bracketed" them off and went out to encounter the world of personal tutoring directly from the tutees and the tutors' perspectives. Now I am at the stage of Husserl's *Epoche 2*. I encountered their world and I have stopped to look at the "whatness" of the data, bracketed it off, and started looking at 'how' this

data has come into being in one's consciousness. (Hawkins, 1998) turned to psychodrama. Hawkins quotes Moreno (1946) as saying to Freud: "*you analyse their dreams. I try and give them the courage to dream again. I teach them how to play God*" (Hawkins, 1998:62). Moreno was interested in how we each could discover how we are actors in our own dramas, and how we can become the author and director of these life dramas. Hawkins states that Moreno was interested in the 'encounter' of the past, the present and the future. He wanted them to unite and bridge the distance to the other and in so doing also move deeper in the discovery of the deepest essence of life.

The bridging of this gap is through the process of '*tele*', a Morenian concept. *Tele* is the ability to enter into the lived experience and perspective of the other person, to stand not only in their shoes but also in their emotional body and to see the world with their eyes. This requires not only an empathy for the other, but also the ability to make an imaginative and intuitive leap into their world. Hawkins (1998:63) refers to a psychodramatist, Haskell, 1974 who describes the concept of *tele* as:

*" Tele represents insight into and appreciation of feeling for the actual make up of the other person. It is not merely empathy, the ability to take the role of another in a given situation. It is the ability to assume the feelings of the other in every situation, including the situation involving self. Tele is responsible for increased mutuality of choices and increased rates of interactions "*

Although, I was meant to "bracket" and remain detached, there were several times during my data collection when it became impossible to sense my participants' moods, feelings, emotions and the experiences they have had in the personal tutoring context. Therefore, I found and shall consider Hawkins' phenomenological

psychodrama to let the reader(s) of my thesis see the experience for themselves. In a similar vein to Hawkins' dramaturgical metaphor who said having seen the play, tape recorded the script, noted the gestures and so on, now there is a need to go deeper in understanding the play (for my research, they are the stories of my participants' experiences which when I applied the traditional, qualitative method of analysis, even with Colaizzi's method, the data were stripped bare and I had removed the nuances of their experiences). I chose not to present the experiences as a set of data which have little impact on the reader(s)' perspective and also I do not wish to make any claim on the quality of the "stories" which were collected in the open-ended interviews, but I do want to lay bare some of the ways that the tutors and tutees have experienced their individual role.

Since I find myself in a 'crisis of presenting my findings and representing my participants' world. Denzin (1997) suggests that stories help redefine the relationship of the subject to the object, of the researcher and researched identities, and of knowing with known. And thus, I chose to use a mixed method of analysis of story-telling and narratives with Colaizzi's method of analysis. This is to show readers how I approached the task of data analysis and presentation of findings differently and to let the participants speak for themselves, given that the stories were central to their experiences. I found Clough's (2002) writing of stories from an educational setting perspective quite useful when he argues on the criteria of falsifiability. He uses Richardson's (1994) assertion that there are no criteria and no rules but there are multiple and complex criteria which are not possible in post-



modern times to offer prescription (Clough, 2002:8), but the notion that you are freed from restrictive and prescriptive structures in the tradition of academic writing and so we can construct our own narrative report in a style of our own choosing.

Clough further adds in writing the stories, the writer becomes the architect, the question therefore, is not technical; it is not 'how do I construct this building?'; but rather 'what is this building for'? Questions of purpose and function follow 'what must it do? 'who is it for?' And thus, the research findings, the narratives, the categories that emerged from my research are to be opened up to the students and the lecturers (tutors) in Higher Education with an aim to illuminate the deeper view of life in familiar contexts and to make the familiar strange and the strange to be familiar (Clough, 2002:8). Within my education report, the stories would provide a means by which those truths, are told and are uncovered.

### **5.3 Story Telling and hermeneutic**

My data collection was unstructured, open-ended interviews as Reissman (1993) had suggested that there is only a slight difference between narratives and unstructured interview methods of data collection. Narratives are 'long stretches of talk' (Reissman, 1993). Whilst interviewing my participants I had not considered to ask them for narratives of their experience, I encouraged them to tell me about their experience of being a tutor or a tutee in the personal tutoring process. My intention was to get them to focus on the personal accounts' of their lives. Some of them reconstructed their "stories" as if they were re-living them when recalling their

experiences. Reissman (1993) reports that there are three types of narratives: habitual narratives about routine events and actions; hypothetical narratives which describe events that had not taken place and topic-centred narratives which are stories of past events that are connected thematically to the story-teller. When telling stories the participants give meaning to what happened to them, they recall most vividly the events and actions which have influenced them or made a strong impression, Holloway and Wheeler, (1996). Mischer, (1986), Packer, (1991) and Reissman, (1993) had suggested that there is a related theoretical issue about the best means to access individual perception. Traditionally, this has been by an open-ended qualitative interview. The assumption is that the 'life world' is told in narrative discourse.

Lieblick et al (1998) stated that people are story-tellers by nature – stories provide coherence and continuing to one's experience and have a central role in our communication with others. They also add that one of the clearest channels for learning about the inner world of individuals is through verbal accounts and stories presented by individual narrators about their lives and their experience of reality and narratives also provide us with access to people's identity and personality.

### **5.3:1 Female Participants' Narratives**

Some of my participants, mostly the females tutors and students gave me thick description of their experience (See a complete transcript of how a lecturer and a tutee told their stories in Appendices 21 and 23). I believe their descriptions of their

experiences were thick narratives because I had a fairly close relationship with them. I was aware that traditional research texts advise social scientists to create rapport in the hope that this would generate more and better data. But from a pragmatic view they also warned against over-rapport for fear that it damages objectivity. It was not easy to remain detached from my participants and I was conscious that I had to 'bracket' my assumptions but at the same time I could not be passive as if I was an outsider.

In feminist research this is seen as an exploitation ( Holloway and Wheeler, 1996). Oakley (1981), a famous feminist researcher points to the importance of the researcher's relationship in the interview. Oakley criticises impersonal relationships between the interviewer and the person interviewed, because it results in an interview which becomes a mechanistic tool for data collection. There was an informal manner in which I engaged my participants which Finch (1984) encourages as a style of interviewing where there is a non- hierarchical relationship and being of the same gender promotes trust and a willingness to communicate ideas and experiences.

Denzin (1989a) claims that thick descriptions aim to give the readers a sense of the emotions, thoughts and perceptions that participants experienced. From an 'emic' perspective (Harris, 1976), the insider's (the tutee or lecturer) accounts of reality helps to uncover knowledge into the reasons why people act as they do. The 'emic' perspective gives an explanation of events from the cultural member's point of view

and it prevents the researcher (in this case me) from imposing my own values and beliefs on their culture, their world.. As Harris (1976:36) said:

*“the way to get inside people’s heads is to talk with them, ask questions about what they think and feel’ this will correspond to reality and the essence of the participants’ experience.”*

### **5.3:2 The Story must be told**

I have borrowed a quote I came across while reading chapter 4 on “Storytelling as Inquiry” by Peter Reason and Peter Hawkins (1998) in the book “Human Inquiry in Action”.

The Quote:

*“The Master gave his teaching in parables and stories which his disciplines listened to with pleasure and occasional frustration, for they longed for something deep. The Master was unmoved. To all their objections he would say, ‘You have yet to understand, my dears, that the shortest distance between a human being and Truth is a story. Reason and Hawkins had quoted (Anthony de Mello, SJ, One Minute Wisdom).*

From some of my transcripts I could not describe and analyse the experience or explain how I got to the essence of the experience. By explanation I mean the mode of classifying the participants’ experiences into codes and then building a theory or inferences from the codes. Although it is essentially an analytic approach when looking at the holistic experience in manageable components, I felt I would only be presenting the “skeleton and bones of the experience” and it is a similar concept to what Bateson (1972) called applying the scissors, by which I mean that my intention was not an explanation or endeavour to answer questions of ‘why’ or ‘what’ but that I wanted the experience to be illuminated, given that the power of the participants’ expressions are so important. By expression I mean the mode of allowing the

meaning of the expression to come to light, manifest itself, the participants' meaning is part and parcel of all the experiences. The expression is interwoven in their lived world. It had been hidden and therefore it needed to be discovered, created, made manifest and communicated. Reason and Hawkins, (1998) said that we work with the meaning of experience when we tell a story.

### **5.3:3 Why tell a story**

The story filled the empty space, by which I mean, we did not know what it meant to be a tutee or a tutor in the personal tutoring context. From the data collection an 'empty space' had been filled. Reason and Hawkins (1998:81) state, to make meaning manifest through expressions, requires the use of a creative medium through which the meaning can take form. It is rather like creating an 'empty space', a 'Litchung' or 'clearing', as Heidegger describes it. The empty space becomes a vessel in which meaning can be communicated: the language of the words that lead to stories. The medium, the opportunity to relive the experience to be an enquirer who is willing to listen carefully can be seen as the empty vessel and the experience which my participants shared are the meanings, the essences that filled the empty vessel. The way of knowing or meaning-making would be through 'cognitive thinking'. Cognitive thinking is seen as an elaboration of feelings and emotional imaginary and intuition into created form and expression. Eckhartsberg, (1981:82) suggests that for it to happen is through hermeneutic experience and activity. Wilber, (1981) defines hermeneutic as a science of interpretation, or determination of the meaning of mental production.

Dilthey (1976) believed that to understand human experience, in addition to the description of the experience, it is important to go beyond consciousness, to see, as it were, without eyes or to direct a cognitive gaze behind the eye itself. By presenting the chunk of the given 'story' I would aim to provide an undistorted reality of the experience as it existed in the consciousness of my participants. Dilthey (1976:182) posits that hermeneutic science involves the art of reading a text so that the intention and meaning behind appearances are fully understood. Hermeneutic analysis is required in order to derive the correct understanding of a text.

Gadamer, (1984:58) suggests it is a moral interpretation of the phenomenon. It is no longer the manifest meaning of a statement of a text, but the text. The interpreter functions as the preservation of the lived experience and reinforces Heidegger's emphasis that interpretation is not an isolated activity but the basic structure of experience. In the hermeneutic process understanding occurs, through which we can correct our prejudices or set them aside and hear "what the text says to us" (Gadamer, 1976: 58).

### 5.3:4 Narrative Analysis

Since I also intend to present some stories in my data presentation and analysis, it led me to use Martin Cortazzi's (1993) narratives analysis. He based narratives on Labov's evaluative model (Cortazzi, 1993:45). He proposed the followings steps:

**Table 5.3:4 Narrative Analysis**

Structure	Questions
Abstract	What was this about?
Orientation	Who, what, when and where?
Complication	Then what happened?
Evaluation	So what?
Result	What finally happened?
Code	Finish narratives

### 5.4 Phenomenological Reduction, imaginative variation and synthesis of the experiences.

Moustakas (1994:90) defines phenomenological reduction as a task of describing in textual language just what one sees, not only in terms of the external object but also the internal act of consciousness, the experience, the rhythm and the relationship of the phenomenon and self. To fulfil this task, I look and describe: look again and describe always with reference to the textual qualities to include the mood, emotion and language of the participants.

This method of phenomenological reduction takes the form of a graded pre-reflection, reflection, and reduction, with a concentrated amount of work aimed at explicating the essential nature of the phenomenon (Husserl. 1931). Moustakas (1986:160) recommends that each experience is considered in its own singularity, and for itself. Within the brackets, the phenomenon is perceived and described in its totality, in a fresh and open way, a graded series of reduction coming from a transcendental state, a totally differentiated description of the most essential constituents of the phenomena is revealed” (Moustakas 1994:97).

The next step is imaginative variation, which is to seek possible meanings through the utilisation of imagination, varying the frames of reference and approaching the phenomena from various angles and perspectives. The aim being to arrive at the structural description of an experience (Moustakas, 1994:98) recommends that researchers ask the “how” that speaks to the conditions that illuminate the “what” of the experience and how did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is? Husserl (1931) suggests that it is an imaginative variation, that the task is describing the essential structures of the experience or phenomenon, the ‘*Eidos*’ the pure essence of the experience. The next step is the synthesis of meaning as the final process of phenomenological process. It is the intuitive integration of the fundamental textual and structural description into a unified statement of essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole (Moustakas. 1994:100). This is the eidetic science, the establishment of a knowledge of essences (Husserl. 1931: 43-



44), employs this concept, which means, for that which is common or universal, it is the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is.

### **5.5 The journey so far - the search for structure and essence of the experience**

An approach for conceptualising my journey within journeys into the research of the lived experiences of personal tutees and tutors is adapted from Paterson and Zderad (1976: 71-91). It aims to show the path into my research journey, where I am. This is shown below:

Intuitive Grasp - I had to be open to the phenomenon by considering the following:

- I had to be aware of my own views and assumptions on personal tutoring.
- I identified ‘a priori’ notions and set them aside, which means I bracketed my assumptions.
- I listed different ways of looking at the phenomenon by being objective-subjective, passive and active (these are the stages of data collection).
- I immersed myself in the evidence which was provided to me by my participants.
- I tried to observe from within the phenomenon which led me to review some thematic literature into for example “help-seeking behaviour”.

Analytical examination of my transcripts. This is the stage when I considered the many instances of the phenomenon, what are the experiences of the tutees and tutors?

- I compared and contrasted several transcripts of the tutees from the London university with tutees' transcripts obtained from the Northern university and did the same with the tutors' transcripts. In phenomenological research, data should not be compared or evaluated but I needed to attach meanings to the experiences. The data from the Northern university presents a contrast of the phenomenon under study.
- I employed Colaizzi's method of data analysis to identify common themes or elements of the experiences. My supervisor proposed the use of Discourse Analysis but I opted for Narrative Analysis. The rationale for the use of this method has previously been given.
- With the support of my supervisor and critical reader/independent judge, Dr Bob Price we determined how the elements of the experiences are interrelated.
- With some guidance from my supervisor and critical reader I identified how the elements are distinguished or relate to similar phenomenon.

Description and synthesis - Define, describe and construct new knowledge:

- Classify the themes in manageable data. Present vignettes or stories or narratives of particular transactions that captures the meaning of the situation.
- Use metaphors/parable /analogy to isolate central characteristics of the phenomenon.
- Synthesise the phenomenon- what is personal tutoring, in order to illuminate and unfold the personal tutor role and the variation in experience as lived by the personal tutors and tutees.

The rationale for opting to use narrative over discourse analysis is based on my personal preference to use Attributional Theory (AT). Jones et al, (1972) and Nisbett et al, (1973) suggest that AT is concerned with discovering about the causes of our own and other people's behaviour. As a researcher, I will present 'vignettes' ('mini-stories') as brief descriptions of my research participants' social behaviour. These vignettes will be descriptive, 'factual' as they were thought and conceived or 'stand for' in my participants' consciousness. I will be making inferences to illuminate or hypothesise, in other words I will be attributing reason why 'things' happened. I will critically analyse the situational attribution, by which I mean, I will be examining a reason for an act or behaviour; I will suggest it occurred as a result of the situation or circumstances that the person was experiencing at the time (Nisbett et al, 1973). or I will scrutinise the dispositional attribution to identify why a particular behaviour is

thought to have resulted from the person's own personality or characteristics, or rather from the demands of circumstances.

### **5.5:1 Discourse Analysis – not considered**

Discourse Analysis(DA) is a method of studying human experience by analysing the things people say to one another, how they express them, both symbolically and behaviourally, Potters et al (1990). Proponents of DA criticise AT by suggesting that the 'facts' of the story are treated by the researcher as problem-free, treated as 'given', as though the person who wrote the vignette had no control over them, and they are gathered as 'neutral descriptions' of 'what really happened'. Then, the researcher goes on to interpret the causes of 'what really happened'. They considered this to be problematic. I do not see this as an obstacle or problematic because my philosophical framework is 'Transcendental phenomenology', I had abandoned my assumptions of what personal tutoring is or means, I adopted a stance of 'unknowing' (Munhall, 1993, 1994), I was open, non-judgemental, caring and compassionate in order to understand what it means or feels to be in a personal tutoring relationship. I intend to present the situated meaning of the lived experiences of my participants.

To minimise the criticism, the misapprehension of the relationship between the words and reality and being fully aware that social behaviour is complex and so any short description of a piece of their experiences will rely on a selection of facts that I chose to present and may be considered as subjective and value-laden, I opted to

present longer vignettes in the form of narratives from some of the participants in order to project versions of events in the most believable and convincing way I could. The narratives will be presented as an unbiased account of the 'facts' but I shall not focus on factual discourse analysis. Potter et al, (1990) argued that DA can be insightful and challenging because DA analysts often focus in great detail on a very small section of their data, their conclusions tend to be persuasive, and they avoid the superficiality that psychology suffers from. But AT will examine the way in which people come to a conclusion about the causative factors for my participants' behaviour.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In summary, the chapter has outlined the difficulties that I experienced in handling large amounts of data. I proposed to use Colaizzi's method of data analysis that I felt had some limitations and would be inadequate to describe the 'thick' description of the participants' lived experience. It led me to seek academic support from my supervisor who proposed that I used discourse analysis. I viewed discourse analysis as a method on its own. Having started with the Colaizzi method, it would mean that I would have to abandon it in order to adopt DA as a method of analysis, I decided to continue with the Colaizzi method. I did however determine to enhance the process of analysis by combining Manen's (1990) sixth step and Cortazzi's (1993) with Colaizzi's (1978) in order to explore the essential structures of the lived experiences of the processes that occurred during personal tutoring.

The next chapter will present the research findings and the categories and themes that emerged following analysis will be discussed with supporting literature.