

The influence of a student centred approach to teaching
on the achievement of students' career goals and
personal aspirations

Vivienne Decleva

College of Education

Victoria University

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Candidate Declaration

"I, Vivienne Decleva, declare that the EdD thesis entitled *The Influence of student-centred teaching on the achievement of students' career goals and personal aspirations*, is no more than 60,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

Vivienne Decleva

Signature

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ABSTRACT

Competency Based Training focuses on the acquisition of work related competencies. This study examines the acquisition of such competencies and it investigates students' progress in the direction of their career goals and personal aspirations when a humanistic/student centred approach to teaching is used in a Competency-Based program. Nineteen students in Certificate III, Community Services Education (Aged Care Work) participated in the study. Information was collected during the 17-week program, three and six months after the program. The methodology for the study was derived from the Theory of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) as presented by George Kelly (1955/1991). The theory of PCP acknowledges individuals as responsible, active and meaning seeking agents who are open to change and to personal development. The theory also proposes active participation between researcher and respondents. In the study therefore, the respondents became co-researchers who monitored and interpreted their constructs systems. Through their stories and personal reflections the study monitored their progress in becoming "*the person that I would like to be*".

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CHAPTER ONE

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The carers did not want to do the program in Certificate III Aged Care Work although their employer said that they had to. They claimed that they had been working as personal carers for years and felt that they knew everything they needed to know. Going to school every Wednesday for thirty-four weeks meant that they were missing out on thirty-four days pay, and most argued that they could not afford that loss. They were told if they did not have Certificate III in Aged Care Work, they would not be able to retain their jobs.

Therefore, grumpy and resentful, they came to school and argued at every opportunity. After a few weeks, however, there was a change: they liked coming to class, they enjoyed being with other students and most of all, they enjoyed learning. Nine months later, they did not want the program to finish and asked for a program in Disability Work to be delivered. They were so determined and willing to continue studying, that they were prepared to pay the full-fee.

In conjunction with the employer, an eight-week program in Certificate IV Disability Work was organized.

The students requested that the program covers competencies directly related to hands-on care. They were not interested in higher-order competencies, such as those for training small groups or policy development, more suitable for those wishing to take managerial positions. They saw themselves as hands-on-workers, who were not interested in becoming supervisors.

Halfway through the Disability Work program, it became evident that many students had a disabled family member and the information was not only relevant to their work requirements, but also important to them personally.

At the completion of the second program, the students requested the delivery of a third program. They requested that this third program covers competencies related to staff supervision and management, as many were now contemplating the possibility of becoming supervisors.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This vignette describes what happened six months prior to the commencement of this study, when I was delivering Certificate III in Aged Care Work for a government organization. The students, as they preferred to be called, were mostly middle-aged women employed by an aged care organization. All had been working for that organization for at least five years; some had been with the organization for over 15 years. They were all experienced carers, who had learnt how to care for older persons on the job, but due to changes imposed by the Aged Care Act of 1997, they were now required to have Certificate III in Aged Care Work to be employed in the field.

Unlike the students in the vignette, the students in this study were, with one exception, new to aged care. Unlike the previous students, the students in this study did not have the accountability to an employer, the need to save face, hold onto their jobs or to maintain their identity as aged care workers. These are extra pressures faced by students, who like the students in the vignette, have to update their skills.

During the period of writing this thesis I had the opportunity to work with many aged care workers updating their skills, I believe that in the future because of industries requirements there will be more practising workers returning to study. This thesis is an exploratory study that investigates the experiences of students new to aged care work. However, the findings of the study are relevant to all adult learners, undertaking a vocation program.

Similarly to students in the vignette, the love for learning also began to emerge in the students in the study. As this emerged, their hidden potential surfaced and they became more determined to achieve their expectations, hopes and desires. This transition correlates with Burns' (2002) statement that:

When an adult believes that learning, education and self-development are possible and part of their life, they will be much more likely to involve themselves. The potential is there, but it requires... support and expectation to bring it to fruition (p. 213).

A study conducted by Healy and Moskos (2005) on the aged care found that most carers were poorly educated, middle-aged women, who were resigned to work for a low weekly wage of \$560 - \$630 (Aged Care Industry Awards 2010) in an industry where there were no increments for experience, career opportunities or pathways for professional development.

My experience of teaching aged care workers differs from these findings. Firstly, I had found that not all aged care workers have a low standard of education, a number have Diploma or higher educational levels. This observation is supported by the research studies by Richardson and Martin (2004), which reported that of age carers that "...10 per cent have higher level qualifications. Fourteen per cent have formal nursing qualifications, with 11.7% having other higher qualifications" (p. 28).

Secondly, I found that students enroll in Certificate III Aged Care Work with the desire to better their lives. For some, this meant using aged care work as a stepping-stone to nursing, social work or management. I believe that in future, the increasing needs of older persons and the increased responsibilities of aged care workers will change the stereotype to a younger, better-educated and more assertive worker. Consequently, as well as meeting the needs of present cohorts, programs in Certificate III Aged Care Work have to be developed for the new generation of aged care workers.

1.2 CHANGES IN DEMOGRAPHICS

In the last twenty years there has been in Australia a remarkable increase in the aged population, and it is predicted that as people live longer it will continue to increase. Forster (2003) writes: "Along with a decrease in mortality (and an increase in the aged population), there has been a significant increase in morbidity. This means that there is a greater number of frail and ill elderly people than ever before (pp. 1-2).

Changes in the demographics of older people have determined the types of services required by the aged care industry and the particular skills required by its workforce. In the last two decades, there has been a worldwide increase in the number of persons over the age of 65 years. In Australia, the growth rate has been more rapid among senior older persons, more specifically in the aged group over 80 years, with an increasing number of people over 100 years. Martin and King (2008) write that in 2007, the Australian Bureau of Statistics projected:

... the proportion of Australians over the age of 65 and over will nearly double in the next 50 years, increasing from 13% in 2007 to between 23 and 25% in 2056. The proportion aged 85 and over will rise from less than 2% to between 5% and 7% over the same period

(Martin & King, 2008, p. 1).

Although this increase is considered to be the result of a healthier life style and advances in medical sciences, longevity has also resulted in an increase in morbidity. For persons over 80 years, there is an increase in the incidence of disabling conditions of the nervous, respiratory and cardiac systems. Consequently, as people live to 80, 90, 100 years and over, they will require care that is specialized in meeting their personal and their medical requirements (Woods, Fitzgerald & Macri, 2011). The increase in older persons over the age of 85 years will result in an enormous strain on the Aged Care and Health Care systems, requiring re-evaluation and restructuring of care delivery.

1.3 THE AGED CARE INDUSTRY

At present in Australia, the aged care industry consists of a three-tier system, providing care in nursing homes, hostels and in the person's own home.

Nursing homes are also referred to as high-care residential settings, delivering care to frail older persons. The residents living in nursing homes can suffer from a number of debilitating cognitive and medical conditions requiring around-the-clock care. Hostels, also referred to as low-care residential settings, deliver care to older persons requiring a low level of assistance with the activities of daily living such as personal hygiene, mobility and recreation. Community Care, often referred to as Home Care, delivers care in the person's own home and is tailored to the specific needs of clients and their families. For example, the client may need assistance with house cleaning, meal preparation, personal hygiene or with transportation (Woods et al., 2011).

In all three settings, older persons require emotional support to cope with deteriorating health, declining independence and the loss of what is dear to them. In the three settings, aged care workers work with nurses, assisting older persons to maintain a high quality of life, independence and self-worth. The aim of Certificate III in Aged Care Work is to provide students with competencies to work in all three aged care settings. At the completion of the program, graduates are able to join the aged care industry, an industry that for the last fifty years, has and continues to experience, changes in focus and care delivery.

1.4 CHANGES IN THE INDUSTRY

As with other industries, the aged care industry has been changing in response to societal and economic needs. When in 1954 the Aged Persons' Home Act was introduced in Australia its aim was to provide accommodation, for older persons, through a government subsidy of dollar-for-dollar to organizations (Ford, 1979). At that time, hostels were the main

form of residential accommodation they were catering only for the “well aged”. Older people who were disabled or in need of medical care were cared for in hospitals (Ford, 1979). During that period, carers were not required to have the advanced clinical skills expected today as at that time kindness, compassion and good common sense were the main requirements for working in hostels.

In the 1950s, older persons who could afford a donation to a chosen hostel were able to ensure their accommodation. Such practices led to an inequity of care for older persons. A survey, carried out in 1963 by the Old People’s Welfare Council of Victoria, found that the poorer older citizens were unable to obtain residential care because they could not afford it. In response to such findings, the Government began to subsidize approved nursing homes, so that the poor and the sick could be cared for by these homes.

In the following two decades residential aged care became heavily subsidized. In 1982 in the McLeay Report ‘In the Home or At Home Accommodation and Home Care for the Aged’, pointed out the imbalances of funding between institutional and community-based care (Fazio, 2007). As the result in that same year, the Labor government introduced the Home and Community Care (HACC) programs for older persons. Although the aim of the Government was to enable older persons to stay at home, there were many who did require constant care and nursing homes and hostels continued to provide care to those requiring 24-hour care.

During this period, carers who had learnt the skills on the job, delivered most of the hands-on-care. Some residential settings had well-established policies and provided good training, but there were also settings where policies and staff training did not meet the needs of residents. The disparity of care resulted in the introduction of the 1997 Aged Care Act.

The central aim of the Act was to provide high and uniform standards of care throughout the industry. The major change of the Act was the introduction of Accreditation Standards of Care, which covered 14 areas, including safety, nutrition and staff qualifications. In 2002, the Certificate III in Community Services (Aged Care Work) became the minimum qualification for aged care workers. Despite the changes over the last three decades, the 1950s concept of the older person in care, sitting on a rocking chair, sipping tea while listening to the horse races on the radio, continues to be a common view. For many looking for employment, working in aged care is considered an easy way to enter the workforce as it is considered that this type of work does not require many skills. This belief is further supported by many training organizations delivering four-week training to students with no experience in the field, because of the current assumption that only minimal training in basic personal care skills is required. As the result of

this perception I found that students joined the program with the belief that it was an easy option and the work itself, the only work they felt capable of doing.

1.5 THE THESIS

The thesis is an investigation of how students in a Certificate III Aged Care Work program moved towards their aspirations and personal goals. The participants are referred to as students, as this title gave them a sense of pride and a status similar to those of students from other programs. However, while writing this thesis, they were to me more than participants. They were real people, and as Van Manen (1990) explains they were unique human beings with dreams, hopes, abilities, flaws and apprehensions. For this reason, each of the 19 students was given an assumed name, which I felt fitted well with the characteristics of the individuals as I came to know them.

The research question of the study focuses on students' personal goals and aspirations. For some students these goals and aspirations were beyond the restrictions of working at the lower level in the aged care industry. The study supports the notion that a positive self-concept is vital for successful learning outcomes. It also highlights the effectiveness of a person-centred/humanistic approach. This approach, when combined with teaching techniques such as suggestopedia, metaphors, anchoring and the use of inclusive language to empower students to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Students in the study had their personal reasons for joining the program. Their reasons, although special to each individual, were not dissimilar to those of other students in similar programs.

Some students for example had clear and precise reasons:

To further my development/training in health services and in aged care.

I am working in aged care hostel at the moment. It has been suggested at the Centre that I get more qualifications so that I can be a valued member of the staff.

Others had more altruistic motives:

The reason why I would like to do this course is to serve another person and help others. Helping other people is the greatest thing that another person can do for someone in life. I have always wanted to serve people in need and this will be the greatest achievement in my life.

I am looking for a change in career, that I can use my experiences of life. I have reached a stage in my life where I want to give back and contribute to the community,

While others had a specific direction in mind:

I want to do this course because it will help me go to the next level, which is Division 2 in Nursing. I believe that this course is going to help me get where I want to go.

I have been unemployed since April. I have decided to change my employment pathways to something that I can achieve and better myself in many ways (you are never too old to learn), and to also give something back to others.

During the study, students reflected and evaluated their personal goals. For a few, their goals remained the same, but the urgency and the will to achieve those goals increased. For most, there was clarification of goals and a change in direction on how to achieve them. The processes and the factors contributing to students moving in the direction of their personal goals are discussed in the following chapters.

1.6 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter Two: The Study

The first section of Chapter Two describes the driving force that has motivated me to undertake this study. In this Chapter, the context of the study, the students and the approach employed are introduced. I put forward my perspective on humanistic education and present an argument for its implementation in vocational programs.

The second section, describes the nuts and bolts of the research process: its paradigm, epistemological assumption, question and methodology.

Chapter Three: Facilitation and teaching in vocational education

Chapter Three focuses on humanistic education. I set out to define its concepts and to describe its influence from the times of Vico (1699; 1707), Maslow (1968) and Carl Rogers (1969; 1983) to the present time.

The argument presented in Chapter Two in favor of a humanistic approach is discussed in greater detail, highlighting its relevance to vocational education in this period of rapid technological advancements. The major tenets of humanistic education, as presented by Carl

Rogers (1969/1983) and their relevance to students' learning and personal development are described.

Chapter Four: Vocational education and training

In Chapter Four, the changes in the Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) system in the last three decades are outlined.

The Chapter discusses the forces that resulted in the restructuring of the VET system in Australia and the consequent development of Competency-Based Training (CBT). The implication of CBT as the sole approach in vocational programs, as it relates to training for aged care is discussed

Chapter Five: Teaching in response to students' needs

The focus of Chapter Five is on the application of teaching/learning strategies in adult education. The Chapter commences with a discussion about a variety of learning styles and the importance of acknowledging these differences in adult learners. A discussion about the strategies used to address the different styles is also presented. In the second part of the Chapter, I describe how the teaching/learning strategies derived from the works of Assagioli, (1965/1993), Erickson (1958; 1980) and from the neurolinguistic writers such as Bandler (1985), Bandler and MacDonald (1988) were implemented in the study.

Chapter Six: Description of methodology

This Chapter gives a detailed description of the methodology derived from the theory of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) as presented by George Kelly (1991) and discusses the rationale for its choice in this study. The instruments of self-characterization and repertory grid analysis, used to collect qualitative information.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and interpretation of results

In Chapter Seven, the self-characterizations and grid analyses of four students are discussed in detail. The stories are told through the students' reflections and interpretations of their self-characterizations and the graphic plots derived from the repertory grid analysis.

Chapter Eight: Discussion and interpretation of individual student samples

Chapter Eight examines the emerging themes and changes in the students' personal goals, aspirations and their subsequent movement in the direction of the people they aspired to be.

Chapter Nine: Recommendations and conclusion

Chapter Nine reiterates the need in the 21st Century for a combined approach to vocational education.

The Chapter offers suggestions as to how vocational programs may be delivered to meet the future needs of the aged care industry and of the new generation of students in Aged Care Work.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STUDY

It is important to have skills. You need them for doing a good job, but it is more than that – you need to have the desire to help; to think that it is a thing worthwhile doing. Meaning is a critical element of life.

(Response from Self-characterization I, as written by Rebecca)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 21st Century experienced a spurt of technological advancements and economic rationalization. Today industries have a serious challenge in keeping up with the new technologies. Education too as has been challenged and its ideals have been replaced by industries demands for a skilled and competitive workforce (A. Rogers & Horrocks, 2010). There is no argument that skill competence is necessary for all occupations. Nonetheless, because of the high reliance on technology, it is vital for vocational programs to maintain those qualities and values that make us accountable, caring and compassionate beings.

This chapter describes the motivation behind this thesis, it outlines the teaching approach and introduces the methodology of the investigation.

2.2 THE RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In the last decade, there has been a plethora of literature on adult education. Much has been written, questioned and answered. Most of the literature suggests a student-centred approach, a non-threatening environment and the empowering of the self. However, in Australia, these suggestions have, in most educational institutions, become nothing more than rhetoric, as training programs, particularly from Certificate II to Diploma levels remain strictly skills focused. Teachers of these programs are required to have only the basic qualifications in Training and Assessment. They are trained to assess work-based competencies and not to foster personal development. This study is an attempt to show that a broader education approach can enhance a competency-based program.

The rationale for this study is two-fold. Firstly, it endeavours to promote the status of students undertaking Certificate III in Aged Care Work and defends their rights to be educated rather than merely trained. Secondly, it proposes that skills acquisition and the development of personal ideals can occur concurrently in competency-based programs.

The motivation to do this study is derived from my personal experiences as an educator and as a nurse. Over the years of teaching nurses and aged care workers, I became aware of their similarities.

Both disciplines provide care around the clock. The consistency and the physical and emotional closeness of their care, make it not only intimate, but also unique (Declewa, 1994). The effectiveness of this care is dependent on the relationship between the nurse/carer and patient. It is therefore the view of this thesis that preparation of aged care workers, as for nurses, involves the development of those personal attributes and skills that enable students to maintain good rapport with patients, families and a positive work-relations with colleagues.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF CARING

As early as in the 1950s, and then later in the 1960s and 1970s, when nursing was establishing itself as a profession, the concept of caring was redefined in the English-speaking world of nursing. Nurse theorists such as Peplau (1952), Orlando (1961/1990), Leininger (1979) and Watson (1988) developed theories by drawing on the epistemology of other disciplines, particularly from the fields of humanistic psychology and anthropology. Even though each of the theories had a different focus, they were all grounded in a social/humanist framework. The commonality of these theories was the emphasis on a positive nurse/patient relationship. When referring to nurse education Peplau (1952) writes, “The basic task of nursing education should not be concern [sic] for the patient but rather the development of each nurse as a person who wants to nurse patients in a helpful way” (p. xii).

This concept of the nurse/patient relationship was incorporated into nurse education and into nursing practice. Since then, numerous texts have been written describing how these theories could best be implemented in the development of nurses. In Australia, regulatory bodies such as the Australian Health Practitioner Regulatory Agency (AHPRA) and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Councils (ANMC) are the overseers for nurse education and delivery of nursing care. One of their major objectives is to ensure that nurse upholds the rights of and respect for the individual.

However, unlike nursing aged care work is not an established profession. Apart from the Australian Qualification Training Framework (AQTF) and the Aged Care industries directing the content of training, there are no professional bodies advising on the training or regulating the professional conduct of aged care workers. The expectation is that aged care students are trained in a set of manual skills and even though they, like nurses, provide care on a very personal level, the National Training Package of Certificate III in Aged Care Work is not concerned with the affective domain of learning, the learning approach or the duration of the program.

2.4 PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

As a teacher, I followed humanistic principles of education. I may be what Atherton (2010) calls a “romantic humanist”, whose belief is that people have a yearning to learn, and it is this yearning that brings about personal change and self-fulfilment. For adults returning to study, the experience of gaining a qualification determines their identity and their status in life (A. Rogers & Horrocks, 2010). For many adult students, it is a big step to take, especially if they have been away from formal learning for a while. One can usually cope with the image of being a bad driver, or a poor cook, or not having an “ear” for music, but not having adequate reading or writing skills, or not being able to follow written information, is for most people a different matter. In our society, much emphasis is given to cognitive intelligence and thus cognitive ability is strongly connected to one’s self-concept. Therefore, coming to school and taking up a new course can be, for many people, a daunting experience.

Over the years, I have become aware of the anxiety experienced when adult learners return to study. For some, this anxiety may, at best cloud their perception of the teaching situation and of their ability as students. At worst, it may lead students to leave the program soon after starting, as th the following vignette of a student I taught a year before this study indicates:

Elaine was an aged care worker in a nursing home run by a religious order. She was highly regarded for her skills as a carer, so much so that she was working in the Unit assigned to the older nuns of the Order; a position given only to those trusted carers. As with the other carers at the nursing home, Elaine was required to do Certificate III in Aged Care Work. The program was delivered on-site, one day per week for 36 weeks. The 12 students knew each other well and were very supportive of one another.

On the second day of the program, Elaine approached me in the corridor and very loudly announced that, after 28 years of working as an aged care worker, she was ready for a career change. When I asked her what she wanted to do, she said that she wanted to work in a milk-bar. At every opportunity during the day, Elaine told everyone how happy she was to have made the decision and how great it would be to work in milk-bar; something that she had wanted to do for years.

In the brief interactions I had with Elaine during the day, I found out that she had left school at the age of 15 to help her parents in the family’s milk-bar. When the family sold the shop, Elaine had gone to work at the nursing home. In discussing her career change with me, Elaine sounded so convincing that I felt perhaps this was what she really wanted

to do. At the end of the day, asked her if she could come to school the following week, so that we could talk a little more about her decision.

The following week, I was able to have a private chat with Elaine. She was still adamant about her career change and talked about how she had discussed that with her husband and how good it would be for her at this stage of her life. During the conversation, it became evident that Elaine did not feel confident of her reading and writing skills. We talked for a while about her abilities as an aged care worker and how highly she was regarded. I described how we could help her to improve her reading and writing. Since she was not leaving the nursing home just yet, I asked if she could come to class and give the program a go for a couple of weeks.

Elaine came to class the following week and the week after that, and the week after that still, and kept on coming until she completed the program. She did not require any remedial teaching, only acknowledgement of her concerns and some encouragement.

I met Elaine at the supermarket some six months after she had completed the program. She was still working at the nursing home, but now she was the Unit Supervisor. She said that she was very happy, and with great delight, she announced that she had received an award for her contribution to that nursing home. Her husband was also at the supermarket and proudly stated how much she loved her work and how very proud he was of her.

Although Elaine was not part of her this study, her experiences are in many ways similar to those of students worried that formal studies may overwhelm and shame them. There might be a number of reasons for students feeling overwhelmed and anxious; these reasons may range from poor confidence in literacy skills, to personal issues such as not having the money to travel to school. Many students just drop out of programs and are never seen again. The more courageous may provide excuses, such as the program was not what they expected, family/work commitments, too far to travel and so forth. For some, these reasons are genuine, but for others, it is a way of saving face. It is therefore important that from the first contact, students feel that they are safe. A sense of safety, as used in this thesis, refers to learning situations where students feel accepted and respected.

The conditions of acceptance, unconditional positive regard and genuine empathy are usually not overtly spoken, but are conveyed by the teacher and felt by the students. The vital ingredients for these conditions are the teacher's trust and the belief in the abilities of the students. Rogerian (1969/1983) thinking denotes that when these conditions are present in the learning environment,

students are more apt to explore their abilities, determine their goals and be motivated to become the *person that they would like to be*.

Students are unique in the achievement of their personal goals. The manner and direction of students' personal development differs from person to person. According to Carl Rogers (1969, 1980) and Maslow (1968), all individuals have a natural drive to grow. Such drive is intrinsically determined. In this process, the teacher, teaching strategies and the learning environment are external factors facilitating and supporting this growth. Of great importance to the effectiveness of the teaching/learning situation is the relationship between the teacher and students (Carl Rogers, 1961/1983; Neville, 2005). For example, in nursing, it is important to implement a procedure correctly, however, what determines the emotional wellbeing of the patient is the quality of the nurse/patient relationship during that procedure. If for example, if the nurse has a positive attitude towards the patient, the patient will be more likely to be more accepting of the self, the illness and the situation, resulting in a sense of emotional wellbeing.

The importance of creating a positive environment also applies to teaching. If teachers believe in the students, they will believe in themselves. If teachers trust the students, they will trust themselves and if teachers are accepting of students, they will accept themselves (Declewa, 1994). In my experiences as an educator, there have been times when students were unable to have an introspective look into their situation, perhaps because they might not have yet developed the ability to do so, or perhaps the idea of looking within themselves was too confronting. Nonetheless, I noticed these students also grew, but often in ways in which to me the teacher were unexpected.

2.5 THE NOTION OF SELF-CONCEPT IN THE STUDY

The notion of self-concept is greatly relevant to this study, since it is seen as being the most relevant factor in determining the success or failure of adult learners, a notion supported by Maslow (1968), Carl Rogers (1983), Lawrence (2000), Combs (2006) and Jarvis (2010).

Self-concept may be defined as an awareness and feeling that one has about one's physical and mental attributes. Lawrence (2000) describes self-concept as having three facets: self-image, ideal-self and self-esteem. He defines self-image as the perception that one has of the self. This perception is mostly derived from the experiences and the feedback received from the external world. For example, if students constantly receive positive feedback from others, or if they feel successful, they will be more likely have a *can do* attitude and a positive self-image. The ideal-self is the image that the person holds about what they would like to be (McLeod, 2011). According to Lawrence and Lawrence (2012), the congruence or discrepancy between the person's self-image and the ideal-self is what results in the

person's degree of self-esteem. Maslow (1968) explains if there is congruence between a person's image and the ideal-self, the person will feel positive, have a good self-esteem, be energized and feel able to achieve their goals (Maslow, 1968).

At times, there may be a discrepancy between the person's self-image and the ideal self. This, according to psychological writings, can be a source of depression (McLeod, 2011). It is not unusual for adult learners to become depressed when they find it difficult to achieve what is required of them in the program and often, like Elaine, want to leave the program with dignity. Sometimes, it may be easier to just leave and resign oneself to losing that opportunity, rather than expose one's inadequacies. Similarly, workers can become depressed when they feel they do not have the skills and the abilities to meet their work requirements.

In this study, students' self-concept was addressed from an educator's perspective. Although it is acknowledged that self-concept is the product of experiences over many years, the study focused on what the students could do at that present time. Most students joined the program feeling that they did not have the ability to do anything else and felt "stuck". The main reason for implementing an educational approach in this study is that this approach focuses on the development of the whole person: the acquisition of work-related skills and on the students' personal growth including the development of a healthy self-concept.

2.6 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

At the end of the 20th Century, there was a rapid technological expansion. Computerization, especially the establishment of the Internet, brought the world closer (Hodge, 2007, 2010). Knowledge is now shared instantly on a global scale. In the last two decades Australian industries have been greatly affected by these changes and have been pressured to respond to the competitive global markets.

The new technologies also brought changes in work structure and culture. As Burns (2002) explains, "Globalization is changing the way enterprises are managed and work is performed. Focus is on productivity, efficiency and competitiveness..." (p. 3). The emphasis was now placed on developing intricate and specialized skills (Harris, Guthrie & Hobart, 1997).

To prepare employees to meet the challenges of the new era, the Australian vocational training system was restructured on a national scale. In 1985, a Committee of Inquiry into Labour Market Programs was established to examine the trends in the Australian work market. A committee, chaired by Peter Kirby, recommended the standardization of all Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs. Standardization meant that VET programs, which traditionally had followed a curriculum

developed by individual training colleges, were required to deliver National Training Package programs developed by the then Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE).

Prior to this reform, workers, especially those in manual occupations, were employed with few or no skills. In fact, in many industries, workers learned the skills on the job (Billett, 2004). At that time, the expectations were for workers to pick up skills along the way. One may be a good worker, fast in learning or a bad worker, who was slow in learning. However, in the latter part of the 20th Century, the expectation was that new workers had to be work-ready, to have the skills required at the commencement of employment, so as they were deemed competent in the required skills, could, with little if any induction, undertake the responsibilities of their roles. With the increased demand for more complex and specific skills, standardization of skills through CBT became necessary for all industries, including the aged care industry.

2.7 CERTIFICATE III AGED CARE WORK

Presently, Certificate III in Aged Care Work is the minimal qualification for working in the aged care sector. Similar to other vocational programs, this qualification is from a National Training Package. Carers with this qualification are employed as baseline-workers in nursing homes (high care), hostels (low care) or in the clients' own homes (home and community care). Aged care workers deliver personal care such as assistance with showering and dressing, provision of social activities, such as group activities, monitoring of vital signs such as blood pressure and sugar level readings and provide assistance with the self-administration of medications. Aged care workers are the largest workforce in the industry (Healy & Moskos, 2005). Despite the value of their work, aged care workers are not highly regarded by the industry. They have poor job security, little opportunity for career advancement, and even when performing higher duties, they are paid considerably less than other health-care workers (Healy & Moskos, 2005).

Students of 18 years and over enrol in Certificate III Aged Care Work, but generally the greatest group consists of women between 30 and 45 years. Students come from a variety of education experiences, ranging in level from Year 10 to degree. Most students join the program because they are required by government authorities or work organizations, or are driven by the need to find a job and, like the group described at the beginning of Chapter One, are at first disgruntled about "coming to school". However, after a few weeks most experience a change; learning becomes something they like and embrace. They become eager and enthusiastic to gain new knowledge, seeing themselves fortunate to have been given a chance to gain a qualification. Like the students described in Chapter One, they came with a potential, which for many has never been acknowledged, either because there was not the

educational opportunity, or because the teaching environment did not allow their potential to emerge. In this study, the teaching approach concentrated in creating a supporting environment where their potential was able to surface.

2.8 TEACHING STRATEGIES

This study was conducted at a time when power-point presentations and e-learning had become the must-do in VET programs. These techniques have much to offer, but their purpose is to augment rather than replace face-to-face teaching. During the program, power-point presentations were used to support the material being presented. Group work and activities used in conjunction with classroom discussion were the main formats used.

Now, more than ever, we have the knowledge about how individuals learn, how to improve memory, how to integrate left and right brain functions and how to dissolve barriers to learning. As early as the 1970s, the works of Lozanov (1975), Erickson (1980) and Bandler (1985) demonstrated how teachers could enhance the students' learning by integrating the functions of the whole brain. For example by the use of positive suggestion, teachers can assist students to dissolve negative beliefs and develop positive attitudes.

Breaking down barriers such as fear of failure and inadequacy are important for learning. Making learning meaningful and enjoyable as well as relevant can overcome fears of inadequacy. Houle (1972) believes that there are a few differences in the way that adults and children learn (cited in Merriam et al., 1999, p. 397). Like children adults enjoy activities that are fun, such as writing in colour instead of writing in blue or black ink and being actively involved in activities from which they can gain pleasure and enjoyment. Fun and laughter alleviate tension and energize. On the other hand, unlike children, adults have well-established learning styles (A. Rogers & Horrocks, 2010). By addressing the different learning styles the teacher creates an environment where learners feel that they can learn more easily and as a result learning is no longer difficult or unachievable. The feeling of being able to learn is important, particularly for those adults who in the past have had disappointing and at times traumatizing learning experiences.

In this study, a humanistic approach to education and attention to specific learning strategies were implemented within the boundaries of a National Training Package. The assumption of this thesis is that a humanistic approach can co-exist with CBT, each enhancing and supporting the other.

2.9 PARADIGM OF STUDY

For all individuals, truth is derived from personal meaning, and personal meaning is dependent on the subjective interpretation of the person's experiences, and the latter guides the person's behavior (Crotty, 1998). The Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico (1669/1707) stated "*Verum ipsum factum*", translated as: the truth is the same of what we make of it.

Scott and Usher (1999) explain this notion further by stating that a person's actions are inseparable from the personal interpretation of experience. The person's self-esteem is dependent on the interpretation of experiences, and this meaning is not static; it changes in response to one's own re-evaluation of constructs, or in response to external events. For example, if one interprets people to be unfriendly, that person will be suspicious of others and behave accordingly. Consequently, others will perceive the person to be aloof and will distance themselves, thus validating that person's reality. On the other hand, if a person feels accepted, they may have to re-evaluate and perhaps even change their perceptions of others. Thus, as Crotty (1998) writes, constructivism is the result of the combination of the person's interpretation and subjectivity of the world "brought together indissolubly" (p. 44).

2.10 THE NOTION OF INTENTIONALITY IN CONSTRUCTIVISM

The constant re-evaluation of personal meaning results in adjustments in the person's behavior. Carl Rogers (1969) believes that humans are in constant motion, continually striving in ways in which they know best, towards a more favourable situation. Jarvis (2010) writes: "It is through our living that we learn and through our learning that we live" (p. 13). From the constructivist perspective, this notion is referred to as *intentionality*: the individual's desire to move towards a particular goal. The general viewpoint of intentionality is that, when individuals become aware of what they would like to achieve, they are more motivated to move in the direction of their goal (Crotty, 1998).

2.11 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTION

This study is based on two main epistemological assumptions. The first relates to the students' drive to achieve their aspirations and goals. The second assumption is concerned with the students' perceptions of themselves as people and as learners. The study demonstrated that, as students developed more confidence in themselves, their goals became more defined and attainable, and the students themselves, became more determined to become *the person I would like to be*.

2.12 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question in the thesis asks:

To what extent did students in Certificate III in Community Services Education (Aged Care Work) progress in the direction of their career goals when studying in a competency-based program incorporating a student-centred approach and teaching strategies that met students' needs?

This question will be examined through the interpretation of qualitative information derived from students' personal reflections and interpretations of experiences. A phenomenological approach will be employed in this exploratory study. The instruments derived from Kelly's (1991) Theory of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) will be used to investigate students' personal meaning of their experiences as students and future aged care workers.

2.13 DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

The methodology derived from the PCP was considered appropriate to the study for the following reasons. Firstly, it postulates that individuals are not victims of circumstance, but rather that individuals structure circumstances according to their interpretations of events. According to Kelly (1991), individuals are not reactive to external events, but "constructivists", as Pope and Scott, (2003) explain, "...capable of making things happen, able to construct events and invent their theories" (p. 92). Secondly, PCP is congruent with a humanistic approach in the acknowledgement of personal meaning and self-determinism. In the study, the students became what Kelly (1991) refers as *co-researchers* actively involved the monitoring and interpretation of data. They were *scientists*, examining and modifying their construct systems and by so doing develop self-understanding.

A phenomenological attitude to the inquiry as described by Giorgi (1985) is implemented throughout the study. Information is personal and subjective, presented from the students' interpretation of their personal meaning (Giorgi, 1985). The intention is to provide students with a voice and to enable them to become the researchers; interpreting, monitoring and learning from the meaning they give to their experiences.

2.14 CONCLUSION

The rationale for this study is to advocate for the right of students in VET and, more particularly for students in Certificate III in Aged Care Work, so that they can be educated through the CBT. In the program, teaching and learning strategies focused on the interaction between teachers and students enhancing the students' self-concept. The epistemological assumption is that students have their

personal goals and ideals; the goal of education is to encourage students to move towards the achievement of those aspirations.

The following chapter discusses on the value of employing a humanistic/student-centred approach to education in vocational programs.

CHAPTER THREE

FACILITATION OF TEACHING IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The goal of education is... to assist students to become individuals who are able to take self-initiated actions and to be responsible for those actions; who are capable of intelligent choice and self-direction... who work, not for the approval of others, but in terms of their own socialized purposes.

(Carl Rogers, 1942, p. 384)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1970s, when Knowles (1984) first introduced the concept of andragogy, much has been written about adult education. Works by Jarvis (2010), A. Rogers and Horrocks (2010), Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007) and many others have provided an array of explanations and suggestions about adult learning. Most of these writings are based on Dewey's (1899) notion of education as a meaningful and enhancing experience for the learner.

Despite the abundance of literature, the perception of adult learning shifted away from a person-oriented to a work-skills perspective. In Australia, this shift began in the 1980s and some 20 years later, VET programs have remained firmly focused on the acquisition of skills.

The aim of this chapter is to present a justification for the implementation of humanistic ideology in adult education, especially in the preparation of helping-oriented professions. I begin by providing a definition of humanistic education and tracing its implementation. In the next section, I describe what has drawn me to humanistic education and explain the relevance of its ideology in the 21st Century. Lastly, I outline the tenets of humanistic education as presented by Carl Rogers (1969/1984) and describe how these have been implemented in the study.

3.2 ORIGINS OF HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

The origins of humanistic education date from 50 BC: at the time of Aristotle (Russell, 1961; Hobson, 2001). Bertrand Russell (1961) refers to Aristotle as the first professional teacher (p.147). According to Elias and Merriam (2005), Aristotle's approach to education may not be considered to be humanistic by today's standards, but his philosophy on human nature, however, encompasses the fundamental principles of humanistic education.

Unlike the Platonic thinking of his times, which emphasized the imperfection of nature, Aristotle acknowledged the uniqueness and beauty of nature. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he described how each living thing, while in the process of growing and changing, maintains its unique properties and essence (Palmer, 2001). The analogy of the acorn retaining the properties of an acorn, while growing into a majestic oak, is often used to describe this concept. Aristotle referred to this principle as the “*essence of man*”, “... those properties which one cannot lose without ceasing to be oneself” (Russell, 1961, p. 177). Aristotle believed that all organisms have an intrinsic motivation to strive from a state of imperfection to a state of perfection, and from a state of potentiality to a state of realization (Russell, 1961; Tarnas, 1991). This view is similar to Maslow’s concept of self-actualization and Carl Rogers’ notion of self-determinism.

According to Aristotle, self-actualization is synonymous with happiness (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Happiness or “*domenia*” in the Aristotelian sense refers not only to the person doing well, but also to the person’s sense of knowing to be doing well. Such awareness Aristotle believed was acquired through the nourishment of the intellect (the logic) and the development of moral virtues (rhetoric) (Elias & Merriam 2005; Hobson 2003; Tarnas 1991). For Aristotle, the goal of education is, “... to cultivate the disposition that will lead people to be ready, able and willing to engage in the excellent activities which constitute or which lead to happiness” (Patterson, 1973, p. 34). This concept parallels what Valett (1977) refers to as the final goal of education “...to produce a good and relatively happy person who is capable of living a creative and meaningful life” (p. 6).

3.3 THE HUMANISTIC APPROACH DURING THE RENAISSANCE

In 1725, the Italian philosopher and educator Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) espoused the epistemological perspective of Aristotle. Today Vico is regarded as the first modern humanistic educator (Seizer, 2002). Like Aristotle, Vico believes that education should encompass the development of the whole person: the logical reasoning of the “*scienza*” and the conscious awareness of the “*conscienza*”. In the book *Dei Nostri Tempi Studiorum Ratione* (The Study of Methods of our Times, 1709), Vico strongly criticized the Cartesian model of education that was popular at the time, for its emphasis on analytical thinking and lack of attention to the development of the imagination, speech, memory and of the lack of the application of metaphors (Verene, 2005). In the *Oratione Inaugurali* (Six Inaugural Orations on Humanistic Education, 1699-1707) and in *Scienza Nuova* (The First New Science, 1725), Vico distinguished between what he calls “*il vero*” (the true) as in the truth determined by scientific reasoning, and “*il certo*” (the certain) as in the truth interpreted by personal meaning. Personal meaning and self-knowledge are important tenets of Vico’s philosophy. However,

his definition of self-knowledge does not refer to what modern humanists may regard as personal introspection, but echoes Aristotle's interpretation of wisdom through the knowledge of both liberal arts (rhetoric) and science (logic). According to Vico, such balance of the rhetoric and logic leads to the development of "*sapientia*" (human wisdom), "*eloquentia*" (the ability to speak on a topic with clarity), and "*prudentia*" (practical wisdom). Verene (1993) writes, "*Sapientia, eloquentia, and prudentia* are three aspects of a total process of the human mind and spirit that is the true aim of humanistic education" (p. 9).

Humanistic education shares similar core values with the humanism of the 16th and 17th centuries. The humanists of that period, like Voltaire (1642-1778) and Hume (1711-1776) believed in the innate goodness and potential of the individual, and acknowledged that all humans are governed and motivated by the meaning of their experiences. The aims of humanistic education are, therefore, to provide learning experiences that foster potential and promote personal growth and achievement.

Humanistic education incorporates knowledge development, acquisition of skills and reflection of feelings. It is believed that the integration of the whole person: cognitive, emotional and physical, leads to inner growth and greater self-understanding (Elias & Merriam, 2005), and as Heslop (2006) points out that even in the police force, with its authoritative image, the implementation of a humanistic approach is appropriate for the education and training of its recruits. In spite of its positive attributes, humanistic education has been criticized for being too nurturing and over-protective of the individual (Kirschenbaum & Henderson 1989). Whilst this may be so, nurturing in the humanistic context, does not mean smothering the person with sentimentalities, but rather providing the opportunities and the environment in which the person feels respected, acknowledged, free to make choices and as McLeod (2011) writes, a person who is valued for being and becoming themselves.

3.4 THE DEVELOPMENT THE HUMANISTIC APPROACH FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR TO MODERN TIMES

It was not until the late 1940s that through the translations of Bergin and Fisch (1948) that the writings of Vico became known to the English-speaking academia (Danesi, 1994). Unlike Vico, the humanistic educators of that time did not pay much attention to examining the past, but like him they were concerned with the development of the whole person, with particular reference to personal freedom and dignity (Elias & Merriam 2005). It was during this period that the humanistic movement was re-emerging throughout the Western world, having its greatest impact in the United States.

In the late 1940s and 1950s the world, including the United States, was recovering from the traumas of World War II. The United States had emerged as the strong nation and as the leader on human rights, democratic freedom. However, as a country, it had its own internal social problems.

After World War II racial prejudice and inequality continued to dominate much of the American psyche. In the 1960s, minority groups such as the African-Americans, the unemployed and unskilled workers remained oppressed. According to Barrett-Lennard (1998) national policies such as Roosevelt's "New Deal" commitment in the 1960s, aimed at improving life circumstances of the disadvantaged and to some degree, these policies influenced and even advanced the works of Carl Rogers. It was during the 1950s and 1960s, primarily through the works of Maslow (1968) and Carl Rogers (1951,1969) humanistic education began to be formally recognized.

Although the principles of humanistic education became integrated within some community initiatives, they were not well accepted by the educational institutions of the time (Barrett-Lennard 1998). The lack of appeal appears to have been the result of a number of interrelated factors.

Humanistic education, like humanistic psychology, presented a deviation from the traditional practitioner-driven approach and so was a reaction against the newly-emerging personality and behavioral theories (A. Rogers & Horrocks, 2010). The humanistic approach took control away from the teacher and gave it to the learner, who was seen to be trustworthy, self-directed and accountable, and thus this approach also became known as the student-centred.

This shift of power was perceived as a threat to the more conservative educational establishments of the 1960s (A. Rogers & Horrocks, 2010). Many religious groups questioned the person's innate goodness and saw this tenet as a rejection of the theological belief in original sin. The more fundamentalist groups also feared that one's personal power would result in rejection of God's omnipotence and that self-actualization would lead to the development of selfish attitudes (Burns, 2002). Despite these fears, many humanistic educators held a strong traditional religious conviction and, like Aristotle and Vico before them, believed that personal empowerment and self-actualization would in fact lead humanity to a higher level (Burns, 2002).

Humanistic education developed at a time when empirical research was greatly respected. Immediately after the post-war years there was a spurt of scientific consciousness. The belief that scientific knowledge was reliable because it could be objectively proved (Chambers, 1976) dominated the 1950s and 1960s thinking, reaching its peak in the 1970s. During this period, all professions and, particularly education, were drawn towards empirically-based theories, such as Piaget's (1977) Cognitive Theory and Skinner's (1973) Behaviorist Theory.

In the 1950s, Carl Rogers and his associates conducted several studies in education, including post-secondary and professional education. These studies were primarily based on conditions conducive to personal growth and self-actualization. However, in the positivist thinking of the 1970s, the studies were perceived as being subjective and lacking in empirical vigor. Kirschenbaum and Henderson (1989) write, “Carl Rogers was often criticized by academics as being “soft”, unscholarly, unrealistic or ‘lightweight’ ” (p. 201). Consequently, this might have been another reason why humanistic education did not gain respectability with the academics of that period

3.5 THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANISTIC EDUCATION DURING THE 1980s AND 1990s

The 1980s and 1990s were years of transition. On the one hand there was the advancement of technology that influenced industries and, on the other there was a continuation of the New Age movement of 1970s. During this period scientific thought remained highly regarded but its impact was declining. These were the times of action, but action carried out with increasing recognition of the intangible and the unknown. Another factor that hindered the humanistic approach from being well accepted in education was its language. Humanistic education presented itself in a “feeling” language similar to that of the then-developing “Hippie Culture” and was often confused with that culture and its association with metaphysical and Eastern traditions. It might have been for these reasons that many authorities were reluctant to introduce humanistic education to their respective institutions (Decleva, 1994).

The writings of Feyerabend (1975) and Capra (1975, 1982) for example, did much to demystify and challenge the authority of scientific thinking. Tarnas (1991) explains, “Science was still valued, in many respects still revered. But it had lost its untainted image as humanity’s liberator” (p. 365). It became evident, during this period, that scientific thought could coexist and complement intuitive and subjective reasoning, especially in the fields of psychology and education. In this period, psychological thinking was also changing, becoming less controlling and less dependent on analysis. Eastern traditions were becoming better accepted and seen as complementary to Western philosophies. During this period, New-Age thinking was becoming accepted as a form of enlightenment based on reflection and self-understanding.

3.6 THE NEW MILLENNIUM

In the 21st century there is a wider acceptance of subjective interpretation and far more recognition of the value of personal power. Presently, there is an abundance of texts and workshops on personal development, empowerment and achievement of personal goals. So much so that these terms

have become part of the common lexicon. Even though at times, these concepts may be misconstrued as self-centeredness and ego-centrism, in most instances there is a genuine openness and acceptance of these ideals. Consequently, Carl Rogers' theory of a client-centred approach remains a popular and highly respected theory in counseling (Barrett-Lennard 1998; McLeod, 2011) and in adult education.

3.7 THE REASONS I WAS DRAWN TO THE HUMANISTIC IDEOLOGY

I feel that *being drawn* is an appropriate phrase, for there are life experiences that draw us to search for meaning and solutions to the human condition. I am reminded of Carl Rogers and the influence that his first counseling position with the Rochester Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (Thorne, 2003) might have had on him. Theorists in the helping professions are often driven by experiences of human trauma. Lyon, (1971) for example had been a paratrooper, training armed forces in guerilla warfare, yet became an influential humanistic writer and educator. Nurse theorists such as Peplau (1952), Leininger (1979) and Watson (1988), all developed their theories of caring whilst nursing in mental hospitals where the person's sense of self and not the physical condition required healing. It seems that, like them, I too found myself in situations where I witnessed the resilience and determination present in every person.

My first training was as a Disability Nurse and, as such, I was well trained in the behaviorist model. I vividly remember teaching residents the basic life tasks, such as eating and dressing. I recall how difficult it was for the residents to perform the ordinary tasks of living and how much they tried. I remember their yearning and their attempts to better themselves, so that they could be seen as a person with the potential to develop. Such struggle and triumph of the spirit deserves recognition, respect and acceptance.

When studying to become a nurse educator, I took the elective on Humanistic Education delivered by the Nursing Faculty. This was not a popular elective and I was the only student to enroll in it. But I did not feel alone; I had Maslow, Carl Rogers, Lyon and Jourard to keep me company. I was enthralled by the writings, by what they were saying and by how much sense they were making to me.

It was a unique experience, being the only student doing a module. You can organize how you would like the course to be delivered, have one-to-one meetings with your lecturer (at convenient times of course) and determine your assessment. Consequently, I felt very much in control and special. I was experiencing what could very well be called a student-centred approach, which was liberating as I felt fully in control of my learning. But there was something that influenced me more than the books or the student-centred course. It was the philosophy of the Faculty and even more importantly, it was

the modeling of my lecturers who lived the humanistic attitudes. It was by being in that environment that I truly experienced the humanistic approach.

The effect it had on me was profound and my grades in the overall degree improved enormously. On completion of the degree, I took the learning about the humanistic psychology and implemented it in my classes. After many years, I have continued to experience the positive influence that the humanistic approach has on students. Time after time, groups of students have grown beyond their limitations and have done well in all aspects of their learning.

3.8 THE YEARNING TO MAINTAIN THE ATTITUDES OF CARING

Today, more than ever, it is important to go back to those attitudes of humanistic psychology. In the busyness of the modern world some of us have lost our individuality and the essence of who we are. Technology and the increasing dependence on computers and mobile phones have changed the way we think and behave. Friends no longer drop in to say “Hello”. Instead, they send a text message. Colleagues sitting next to each other do not talk but send email messages to each other. When we phone for an inquiry we no longer speak to a person, but to a machine. It is said that the world of technology has brought us closer but it has also made us impersonal and distant. The pressures of our profit-driven world have caused society to be in survival mode and this mode can evoke the behaviors of self-protection, ego-centrism and distrust. Instead of opening up to others we tend to close up, developing what Jourard (1971) describes as a “protective armor” against the expression of feelings.

Yet there is an expectation that health professionals such as nurses and aged care workers either already possess interpersonal skills or that these can be cultivated through training. Many students enroll in nursing and aged care work with the intention to care. However, noble aspirations are not in keeping with what is happening in practice. As studies by Martin and King (2008) show that nurses and aged care workers have very little time to talk to residents in aged care settings. Technologies have taken up many of the functions of care. As Kleiman (2005) points out technological advancement has also played a role in dehumanizing nursing care as the following reflections from a nurse demonstrates:

I was consumed the whole time with ensuring that all the four machines which were connected [to the patient] were functioning, and so I was taking care of the machines and the name without a face... the sound that beckons is not the scared voice of old Mr. John Doe, but the alarm of my machine that demands my attention. (Kleiman, 2005, p. 5)

This example taken from an acute-care setting shows the nurse's yearning for an intimate connection with the patient rather than merely responding to the equipment to which he is attached. By going back to the "classics", we can recognize that while Carl Rogers and Maslow might have presented their views more than half a century ago, these views are even more relevant today than they were at that time.

3.9 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A HUMANISTIC APPROACH IN THE STUDY

When the students in this study first joined the program they displayed similar characteristics to those presented by the students in the vignette at the beginning of this thesis. They were apprehensive about the program wondering: was this the right one for them; was it at too high a level or had they allowed themselves to aim to a too low level? In most circumstances such apprehension is normal but because of their previous experiences these anxieties were for some overwhelming. Many had had negative experiences with their previous schooling or employment and consequently, as Burns (2002) explains those painful memories made students feel inadequately ill-equipped and insecure. It was therefore essential to the study to create a learning environment where students felt valued, encouraged and understood (Burns 2002).

Humanistic educators such as Maslow (1962), Carl Rogers (1969), Lyon (1971) and Combs (1973, 2006) believe that the individual learns best in an environment that is accepting and unthreatening. Carl Rogers writes, "When threat to the self is low, experience can be perceived in differentiated fashion and learning can proceed" (as cited in Lyon, 1971, p. 86).

Maslow (1968) believes that for self-actualization to occur, two major needs must be met. Firstly, a sense of safety and security, where the person feels they can be themselves without fear of ridicule, judgment or chastisement. Secondly, the feeling of belonging, being valued and accepted for whom they are. In the study, the aim was to ensure that these needs were met.

3.10 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENT

Teaching, like caring, is an interpersonal relationship and the quality of the rapport determines its effectiveness. The way in which teachers behave towards students, their verbal and non-verbal messages are interpreted and internalized by the students and influence their perception of themselves. Jersild (1975) states:

Everything [the teacher] does, says, or teaches has or could have a psychological impact.

What [the teacher] offers helps [to students] to discover their resources and their

limitations. [The teacher] is a central figure in countless situations which can help the learner to realize and accept himself or which may bring humiliation, shame, rejections and self-disparagement. (as cited in Read and Simon, 1975, p.135)

Important to the relationship is the way in which individual students perceive the teacher. During the study my relationship with students differed according to how they saw me. To the students who had been a long time away from formal learning, I was their teacher and throughout the program they maintained a certain distance. To the younger students I was more like parent figure, and to the students who had more experiences in education I was the expert authority. As the study progressed it seemed that my relationship with most became closer, but I felt that their original perception of my role remained the same: for some students I still remained the teacher, for others, the parent figure and for other still the expert authority.

3.11 CARL ROGERS' TENETS ON EDUCATION

Carl Rogers' view of personal development began with his work in psychotherapy, but over the years, his focus extended to education (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989). He believed that those principles that were important in therapy were also important in education. As early as 1951 he wrote, "If the creation of an atmosphere of acceptance, understanding and respect is the most effective basis for the learning, which is called therapy, then might it not be the basis for the learning which is called education" (Carl Rogers, 1951, p. 384). He believed that congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding are necessary conditions for learning. The teacher, like the therapist, is responsible for creating these conditions in the learning environment. The following sections provide snap-shots of how these conditions occurred in the study. These snap-shots are written from my perspective as a teacher and narrate my actions and subjective interpretation of the situation.

3.11.1. Congruence

In his early work, Carl Rogers used this the term congruence in therapy to describe the consistency between the real and the ideal self (Barrett-Lennard, 1998). In the mid 1950s as Carl Rogers redefined his approach, the term took on a different meaning. Congruence was interpreted as the counselor being real or genuine in the relationship with the client, letting the client know where the counselor is emotionally (Carl Rogers, 1980). This may involve confrontation and straightforward expression of personally-owned feelings. Carl Rogers (1980) believes congruence to be most important element in the relationship. In the teaching situation, congruence occurs when teachers present

themselves as real people with strengths, flaws and experiences, entering a relationship with students (Carl Rogers, 1980).

Teachers like everyone else experience an array of feelings. Sometimes they experience a sense of wellbeing such as warmth, recognition or excitement; at other times, they experience uncomfortable feelings such as frustration, anger and boredom. Many teachers believe that “good” teachers should not have any negative feelings. At a conscious level, they may try to repress a feeling that makes them uncomfortable. However, subconsciously these feelings do persist and they may be expressed to students in indirect ways. For example, the teacher who feels threatened may take an autocratic approach and blame the students for not paying attention and for lack of co-operation. Through such actions teachers avoid taking responsibility for their own emotions. Young-Brown (2009) explains:

The problem is that feelings we ignore still affect us. They sink beneath the level of our awareness and nibble way at our well-being. They pop out at inappropriate times or get dumped on people we don’t really want to hurt. Or they lower our levels of energy and joy so that we operate out of a narrow band of blandness and mediocrity. (p. 11)

Carl Rogers (1983) believes that teachers need to live all of their feelings, taking accountability for them as they come. It is believed that if the teacher acknowledges and accepts feelings as their own, they are less likely to express them inappropriately. To experience congruence, a teacher needs to have “... a high level of self-awareness, self-acceptance a self-trust” (Natellio, 1987, p. 206).

When the teacher can experience congruence with the self, they are in a better position to share those feelings that will create intimacy in the relationship with students. It is also important for students to come to terms with their feelings even when those may be of fear, boredom, indifference or resentment and for teachers to support students in this challenge. The following vignette of Erick, a student in the study, illustrates these points:

Erick, the youngest student in the group, appeared to be having difficulties with learning in the nursing home where he was on placement. On one occasion, he became very frustrated. He approached the teacher and told her that he would never want to work in a nursing home again. The teacher listened, but also felt annoyed and frustrated at his outburst. As he continued talking, she felt a sense of helplessness. Between the verbal outbursts, there were moments of quiet, and during those moments, she felt her annoyance, frustration and helplessness, but also a sense of relief that Erick was able to

talk about it. When Erick paused for a response, she stated: “Erick, I don’t know what to say. You sound angry, and I don’t know what I can do to make you less angry.” She chose not to share with him all of her feelings at that point. They were her own feelings and she took responsibility for them. Later that day, when she was able to have a chat with Erick, as both were now in a different emotional state, they were able to talk constructively about the incident.

3.11.2. Unconditional positive regard

The provision of positive that is unconditional involves praising, acceptance and trust for the other. The teacher accepts students the way they are, unconditionally and non-judgmentally and recognize students’ efforts, feelings and opinions (Carl Rogers, 1977, p. 100). Consequently, the students feel that, no matter how diverse their ideas might be they will be acknowledged and respected (Rogers, 1983). Therefore as students feel that there is no need to defend their opinion or behavior, they are more likely to focus on the exploration of their own ideas, understanding and feelings.

If the teacher shows confidence in the students, they in turn will develop confidence in themselves and in others. By expressing an attitude of trust, teachers enable each person to learn in their own way and at their own pace, giving them the space to explore different methods of learning and allowing them to make mistakes and to learn from them. “Part of making education relevant to the student is allowing him [sic] to develop responsibility for his [sic] own learning. But responsibility can only be learned from having responsibility, never from having it withheld” (Combs, as cited in Read & Simon, 1973, p.129). The following vignette illustrates the teacher’s unconditional positive regard towards David, another student in the study.

David was very eager to learn. He enjoyed the course and was looking forward to becoming an aged care worker. He lived in the outer suburbs and travelled every day for over an hour to come to the program. The journey cost him \$5.00 per day, which was expensive for David, who was not yet employed. There were days when David turned up at 11:00 am for the 09:00 am class. He always excused himself, but never gave an explanation for his lateness. Teachers usually sense when students are late for reasons beyond their control, and the teacher felt that this was the case for David. During the day, he seemed to keep his distance as if avoiding having to give an explanation. When he came late, he was always welcomed and since he appeared unwilling to talk about it, nothing was asked. It was towards the end of the program and by accident, that the teacher discovered

the reason for his lateness was that he did not always have the money for the train fare, and on those days, he had to walk to his friend's house to borrow \$5:00 for the journey. When the teacher learnt the reason, she was glad that she had never reprimanded David or asked for an explanation. Somehow, there was a sense of trust that whatever the reason, David was doing his best to stay in the program.

3.11.3. Empathic understanding

When Carl Rogers first used the term “*empathic understanding*”, he referred to it as an active process of “*desiring to know*” the present and develop a greater understanding of the other person.

The state of empathy, or being empathic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the ‘as if’ condition. (Carl Rogers, 1957, in Carl Rogers, 1980, p. 140)

By the late 1970s, Rogers described empathy as a process, when one enters the private perceptual world of the other: “It means temporarily living in the other’s life, moving about in it delicately without making judgments; it means sensing meanings of which he or she is scarcely aware, . . .” (Carl Rogers, 1980, p.142).

When students feel understood, they feel better able to examine their situation and to make better decisions towards their self-actualization (Carl Rogers, 1980) as the following vignette of Ted, one of the more mature students in the study, illustrates:

Ted, one of the older students in the study, had been a truck driver. At times his behavior in class was somewhat rough and blasé. He seemed not to fit in well with the group. Some of the younger students appeared uncomfortable with his language and attitude. One day during class, we discussed the care of people in remote areas. Ted began to talk about the people he had known during his travels. He painted such a colorful portrait of his experiences that everyone paid attention, and by listening to his stories they came to understand the world through his eyes. Interestingly, after that day, his behavior changed. He came across as a very gentle and caring individual who was now well accepted by the group.

3.12 DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL POWER

Rogers (1969) believes that if the conditions of congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathy are present, students will feel a sense of empowerment, able to take responsibility for their life. His interpretation of personal power refers to the power that one has over the self - the manner in which the person develops an understanding of the self and the control they have over their personal goals and ambitions. Personal power enables students to be in control of their learning and to accept responsibility for their actions.

3.13 CONCLUSION

It is the tenet of this thesis that a humanistic approach can not only be successfully incorporated into a skill-focused training program, but that a humanistic approach also enhances the students' ability to learn and to develop confidence in themselves as learners and as future aged care workers.

The following chapter discusses the impact of changes in VET system and how in the last twenty years these changes influenced the delivery of vocational programs in Australia.

CHAPTER FOUR

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The focus of education in the past twenty years has become far more specifically vocational than ever before. This has partly resulted from the skills needed for work having become more sophisticated, and from a diminishing availability of unskilled work opportunities. (Harris et al., 1997. p.100)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Learning has special significance for adults. For some, it has an aesthetic purpose, gratifying a passion and a desire to learn (A. Rogers & Horrocks, 2010). For most however, learning especially when it involves the acquisition of work skills, is a way of opening up career opportunities and improving one's life circumstances (Cranton, 2006). Generally for adults, learning is a mean to self-improvement, transformation and personal fulfillment. To adult learners, such fulfillment becomes even more meaningful when the learning is related to a vocation: an occupation that the individual is particularly drawn to undertake. Today due to the diverse needs of society, there are many choices of occupations. For example, a person wanting to work with people may choose to take a course in hospitality, while another with a passion for cars, may choose motor mechanics. An important aspect of vocational education is that today there is a selection of programs available to meet the interests, personality and capabilities of the individual. This chapter will discuss the aims of VET, its changes in the Australian context and the influence of CBT in vocational programs, as in Certificate III in Community Services (Aged Care Work).

4.2 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Billet (2011) explains that VET is very diverse and difficult to define, as there is a great diversity of learners, ranging from school-leavers training for their first job to mature adults returning to study. The differences in ages, levels of academic skills and personal abilities are part of the diversity. To meet the various needs programs differ in length and in academic requirements, ranging from three months for preparatory studies, to four to five years for academic degrees. VET programs are predominantly delivered in Colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE), in the private sector by Registered Training Organizations (RTOs), and at dual sector Universities.

As an educational system, VET has had a social and a humane purpose. From a social perspective VET is seen as meeting the learners' personal and work-related skills that would enable to gain or improve their employment and life status (McGrath, 2012). Billett (2011) writes that, "...vocational

education can be seen as meeting the focus of securing individual personal growth and pathways of development to assist them in engaging in education in ways that realize their fullest potential and also their aspirations” (p. 61). Such a view is important at all levels of VET, but most especially at Certificate levels.

A proportion of learners undertaking certificate programs come from financially, socially or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds (A. Rogers & Horrocks 2010). Learners from these backgrounds might have had limited opportunities to develop social and academic skills and their life circumstances might have marred their confidence as learners. However, enrolling VET programs are also other learners, such as women returning to study to fulfill their dream of having a career, professionals wanting a career change and people wanting to learn new skills that would give them a greater outlook on life. These latter groups often have already developed high social and academic skills and usually have a positive attitude towards learning. Yet, despite these differences, all learners enroll in VET programs with the aim of meeting their personal goals and aspirations. Hansen (1994) writes, “Vocation describes work that is fulfilling to the individual such that it helps to provide a sense of self; of personal identity” (as cited in Billett, 2011, p. 59). Such statement is in keeping with the essence of this study.

4.3 CHANGES IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

In the last four decades, VET has experienced a number of changes. These changes have been influenced by changes in educational philosophies work ethics and by volatile economic climates. In the 1970s, Dewey’s (1897, 1963) philosophy of “*learning by doing*” regained popularity as it was in keeping with the learning expectations of the 1970s. In this same period Frere’s (1970) writings on “*personal transformation*” and “*social disfranchisement*” of educationally disadvantaged groups also influenced the aims and delivery of VET in Australia. By the late 1970s the Australian Government readily adopted Frere’s notion as a way of reducing unemployment by providing sponsored vocational programs for people returning to work.

Also in the 1970s businesses and industries were becoming highly specialized and Skinner’s Behaviorist Theory (1973) fitted well with the scientific thinking and job specialization of that time. Many industries such as the Henry Ford car industry for example adopted the Skinnerian model in their work practices. At the same time in the 1970s the concept of mass production instituted by Henry Ford in the early part of the 20th Century became even more applicable not only in car industry but also to other secondary industries. Also during the 1970s Fredrick Taylor instigated an organizational system that was rigidly hierarchical and which delegated workers to specific repetitious single tasks of the assembly line such as tightening car-wheel bolts or labeling milk bottles (Smith & Keating, 2003). Despite their

success in increasing production, the Fordist/Taylorist models were regarded to be highly mechanical, focusing solely on tasks and outcomes and indifferent to workers' abilities or basic needs (Smith & Keating, 2003).

Another version of the Behaviorist Theory emerging during this period was the Dreyfus Model. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980) professed learners to be self-directed, always in motion, constantly refining their skills and evolving from beginners to expert workers. Such a model had an influence on skills training, both in vocational and professional programs. In the United States for example, Benner (1984) incorporated the Dreyfus Model in the acquisition of nursing skills. In Australia, the Dreyfus Model was adopted as a framework for skills development. Billett (2001) refers to the implementation of this model in the training of coal-miners.

4.4 AIMS OF COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING

The aim of CBT is on the training and assessment of work-skills, so that at the completion of the training program workers are workplace competent rather than work-ready (Booth, 2000). Workplace competent refers that on commencement workers would be able to perform all the activities of their occupation, with little or no induction. In order for future workers to be work-ready, there has been an emphasis in VET programs to train and assess workers in the actual work situation. As Billett (2003) points out, workplace learning: putting theory into practice is more effective for learning work-skills than the classroom as it exposes learners to real-world situations. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the increasing complexity of theoretical knowledge requires that teaching needs to be also delivered in the classroom as classrooms can provide the setting where complex cognitive information can be presented and discussed without the interruptions or distractions of the work environment, and where students have time to reflect on the learning without being pressured by their work requirements.

CBT determines where skills are to be taught and assessed but not how they are to be taught. The teaching both in the classroom and on the workplace is left to the teacher and therefore within the constraints of CBT curricula, teachers in VET do have the opportunity to implement approaches and strategies that can promote students' personal development as well as the acquisition of work-related skills.

4.5 THE INTRODUCTION OF COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING IN AUSTRALIA

In the 1980s, countries became closer as a result of advancement in communication technology. Computerization, especially the development of the Internet, enabled information to be shared more easily and frequently. During this period, Australia was experiencing a shortage of trade-workers.

Consequently, the recruitment of overseas workers to maintain production was most welcomed by many industries (Harris et al., 1997). The introduction of nationally standardized competencies was believed to be a way of ensuring that national and international workers were competent in similar skills. In the 1980s standardization was also introduced in Europe. However, there it was greatly criticized, as it was ineffective in the transference of skills between different European countries (Toner, 2012).

Despite the question about its ineffectiveness, by the late 1980s most Western industries had adopted CBT in the training of their workers. During this period Australian industries were becoming vulnerable to the increasing competition and needed workers capable of performing according to the demands of growing competitive international markets. When CBT was introduced in Australia it met much opposition from educators and academics (Harris et al., 1995). Nonetheless, advocates for CBT argued that there were several reasons for its implementation: the shift in production that occurred in Australia from primary to secondary and tertiary industries and the unstable world economy were some of the factors during that period. In 1992 the Australian Chamber of Commerce defined CBT as:

A way of approaching (vocational) training that places primary emphasis on what a person can do as a result of training (the outcomes), and as such represents a shift away from an emphasis on the process involved in training (the inputs). It is concerned with training to industry specific standards rather than an individual's achievement relative to others in the group. (cited in Guthrie, 2009. p.7)

Over the years, this definition has been revamped a number of times. On each occasion, the definition has become broader, incorporating higher order skills. For example, Ducker (1993) defines competency-based training as involving, "... considerable breadth and complexity, and moves well beyond the physical realm of ability" (cited in Smith & Keating, 2003, p.123). This view is more in keeping with current practice of CBT.

Since 2003, VET programs have become more demanding, with an increase in high-level of cognitive content. There is also the expectation by employers that workers already possess personal attributes such as autonomy, adaptability, commitment and interpersonal skills (Kemmis, 2008). According to Collins (1993), a report on VET by the Mayer Committee of 1992 assumed that learners in VET programs would have already developed these attributes in secondary school. However, not all students undertaking VET programs have had the opportunity to have a "good" secondary education that allowed them to acquire these attributes.

By the 1990s all occupations, even the ones defined as being more menial, required formal training. Many workers had to enroll in certificate programs, even though they possessed inadequate literacy and numeracy skills limited personal skills. These students were the very ones needing the opportunity to change their life circumstances. Yet it was these same students that were the most disadvantaged by CBT curricula. Often, they were not accepted into the programs, as they were unable to satisfy the entry requirements that progressively had become more difficult.

4.6 RESPONSES OF EDUCATORS TO COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING

It was primarily for these reasons that CBT was criticized when introduced in Australia. The most ardent criticisms came from academics and educators who saw it as a government money-saving exercise, concerned with meeting the needs of industries rather than the development of the person. Studies by Foyster (1997) and Cormford (1997) showed that 62% of teachers perceived CBT severely hindering skills development in students.

The distinguishing factor between CBT and traditional education is that CBT is concerned only with the acquisition of skills. Education on the other hand, focuses on the whole person, which was the original intention of the formal VET system. McGrath and Lugg (2012) point out that teachers in VET are trained primarily to assess competencies. Clayton (2010) writes that, according to the Australian Qualification and Training Framework (AQTF), Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is the only requirement for teaching in CBT programs. Qualifications in education are not recognized, in fact teachers with Diplomas or Degrees in Education cannot teach in VET unless they also hold Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Criticism of CBT when it was first introduced did not perturb governments or industries. In fact, they saw these criticisms as driven by personal motives, and to some degree this might have been true. Harris et al., (1998) suggest that educators and academics had deeper and covert motives for the criticisms. Their main concern was that CBT did not appear to fit well with the philosophies and expectations of education, particularly with those of the higher education sector. During that same period TAFE colleges were becoming amalgamated with universities, with some universities offering skilled-based programs in person-centred disciplines such as teaching, nursing and social work. The concerns by academics and educators were that these programs would end up focusing on outcomes and not on the development of professional attributes. As Smith and Keating (2003) write “Competency-Based Training has been a complex change because it has involved changes in the way curricula are written, the way in which teaching and training is delivered, and the way in which students are assessed” (p.131). Many academics and educators opposing CBT had dedicated most of their professional life to researching,

writing about and implementing adult learning. Now, with the introduction of CBT, they believed that their input on effective adult education and training had been disregarded.

Another concern amongst academics was that the introduction of a national standardization of curricula in post-secondary and tertiary institutions would take away the autonomy from these institutions. As a model of instruction, CBT did impose a threat to the well-respected Oxford system of the more traditional universities. It was therefore not surprising that because of all these factors the criticisms of CBT from the academics were both “*vociferous*” and “*genuine*” (Smith & Keating 2003). Soucek (1993) for example, argues that CBT was educationally unsound and Crittenden (1990, 1994) criticized both the proposal of the Finn Report (1991) and actions of the Mayer Committee (1992) in establishing CBT. Ryan (1994) points out:

As a matter of equity, it is hardly fair to leave the million Australians who participate each year in TAFE courses at the mercy of educational vandals. Australians whose aspiration is in the skilled trades or para-professional occupations are no less worthy of the best available educational quality than those in academic programs. (p.1)

On the other hand The Department of Employment, Education and Training was critical of TAFE colleges for developing programs that were based on theory and traditions rather than on the demands of the workforce (Masters & Curry, 1990). Goozee (2011) explains:

... that of all the advanced industrialised countries, Australia remained the only country where there was no general co-ordination of training on a national basis to ensure a uniformity of training methods, a uniformity of standards and a common acceptance of qualifications. (p. 23)

Nonetheless, despite all the debates and criticisms for and against CBT, the concern of the Australian Government and of industries was the lack of uniformity and consistency in the training required to increase secondary and tertiary production in Australia, which in comparison to other developed countries, was severely lagging behind (Anderson, 1994). Despite such criticism by the late 1990s, CBT curricula were established. It was a decision that had to happen in response to the economic markets. As the world economy and technology continues to evolve, so will there be future changes to VET.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The worldwide recession of the late 1980s has dented economic confidence and left industries vulnerable to volatile economic markets. Industries all over the world seem to have an underlying feeling of paranoia and insecurity. Competition has become intense and aggressive and production has become the overall concern. In this climate, the worker became what in 1848 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels referred to as the means of production and an appendage to a machine.

It is understandable that the rapid increase in technology has required an advanced and skill-focused system for VET programs. However, the acquisition of skills, as determined by CBT, can be acquired with greater effectiveness in a program that also combines a more comprehensive educational approach and appropriate teaching strategies. The following chapter describes teaching strategies employed in this study and their implications for students' ultimate success.

CHAPTER FIVE

TEACHING IN RESPONSE TO DIFFERENT LEARNING NEEDS

“Only individual classes have beginnings and endings. True learning and teaching came before the beginning and will continue after the end (Metz, 1994, The Tao of Learning p.51).”

TAKING NOTES

In class Joseph always sat at the right end of the horseshoe. Since I tended to teach from the right side of the room, he was the closest to me. During class he constantly doodled. At first I thought nothing of it. Students do doodles from time to time. However, I did become intrigued by what he was doing, and I found myself losing my train of thought. To concentrate, I had to move away from the right side of the horseshoe towards the centre of the room. As the doodling went on for days, I became concerned and began to wonder of why Joseph was not taking notes. I tried different strategies like talking slowly, wrote more on the whiteboard, emphasized points and even gave instructions such as “You must write this down”, but he kept on doodling. Sometimes he started a new drawing, or continued on with one from the previous class. As the lesson continued, those doodles became intricate. One afternoon, I commented on how intriguing his drawings were. He explained that the doodling helped him to remember. “OK, if that is what works for you. Use it.” Smiling he replied that this was how he learns, “A bit strange....These are my notes”, he explained. I told him how interesting the drawings were and for a while we talked. He disclosed that when he was unemployed he used to draw on footpaths to get money.



At the end of the program Joseph was nominated for the State Training and Further Education (TAFE) Student Award. A criterion for the nomination was to discuss his

preferred learning style with the selection panel. Joseph brought to the interview his folio of drawings. I do not know what happened at that interview, but for months afterwards, I received feedback on how impressed the panel had been with his knowledge and insight. Joseph did win the State Award that year. At the time, he had commenced working a Personal Carer at a Hostel attached to a large hospital. Three months later he became the manager of that Hostel, a position that he still holds at the time of writing this thesis. As for his drawings, I believe that one of his largest art works is displayed in the foyer of the hospital.

(This picture is an example of a drawing done in class.)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As A. Rogers and Horrocks (2010) point out some adults like Joseph, come to the program with already well-developed ways of learning. For Joseph the way in which he could concentrate was through doodling. Exploratory studies by Andrade (2009) show that for some individuals doodling promotes attention and aids concentration. Similarly to Joseph, students may defend such ways of learning by stating: “This is how I always learnt” or “It has always worked well for me before”. Doodling was Joseph’s way of learning, perhaps not conventional, but his way.

The aim of this chapter is to describe teaching and learning strategies in adult education. The emphasis is on a student-centred approach where the students, preferred ways of learning are recognized and addressed. Students’ learning needs rather than competencies or tasks become the focus of the learning situations, thus making the delivery of the program student-centred.

The first part of the chapter begins with a discussion on the importance for learners to understand their own ways of learning, and it provides examples of teaching strategies used to address these in the study. The second part of the chapter discusses the application of teaching strategies derived from the works of Assagioli (1968, 1993, 1994) and Erickson (1992) and presents a series of vignettes depicting these strategies as they were applied in the teaching situation.

5.2 THE MAGIC OF TEACHING

Over the last twenty years there has been an abundance of on how people learn. Such writings provide a number of useful strategies to assist adults to learn. However, these strategies are only tools and their effectiveness is greatly determined by the manner in which they are applied. If applied in a cold detached manner, inconsiderate of students’ needs or wants, then the strategies may not work well. However, if applied with integrity and in response to students’ needs, then the outcomes can be indeed magical. When teaching is implemented with genuineness, respect and trust, it is as if the whole

atmosphere is sprinkled with some magic dust, and when this magic dust touches the students then everything for them changes: attitudes towards the program, relationships in the group and even beliefs about themselves as learners. Writers such as Maslow (1968), Carl Rogers (1983) as well more contemporary writers such as Neville (2005), A. Rogers and Horrocks (2010) and Knowles et al. (2012) emphasize that no matter the teaching strategy or content, it is the learning climate and the relationship created by the teacher that is fundamental to successful learning. As Neville (2005) argues: “Teaching is not about imparting knowledge but about facilitating learning” (p. 25). In fact now more than ever, students do access information through social media, especially the Internet. Nonetheless, even in this era of technology and computerization it is the teacher’s relationship with students that is important to effective learning. In a positive relationship students are influenced by the teacher’s enthusiasm and supported by the teacher’s encouragement and guidance.

Although the foundation of good teaching rests on a positive attitude of the teacher, ability of the teacher to use a variety of teaching strategies is also important. To augment the teaching the teacher also needs a toolbox from which the most appropriate strategies can be chosen to meet the students’ the learning requirements. The following sections describe the teaching strategies taken from my toolbox to address the learning styles of students in this study.

5.3 LEARNING STYLES

Since 1984, when Kolb first published his findings on individual learning preferences, there has been a greater awareness of how different people learn. Learning styles and learning preferences are often used as synonymous terms (Pritchard, 2009). Some students for example, may prefer the visual mode of gathering and processing information. The best way to learn for these students is through visual prompts such as reading, writing, diagrams, charts, and so forth. Also depending upon their circumstances at the particular time, the same students could choose to study in the morning or late at night, in a quiet environment or with the aid of background noises.

Students have their individual body clocks that will influence their approach to learning. Awareness of the different approaches is important, especially for students returning to study who in their anxiety to do well may be looking for a prescribed way, which may not necessarily fit with their life styles. The learning approaches of the students in this study varied and during the program students often volunteered information on how they studied. Some said that they studied in transit, while travelling to and from the training organization. Others spent an hour or so each evening, while others studied at weekends. There were students who studied only at the training organization, in the library or after hours in vacant classrooms. Some found that studying alone was their preferred method while

others studied in groups. Whatever their learning preference, it was important for students to recognize it and to feel comfortable with what worked for them.

According I. Myers-Briggs and P. B. Myers (1980) one's learning style is greatly determined by one's personality. An understanding of one's personality traits determines the person's mental patterns for processing and organizing information as well as the way in which the person gains energy and motivation.

In the teaching situation, an understating of learning styles is also necessary. In the last decade a number of inventories have been developed. Some of the more widely used are Kolb's (1984) Learning Styles Inventory, Fleming's (1987) VAC/VARK model; Honey and Mumford's (1982) Learning Styles Model; and the learning styles derived from the I. Myers-Briggs (1962) Personality Type Indicator. Although individuals have a preferred way of learning, these preferences are not inflexible. A. Rogers and Horrocks (2010) explain that at different times adults employ a number of learning styles but they usually have a strong preference for one or two styles. Students therefore can temporarily change their learning styles in response to a particular teaching situation. For example, a student with a preference for a visual mode could with a charismatic teacher, adopt the kinesthetic approach, while a student with a preference for a physical mode may resort to textbook learning prior to a written examination.

5.4 RELEVANCE OF LEARNING STYLES TO STUDENTS

In the study, I as the teacher and coordinator provided 60% of the teaching including the clinical teaching. There were two other teachers in the program each providing 20% of the classroom teaching and who shared the clinical teaching with me. We were all Registered Division I Nurses and had Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Although understanding of different learning styles was important to us as teachers, such understanding was even more important for our students. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) write that learning style instruments are of great benefit when used to make learners aware of their individual styles and those of others. We the teachers also had our own ways of teaching, but we were also conscious of employing a variety of strategies to address the various learning needs of students. Kolb's (1984) Delivery Model for example, was used as a framework throughout the program. It was taken for granted that teachers would address the different learning styles within their teaching. The focus on learning styles was primarily to enable students to gain a better understanding of themselves as learners.

5.5 USE OF THE MYERS-BRIGGS PERSONALITY TYPE INDICATORS IN THE PROGRAM

When students first started the program they were asked what changed their attitude towards returning to study. In this group as in other groups students typically responded that it was “*Mid-afternoon on the second day of the program*”. It was at this time that students heaved a sigh of relief, smiled and for the first time uttered statements such as: “*I am glad I came here*” and “*I think I am going to enjoy this course.*” From my observations, I believe the factor bringing about this change was their new understanding of how they learn. By understanding how they process and decode information, students became aware of their abilities, how to utilize them, and how to respond to those factors that may challenge their learning. It was on the second day of the program that the various ways of learning were discussed. Students shared how they liked to learn and how they liked to be taught. Leading from this discussion, the concept of the Myers-Briggs (1962) Type Indicator was introduced so that students could appreciate the influence of their personality on their learning style.

On this day students participated in an activity to determine their own learning styles. The concepts derived from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator were used for this exercise. It was presented to the students that when starting a new program often even the more experienced students would scan the room and compare themselves to others in the group. They may have an internal dialogue such as, “*Gee he’s smart, he is asking lots of interesting questions*” or “*She talks as if she had a great deal of experience. . . . she surely will do well. . . not like me.*” Usually when comparing oneself to others the self always seems to be worse off: inadequate and inferior, while the others appear as “*shining stars*”. The intention of this exercise was for all students to have an understanding of their own learning styles, and through this understanding for all to see themselves as “*shining stars*”.

The exercise was in the form of eight vignettes derived from Oka (1993) Applications of Generative Learning. Each vignette represented the descriptors of the four dichotomies as described by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator: Extrovert/Introvert (E-I), Sensate/Intuitive (S-N), Thinking and Feeling (T-F), Judger/Perceiver (J-P) of the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator. For each dichotomy, two vignettes were presented, describing the characteristics of each side of the dichotomy. Students were asked to draw a horizontal line for the four dichotomies, each end representing the letter of that descriptor of that dichotomy.

I _____ E
S _____ N
T _____ J
J _____ P

When narrating the vignettes it was necessary to create an atmosphere where students could explore their strategies with fun and excitement rather than with criticism and disapproval. Therefore, techniques such as exaggeration of personality traits, humour, metaphors, cartoons, and anchoring were used to describe the eight personality traits as described by Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator.

Description of these characteristics was important so that students could identify their personality traits. For example, a student with a highly intuitive preference may have difficulties in remembering details, while another with a sensing preference may be excellent in remembering specific information. Through the explanations students became aware that at times they might have difficulties in dealing with certain subjects, not because of their abilities, but rather because of their preferred learning modes. Once students are aware that difficulties in learning are more due to their preferred learning styles, their perceptions of themselves change.

The concept of the shadow as presented in the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator, was important in this exercise. Each of the eight preferences has an opposite dimension that is referred as its shadow. Myers-Briggs and Peter Myers (1995) describe the shadow as the least developed preference, that part that is the least accessible, as for example, the shadow of the extrovert would have the characteristics of the introvert. Each of the shadows when exposed can be quite beautiful as well as useful, and when students are aware of their shadow they feel more in control of their learning as they know that they can adapt the characteristics of the shadow in the appropriate circumstances. For example, a student with a highly intuitive preference accustomed to see concepts as whole can learn, when shown how, to view concepts from the perspective of a sensate: with attention to more specific details.

At the end of the exercise two phenomena occurred. The importance is that these same phenomena also occurred in the last 10 years, without exception in all aged care work and nursing students with whom I worked. The first phenomenon was that students with similar preferences in the Sensate-iNtuitive (relating to information gathering) or Perceiver-Judger (how they order and sequence information) types sat together, even though they hardly knew each other. This phenomenon supports the hypothesis that people with similar personalities are in school or work situations drawn to each other, as they find it easier to work together. I. Briggs-Myers and P. Myers (1980) write:

Two people who prefer the same perception and judgment have the best chance of understanding each other and feeling understood. They look at things in much the

same way and come to similar conclusion. They find the same things interesting and consider the same things important. (p. 199)

Fifteen out of nineteen students in the study saw themselves as having a strong (N) iNtuitive's preference and of these, most also saw themselves as having a (P) Perceiver's preference. Knowledge of such a combination is important as curricula for both Certificate III in Aged Care Work and the Diploma of Nursing involve the acquisition of detailed information of anatomy and physiology, medical conditions and procedures that have to be learnt by rote. Interestingly, when this same exercise was on six different occasions given to students undertaking education or social work degrees, on each occasion, students saw themselves as having as strong (S) Sensate's preference with, many of these also having (J) Judger's preference.

When students had difficulties with their learning, their preferences were discussed and strategies on how to best use the shadow were explained. Such knowledge gave students a sense of empowerment, as they could choose to use their shadow for tasks requiring those characteristics.

5.6 HONEY AND MUMFORD'S LEARNING STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

The second instrument the students used was derived from the Honey and Mumford's (1993) Learning Style Questionnaire. The questionnaire was given on the second week of the program. It consisted of 80 statements each with a letter: (R) for Reflector, (T) for Theorist, (P) Pragmatist and (A) Activist. The characteristics as described by Honey and Mumford (1993) are:

Reflectors: Like to stand back and observe and reflect on the learning from many different perspectives.

Theorists: Prefer to base their experience on logical theories that they use to support their learning.

Pragmatists: Like to try out new ideas, theories and techniques and test them on how they will work in practice. They will look for new ideas and take the opportunity to experiment with applications. They tend to be impatient with open-ended discussion.

Activist: Involve themselves fully quite readily in the learning experiences. They take in experience concretely, and process what they take in actively. They tend to act first and consider the consequences later.

Students were required to tick only the boxes of those statements that referred to what they saw to be their own characteristics. Students then added their scores for each letter to determine what was their preference: (R) for Reflector, (T) for Theorist, (P) Pragmatist and (A) Activist. After the scores were added, four groups were identified; one for those who highest score was for Reflector, one for those with a highest score as Activist score and so forth. In these groups students discussed the factors that facilitate or inhibit their learning. However, there were always students who had similar scores for two or more preferences, in such cases students made their own choice of which group to join.

In the group there were 12 Reflectors, four Pragmatists, two Theorists and one Activist. This distribution was also typical of students attending Certificate III in Aged Care Work and the Diploma of Nursing, a high number of reflectors with a corresponding low number in other preferences, especially in the activist preference. Through this exercise students gained awareness of their own learning styles from a perspective based more on engagement and behavior. The understanding of the Honey and Mumford's learning characteristics was particularly relevant in the workplace experiences, as the following vignettes demonstrate.

5.7 VIGNETTES OF STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES

David

David was in his mid-twenties. He was quiet, reflective, polite and always smiling. In class he listened attentively, wrote everything down, and when unsure he tentatively questioned. His notes were well organized, clear, short and to the point.

He did not appear to enjoy role-play even though he was always polite, he seemed to be making a great effort to participate. When working in groups, he took a long time to join in the discussion, and when he did, he appeared to feel good about it. He generally was a private person who spent the breaks in reading or discussing with one or two other students the topics covered in class.

There were times in the workplace that he was anxious as he felt he did not have enough information to care for residents. In the workplace the teachers helped him to deal with his anxiety. They showed him how to access information quickly from the care-plans and made him comfortable about asking the manager and senior staff for information. As his confidence grew,

the anxiety and the need to know specific details decreased. He remained theoretical and analytical, but he appeared to be able to deal positively and constructively.

David did not find a job immediately after program. He wrote a few applications but never sent them. Four months after the program with encouragement from his former teachers, he applied to the nursing home where he did his workplace experience. He was immediately appointed. The manager stated how please she was with his performance and suggested that he should consider doing Certificate IV in Nursing.

Rose

Rose seemed always happy, wanting to share her experience with the rest of the group. She liked to be actively involved. She was always volunteered for role-play and was the first one to go in a group. Prior to the program she had worked in aged care, and constantly related the learning to her experiences in the field. She appeared to be impatient with detailed information but was greatly interested when the information was acted out.

In the classroom she participated well in discussions. The teachers also encouraged other students to participate so, that they too could tell their stories and Rose did not feel to be the only one sharing her experiences.

In the workplace Rose was well accepted. The staff liked working with her. When asked to do a task, she did it. At times however, she was so quick that she forgot to do or to bring certain things: like soap or towels, for example when assisting a resident with the shower. On a number of occasions had to be reminded to slow down and to check if she has collected everything that she needed. She was very keen to learn and to improve. She did very well in the workplace and was one offered a job. However, she wanted to be an aged care worker in the hostel where she had been working as a kitchen-hand. Six months after the program, she was acting as afternoon supervisor of that hostel.

Jane

She had to sit for the examination in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) as part of First Aid Level 2 competency. For days students practiced CPR at lunchtime. Jane was always there: having a drink or eating her lunch, watching others practicing and offering advice or direction.

But she herself did not practice, and appeared to be quite at ease observing and directing others. The teachers encouraged her to have a go, but she replied that she was fine, and just wanted to observe.

At the end of the First Aid Classes, all students, with the exception of Jane, successfully completed their practical examination. Jane did not feel that she was quite ready, and asked if she could be assessed the following week. A few days later, Jane came to arrange a time for her examination. Prior to taking the examination she was asked if she wanted to go over any of the procedures. She replied that she was fine and would like to start straight away. Her performance in CPR was flawless.

5.8 KOLB'S INTERPRETATION OF LEARNING STYLES

The notion of learning styles became popular in the mid 1980's. In 1984 Kolb developed a model of experiential learning. Still today this model is considered appropriate for teaching, especially as according to Kolb (1984) adults tend to learn better when learning relates to real-life contexts (Knowles, et al., 2005). Kolb (1984) based his model on Lewin's problem-solving model (Knowles et al., 2012). Kolb's inventory of learning styles has similarities with Dewey's view that claims that all learning is to be grounded on experiences and also with Piaget's theory on intelligence which emphasizes the impact of the learning environment on one's experience.

In his model Kolb presents four steps in the experimental learning cycle.

1. *Concrete experience* ~ involving the here and now experiences
2. *Observation and reflection* ~ consisting of reflection and observation experiences
3. *Formation of abstract concepts and generalization* ~ consisting of creation of concepts that integrate the learner's observation into theories
4. *Testing implication* ~ using theories to make decision and solve problems.

Kolb's assumption is that by addressing the four steps of the experiential learning cycle, at each step the teaching will meet the needs of a specific way of learning. In his inventory Kolb differentiates between four main types of learners.

Thus by addressing each of the steps of the cycle, the needs of different learners can be addressed. The characteristics of these preferences are:

1 Concrete Experienter

These learners perceive information primarily through feeling and sensing. They do not respond well to theoretical information, but tend to learn best from specific examples. They tend to relate better to peers than to teachers

2 Reflective Observer

Reflection on the impact of learning to their situation is a major characteristic of these learners. They rely on careful observation for their learning and prefer situations where teaching is didactic and they look at the teacher as the expert on the subject.

3 Abstract Conceptualizer

These learners are more oriented towards abstract facts and symbols rather than to people. They prefer authority-directed settings and find it difficult to learn in situations where spontaneity and discovery are involved.

4 Active Experimenter

These learners place a great of effort in thinking about how this information can offer new ways to act. They like to be involved in active experimentation and they engage in activities, project discussion groups and the like.

5.9 APPLICATION OF KOLB'S THEORY

In the study the teaching followed the patterns as suggested by Kolb (1984). For example, a teaching/learning experience starting at Step 1: the teacher presented new information (Concrete experience). Step 2 (Observation and reflection): where the students discussed and examined the information. There were many ways in which this step was conducted during the program: group-work, role-play, active discussions, debates and other activities relevant to the group at that time. Step 3 (Abstraction and generalization): included a whole class discussion analyzing the information being learnt. In Step 4 (Testing implication): there were concerns with testing hypotheses that resulted in a discussion of new hypotheses and the development of new knowledge.

However, teachers were also aware that students had to learn to adapt to teaching situations that were not in keeping with their learning styles. When students became restless, found the lesson difficult, teachers supported and discussed with students how they, the student could make the lesson work for them.

5.10 LEARNING STYLES SUMMARIZED

The aim of the exercise derived from the Myers-Briggs (1962) Personality Type Indicator and from the Honey and Mumford's (1993) Learning Style Questionnaire was to validate students as capable and unique learners who knew what worked for them and what might need extra effort. When teaching the whole group attention was given to all styles as suggested by Kolb's (1984) model. The practice of addressing each style was significant as it enabled students to work with both their strongest and weakest preferences and thereby develop skills to successfully deal with different deliveries.

5.11 APPLICATION OF ACCELERATED LEARNING STRATEGIES

In the early 1980s, as a result of the works of Lozanov (1975), Ornstein (1986) and of neurolinguists such as Bandler and Grinder (1982) strategies were developed to aid learning. These strategies were referred to as accelerated learning strategies, because in certain circumstances they did speed up learning. The term accelerated learning (AL), however can be misleading, as these strategies are not solely used to accelerate but also to facilitate learning.

The International Alliance of Learning (2013) defines accelerated learning as a method "... that begins with the premise that each person is capable of much, much more than what they believe is possible. AL assumes that our own limiting beliefs about ourselves, our abilities and learning itself often get in the way of our learning potential" (p.1). When using AL strategies the teacher creates an environment where learners move beyond limiting beliefs and misconceptions and tap into their hidden potential (The International Alliance of Learning 2013). Such a definition is in keeping with the implementation of accelerated strategies in the study. AL techniques include suggestopedia, mind-maps, information chunking, colour, music, trance states, language patterns, metaphors and narratives. Generally, these strategies work by integrating right and left brain functioning, promoting conscious and unconscious processes, assisting recall, evoking positive emotions, dissolving mental blocks and producing a receptive state of mind.

In the study apart from the strategies described by Bandler and Grinder (1982) and Bandler and McDonald (1988), I made greater use of the strategies derived from the works of Erickson (1992) and Assagioli (1993). For me the strategies from Assagioli and Erickson are embedded in a philosophy that is congruent with Carl Rogers' notion of human potential and development.

In the following pages I describe Assagioli's and Erickson's strategies from the perspective of a teacher and not from an expert in the field of Psychosynthesis or Ericksonian hypnotic patterns. My

intent is not to affirm these strategies as the only or best methods, but rather to state that from my experience, I found them to be the ones that worked best in my teaching.

5.12 TEACHING STRATEGIES DERIVED FROM THE WORKS OF ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI

Assagioli's theory (1969) of Psychosynthesis focuses on the integration between the Self and the Will. It provides new pathway for self-realization that is based on a person's action and responsibility (Assagioli, 1991). A central tenet of Assagioli's theory is the integration of the "I" with the Unconscious and Super-conscious selves. The full extent of Psychosynthesis was not applied in this study however the concepts of the "Act of the Will" and the "As if" belief, were used to assist students in the realization of their personal goals.

Assagioli's concept of the "Will" is congruent with Carl Rogers' and Maslow's notion of self-actualization and with Kelly's (1991) notion of self-determinism. In the study students became more empowered when they realized that through different strategies they could motivate and reinforce their will. As Assagioli (1994) writes "This enhanced awareness this "awakening" and vision of new, unlimited potentialities for inner expansion and outer action, gives a new feeling of confidence, security, joy – a sense of wholeness" (p. 9).

During the program, students were encouraged to see themselves as being successful, to affirm, to feel and to behave as if they were successful. Assagioli (1994) argues that: "Images or mental pictures and ideas tend to produce the physical conditions and the external acts that correspond to them" (p. 51). Holding images of the state one would like to be, produces the physical condition and the behavior of that desired state (Assagioli, 1994). Repetition of the behavior and affirmations would intensify the urge to achieve the desired state. Like Carl Rogers (1978) and Kelly (1991), Assagioli (1994) believes that the locus of control is within the individual. The individual can change their situation, by adopting and acting out the behavior of the desired state. He explains:

If, for example, we are sad or depressed, it is difficult, if not impossible to become cheerful or serene through a direct act of will. On the other hand, it is within our power to smooth our forehead, lift our head, smile and speak words of harmony, optimism, confidence, and joy. That is to say, we are able to *behave* as "if we were" cheerful.

(p. 80)

This technique became particularly useful in the last weeks of the program, at the time when the students were on their last workplace experience and were applying for aged care work positions. As some students had been unemployed for a considerable period they were naturally nervous and apprehensive. Students were asked to talk and act as if they already had the position they wanted. Such a technique put them in tune with their abilities and skills and gave them the confidence to go for their goals. Almost all who applied for jobs after the program found employment.

5.13 ERICKSONIAN LANGUAGE PATTERNS

Erickson gained international recognition for his work and exploration of the conscious and unconscious mind. He is best known for his work in hypnosis and trance states. Erickson found that he could make suggestions directly to the unconscious mind by bypassing the conscious mind. His attitude towards clients is similar to Carl Rogers as Havens (1992) explains “According to Erickson, the therapist is a relatively unimportant component of the therapy process. Thus, the first and most important thing that a therapist can do is to create a setting that will permit and motivate patients...” (p.142).

Erickson (1980) is skillful in the use of language patterns such as the use of suggestions as for example “ I know that you know”, or as indirect commands “As you are learning this, you will remember it easily” which can bypass the conscious mind and be received by the unconscious mind. The careful use of conjunctions for example, can deliver a message that is heard by the conscious but understood by the unconscious as for example, “You can listen to me *and* learn many things” or “The workplace experience is tiring, *but* it will leave you with a high sense of satisfaction”. Other Ericksonian techniques such as the use of indirect suggestions “ I am wondering how you can complete this work by next week” or the use of pacing and mirroring tone of voice, words or gestures to establish a greater connection and rapport are also very powerful in conveying messages to the unconscious mind which will accept it without questioning. When these patterns are used with integrity and elegance they can have a very powerful positive effect.

5.14 NARRATIVES, METAPHORS AND THE USE OF MODALITIES IN FIRST AID TRAINING

In the program First Aid Training Level II had to be delivered prior to students’ first workplace experience. At this stage the students were still very new and although a little more relaxed, they were

apprehensive about doing a competency test that required a written examination of which the score had to be no less than 80% and a practical examination of which the score had to be 100%.

The length of the First Aid Training was four days delivered one day per week over four weeks. The fourth day was reserved for revision and examination. In these four days a great deal of detailed information had to be covered which made it difficult, as most students' learning preferences were intuitive and perceptive. It was important therefore to implement teaching strategies that would enhance understanding and retention for this group. In addition, none of the students had been exposed to medical or first aid emergencies and were anxious about becoming First Aiders with the possibility of having to deal with blood, amputated limbs and the fear of causing further harm to the victims. To assist the learning process, narratives, metaphors and therapeutic metaphors were used. These methods proved to be successful with similar groups (Declewa, 2002) and it was therefore assumed that they would also assist this group.

Storytelling of an event is an excellent strategy to present large chunks of information. For example, the sequencing of steps when approaching the scene of an accident may be better understood and remembered through a story. Through listening to the story the students were able to form in their mind's eye an image and through this image to follow and experience the sequences of events, the assumption being that when this information is required they would be able to recall it by going through the sequences of steps and in their mind's eye.

The narratives consisted of real accounts. The story of the frail woman, who after sustaining a clean fracture to the head-of-femur, was able to walk without showing any obvious signs of pain. Or the story of the man who swallowed a whole sausage and was saved by the actions of a fast-thinking first aider, who by getting hold on the flaps of skin at the end of the sausage was carefully able to remove it from the victim's oropharynx, where it was stuck. These and similar stories served to provide the visual and emotional representation of a situation. For students such accounts were their first experience of First Aid. Even though they received such experiences second-hand, through the eyes and feelings of the teacher, it was nonetheless, their very first experience as First Aiders. Through the stories the teacher was able to guide them through each step of the procedure and to the successful completion of the task.

As Bandler and MacDonald (1988) suggest it is important to observe how students were responding so the colour, sounds and feelings were used to calibrate the modalities according to students' reactions. For example, if students became distressed by the description of "the purplish blood streaming down the victim's arm" was toned down so that it became the 'blood from the

wound'. There were times however when the modalities were exaggerated to make the image almost humorous such as the 'long, long, long snake in the grass' and therefore as Bandler and MacDonald (1988) state, more memorable. The exaggeration made students laugh and such a strategy was extremely important on the fourth day as laughter made students feel more at ease and less anxious about the upcoming exam.

The application of metaphors had a descriptive function. Their purpose was to enable students to make connections between something that was not easily accessible with something to which they could relate (Owen, 2001). Many of the metaphors were well known as they were used in the anatomy and physiology classes for example, the heart being a pump, the brain being the control centre or the hand being a tactile sponge. The familiarity with these metaphors enabled students to quickly form representations and as Williams (1986) points out made, "... teaching more efficient because it recognizes that new information need not to be taught from 'scratch' and makes use of what students already know" (p. 59). In these stories the colour, sound and feelings were also adjusted according to students' reactions.

Therapeutic metaphors were used to embed information which when interpreted, was more likely to produce a particular effect. Therapeutic metaphors were used to reduce the anxiety and fear. These metaphors were designed prior to the lesson but they were used only if required. For the meaning of the metaphors to be interpreted by the unconscious mind, what the students may be experiencing at that time need to be woven into the story. Students could then make meaningful connections between the story and their situation. For example: *"The youth going to the rescue on an unknown island, he is scared and uncertain at what he may find. However, with him he has a basket filled with knowledge and other goodies and he knows that whatever he finds, everything that he needs is easily accessible from his basket"*. In general, the therapeutic metaphors were short stories, lasting one to two minutes. The words were carefully chosen to convey a particular meaning and the tempo was carefully spaced to give sufficient time to process, make connections and to form an interpretation. Monitoring students' responses to see if they were indeed following, responding and making connections, was in these situations extremely important.

Like other groups, with whom the use of narratives and metaphors were used (Declewa, 2002), these students also asked in-depth questions and were able to problem solve more easily. Williams (1986) explains that this is common when metaphors are used in teaching, as the two sides of the brain are stimulated, resulting in concepts being perceived from different angles. Consequently, all students did well in their written test and in the practical examination. They were articulate in their

explanations, their answers showed deep understanding and most importantly they felt confident in administering First Aid.

5.15 TEACHING TALES SHOWING DIFFERENT STRATEGIES USED IN THE STUDY

The following vignettes were selected as examples of teaching strategies used in the program. They incorporated the techniques derived from Assagioli (1994) and Erickson (1992) and from the neurolinguists, Bandler and Grinder (1982).

Vignette 1

Students who have a preference for reflective learning do appear to find working in the workplace setting more difficult, as the following vignette indicates.

Slow down and speed will catch up with you.

Helen was a capable student. Her intention for doing the program was to be a nurse. Despite her marks being good, Helen found the workplace experience very challenging. By the third week of the five weeks experience at the nursing home, at the time when students were starting to work independently, Helen was having a difficult time. Staff were making flippant remarks that she was too slow and that she will never be able to hold a job as a personal carer because she was taking too long to do anything.

The teacher at the workplace was concerned that such comments could harm Helen's confidence. The teacher modeled to staff ways of helping Helen and spoke positively about Helen's attributes such as her knowledge, commitment and of her efforts to do her best. The teacher also spent time with Helen, encouraging her, emphasizing how thorough she was and what a good attribute that was to have. Helen was encouraged work at her own speed. It did not really matter if she took 15 or 30 minutes to shower a resident, what did matter was that the resident was well cared for. Helen did just that, and by the fifth week she was working at a faster pace.

When students are able to learn at their own pace then, as they become more confident, they also become faster. When they allow themselves to go with their own flow of learning, speed does soon catch up with them.

Vignette 2

Ask the fairies to help you.

Erick was having a bad morning at the nursing home. I was working with another group in a different location, but that morning I came to see how the students at that nursing home were doing. We met in the recreation room and sat around a large wooden table. As the students were discussing how their week had been, I noticed that Erick was not there.

I inquired if he had come in that morning, and the students replied in the affirmative. Some 30 minutes later Erick walked in, long-faced hands in pockets, slouching and looking fed up. I welcomed him in and pointed to a chair. I explained what we have been discussing and continued the conversation with the students. When I asked Erick how his morning went, he replied "Shocking." "Why?" I asked, "My buddy told me that I was not pulling my weight." "And were you pulling your weight?" "No", he defiantly replied. The students looked at each other; no one spoke. Finally I asked "Why not?" "Because I was away with the fairies." was his response. "What type of fairies were they? With wings or without?" Erick looked at me, not knowing what to make of it. "Some fairies are quite pretty and helpful too." I continued, "Perhaps instead going away with them, you could ask them to come and help you first." Erick looked at me baffled, and then looked at the others for their reactions. "They will you come and help you know... Haven't you heard of the fairies that went to help the soldiers in the trenches during World War I?" as Erick was making faces and rolling his eyes, Peter one of the older and well respected students, readily replied. "Yes I heard about that, no one could really explain what happened, but something did happen that helped the soldiers out of the trenches" "See.... So Erick next time ask the fairies to help you.... They will you know." By this time Erick was looking totally confused, he tried to make eye contact with the other students, but they were all engrossed in working out soldiers, trenches and fairies. I clapped my hands signaling the end of the discussion, but before moving on to the next person I smiled at Erick and added, "Make them work hard." He smiled back at me and for the rest of that session he looked fairly relaxed and at ease.

Not reprimanding Erick for being late or for not pulling his weight could have confused him. Also the technique of joining in his perception of “*being away with fairies*” and reframing it from problematic to useful “. . . *next time ask the fairies to come and help you*” was the approach used. Peter’s example of the fairies in rescuing the soldiers (which was unexpected but most welcomed) might have confused Erick more. At the end of the session, Erick was more relaxed. In the following days the teacher at the nursing home reported that Erick was working quite well and being very helpful to his buddy.

Vignette 3

How good are you now and how much better you can be?

Amongst the many tales of Erickson one that I used with this and other groups was the tale of the Tarahumara Indians who could run hundred miles without tiring or showing any biological changes. When they ran at 1928 Olympics they did not even place, as no one told them that that race was only twenty-five miles: for the Tarahumara Indians this was the distance they used to warm up (Milton, cited in Rosen, 1982, p. 112).

This tale was told to students to draw attention to their present abilities and potential. “How good are you now, when you are just starting and really just ‘warming up’. Imagine how good you could be when you are more experienced and able to express all your abilities”.

Vignette 4

The wonderful world of wonder

Learning anatomy and physiology can be daunting for students especially if most of the students have a strong preference for the intuitive and perceptive personality. Yet learning how the body function does involve some wonderful discoveries. Many techniques were used such as the use of visual media, drawing part of the body, role-playing the different parts of the body, and having quizzes, such as “What part of the body am I?”, and most importantly was the element of discovery on how everything fits and works wonderfully well with the whole.

Such fun activities make the student more relaxed, responsive and able to remember specific details easily. Thus learning about the wonder of the human body can be a colourful, wonderful and memorable experience.

Vignette 5

Stop looking. Let the job find you.

It was midway through the program and Joseph was becoming anxious about finding a job. He had been unemployed for several years and at present working was as a volunteer in a hostel, but now he was looking for a paid job. He had sent his Curriculum Vitae to a number of organizations, but as yet had not received a reply. As the weeks went by he became more and more anxious, making more and more inquiring and constantly questioning what else could he do?

One afternoon as we were having a conversation, I explained that there is a job there for him, waiting to get hold of him, but this job cannot find him because he is constantly moving. I asked Joseph if he could hold his search still for few days, so that that job that is looking for him could find him. In the days that followed, Joseph did not mention anything about work he seemed calmer and focused on his studies. Some two weeks later, he announced that the hostel where he was volunteering had offered him job.

By concentrating on what he wanted instead of getting himself into frenzy, Joseph became calmer and focused on his study. By being calm he was more in control, in a better position to emanate the will and its energy in the direction of what he wanted.

5.16 CONCLUSION

When adults return to study they have already well-established ways of learning (A. Rogers & Horrocks 2010). This chapter commenced with a discussion about learning preferences. It emphasized the importance of students knowing their learning preferences so to understand how their learning styles can support or hinder their learning.

In my teaching I made great use of the strategies derived from the works of Assagioli and Erickson. For me, the works of Assagioli and Erickson embodied a philosophy that gave meaning and purpose to my teaching where as other teachers in the program used different strategies that worked best for them. The intention of this chapter was not to advocate for a particular strategy, rather to

demonstrate that an educative approach can be implemented in CBT and that creativity, spontaneity and ingenuity is part of teaching. Teachers like students have their own styles and preferences, however what I believe to be a necessary ingredient is the commitment towards students' personal growth. The next chapter describes the methodology employed to investigate the effectiveness of the humanistic approach and teaching strategies in students' progression towards their goals and aspirations.

CHAPTER 6

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Might not the individual man, each in his own personal way, assume more than the statue of a scientist, ever seeking to predict and control the program of events with which he is involved? Would he not have his theories, test his hypotheses, and weigh his experimental evidence? And, if so, might not the differences between the personal viewpoints of different men correspond to the differences between the theoretical points of view of different scientists? (Kelly, 1955, Volume I, p.5)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The study examined how students in Certificate III Aged Care Work progressed towards their goals when studying in a CBT that incorporated a student-centred approach. The methodology was derived from the theory of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) as presented by Kelly (1991). Self-characterization and grid-analysis were the main instruments employed in the study. Questionnaires and unstructured interviews were used to support the findings derived from these instruments.

This chapter commences with a description of the philosophical premise of PCP and provides an explanation for this choice of methodology. The chapter describes the process of the study: its context, duration, participants and instruments. The last section of the Chapter focuses on the use of self-characterizations and grid analyses and presents examples of data collection and interpretation.

6.2 PERSONAL CONSTRUCT PSYCHOLOGY AN OVERVIEW

PCP may be described as an attempt to understand people by appreciating how the world appears to them (Butt, 2008). The intention of this study was to examine the participants' perceptions of their own world and the influence of their constructs in their movement towards their personal goals.

Developed by Kelly in 1955, the premise of PCP is to examine the interpretation that the person makes of their world. Kelly's philosophical position is based on what he calls the *Fundamental Postulate*: the person's ability to make choices according to his/her interpretation of previous experiences. Kelly explains that, "A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he/she anticipates events" (Kelly, 1955, p. 46). According to Kelly, the person is not the victim of circumstance, rather circumstances are the result of the ways in which the person chooses to interpret and to respond to situations (Kelly, 1991). Thus the person is free-willed and self-motivating,

constantly assessing and redefining his/her interpretation of the world. He/she is a scientist, "... testing and retesting his [sic] hypotheses and in so doing seeking to predict and control the program of events in which he [sic] is involved" (Kelly 1955, p.5). In keeping with this principle, the participants actively participated in the research, and in so doing became co-researchers, monitoring and interpreting their individual data. As Kelly (1991) explains, they became scientists structuring the interpretation of their experiences.

Kelly (1991) believes that through the process of structuring and restructuring their interpretation of experiences, individuals develop alternative response patterns (constructs), which fit into their perceptions and predictions of the world. In PCP, the choice of these *alternative responses* is referred as *Constructive Alternativism*. According to Kelly (1991), the choice of alternative responses is in itself irrelevant; what is important is the significance that the person places on those responses, as it is this that determines the person's behavior. For example, if students construe the learning situation as negative they may feel anxious. However, if their perception changes to being positive, then they will have to re-evaluate their constructs and either validate or change their perception in response to the situation.

Initially, the methodology derived from the theory of PCP was used in psychotherapy. However, as the theory became better known, its research methodology was also used in other disciplines such as social work, nursing and adult education research. For example, past studies in education included examination of learning approaches in relation to learner's independence (Candy, 1991) and exploration on the effect of student teachers' personal meaning in their teaching, (Danicolo & Pope, 2001; Pope & Scott, 2003). In nursing, PCP methodology has been used to investigate nurses' perceptions of caring (Costigan, Ellis & Watkinson 2003) and in the exploration of the attitudes of nurses working in aged care (Ellis, 1999). In all of these studies, the participants' interpretation of their world was the major factor in the investigation. Similarly, the focus of this study was the students and the interpretation of themselves as learners and future aged care workers.

6.3 COMPATIBILITY OF KELLY'S METHODOLOGY WITH CARL ROGERS' PERSON CENTRED APPROACH TO TEACHING

Although Kelly's theory of PCP, and Carl Rogers' humanistic/person-centred approach are two distinct psychologies, they do share certain similarities. Both PCP and the person-centred approach were developed in the United States in the 1950s. When first developed the two psychologies were considered to be unconventional as both opposed professional analysis and emphasized the client's personal meaning.

In his writings Carl Rogers (1951, 1978, 1983), similarly to Kelly (1991), acknowledges personal meaning. Both recognize that the individual is in constant motion, wanting to change and changing in ways in which they know best. Carl Rogers and Kelly share the phenomenological belief that the desire to change is intrinsically directed and determined by the person's sense of self. In the same way that Carl Rogers focuses on empathy: perceiving the world from the person's perspective Kelly stresses the importance of a straightforward approach: directly asking the person what is going on (Kelly, 1991). For both Carl Rogers and Kelly, the person is the describer, the analyst and the creator of his/her world. As educators, Carl Rogers and Kelly see education itself as a vehicle for encouraging and developing the students' understanding of themselves as ever-growing and changing beings.

Carl Rogers and Kelly shared similarities not only in their views on personal interpretation and intrinsic motivation, but also in their academic positions. Both held positions at Ohio State University, and were at different times Directors of Training in Clinical Psychology. According to Takens (1987), and Butt (2007) some students had contact with both Carl Rogers and Kelly. It could be therefore assumed that those students would have integrated the two psychologies.

Yet humanistic psychology and PCP have each remained separate, evolving in different directions. According to Fransella (1995) their separation was due to their different perspectives on personal development. While Carl Rogers believed that personal development is dependent on the person's awareness of feelings and introspections with structure and direction being determined by the person's self-exploration, Kelly was interested in the person's cognitive awareness; the interpretation that the person made of his/her experiences and behaviors resulting from these experiences. Unlike Carl Rogers, Kelly was interested in behavior its observation and measurements. He developed a number of instruments such as laddering, pyramiding, self-characterization and repertory grid designed to elicit and monitor changes in the person's construct system and governing behavior. On the other hand, Carl Rogers was interested in examining the therapeutic conditions that enabled patients to become the person that they wanted to be (McLeod, 2011).

Notwithstanding their differences, the two perspectives are congruent in their phenomenological conviction as both emphasize individual experiences and personal interpretations (Takens, 1987). In this study the person-centred approach encouraged attitudes conducive to personal awareness and introspection, while the theory of PCP supplied the techniques and the instruments that defined and measured changes in students' perceptions of themselves as learners and as carers.

6.4 COMPATIBILITY OF KELLY'S METHODOLOGY WITH ACCELERATED LEARNING TECHNIQUES

The methodology of PCP is also congruent with the intent of accelerated learning strategies. Throughout the program, a set of accelerated learning strategies was employed that acknowledge the whole person, their potential and their ability to change (Lozanov, 1975; Ostrander & Schroeder, 1987).

The strategies focus on students' uniqueness by responding to their abilities and learning styles. When students have difficulties in making sense of content, they become confused and overwhelmed which leads to anxiety and to a sense of "*I cannot do this*" which in turn, leads to a state of despair as the vignette in Chapter Three demonstrated. However, if students make sense of the material, they feel in control, confident and ready for new knowledge. Learning becomes more exciting and achievable. When students perceive learning as achievable, their self-perception becomes more positive. A. Rogers and Horrocks (2010) explain that the perception that one has of the self, particularly of the self as a learner, can be the greatest barrier to learning. I believe that if students are able to construe their learning as a positive experience, they are more likely to dissolve barriers to learning, access their potential and become more confident in their abilities and more determined to achieve their life aspirations.

6.5 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The phenomenological attitude to understanding human experiences as presented by Giorgi (1985) is also congruent with Carl Rogers' and Kelly's perspective of personal growth and self-understanding. According to Giorgi (1985) self-understanding is gained through the reflection and narration of one's own experiences. In the study students told their stories through their self-characterizations and interpretation of their repertory grid. As the researcher I reported the findings from their perspective. This did not mean that I was completely unresponsive to my own interpretations. At the end of each session I reflected on the meaning that the findings had for me and included these reflections in the study.

6.6 LENGTH OF THE STUDY

The length of the study was 12 months from July 2003 to July 2004. Data were collected during the 17 weeks of the program: in the third week of the program and two weeks prior to completion, three months and six months after the completion of the program. The following table provides a summary of the process.

TIMELINE

Instrument	Analyses	Action	Timeline
Questionnaire Occasion 1	Means: test of significance of differences and similarities between individuals	Baseline for study. Group discussion	Third week of program
Self-Characterization Occasion 1	Collaborative (researcher and individual students) extraction of elicited construct	Purpose: Rep Grid analyses	Fourth week of program
Rep Grids (1) Occasion 1	Individual factor analyses and comparison of individual grids	Collaborative information and processing	Fifth week of program
Questionnaire Occasion 2	Students' perception of their learning styles and their abilities		Eighth week of the program (September)
Self-Characterization Occasion 2	Collaborative (researcher and individual students) extraction of elicited constructs	Purpose Rep Grid analyses	Fifteenth week of program
Rep Grids Occasion 2	Individual factor analyses and comparison of individual grids	Collaborative information and processing	Sixteenth week of program
Self-Characterization Occasion 3	Collaborative (researcher and individual students) extraction of elicited constructs	Purpose Rep. Grid analyses	Three - four months after completion of program
Rep Grids Occasion 3	Individual factor analyses and comparison of individual grids	Collaborative information and processing	Three-four months after completion of program
Questionnaire Occasion 4	Students description of own goals and aspirations	Evaluation of changes students' perception of themselves as aged care workers. Comparison of responses in previous occasions	Six months after completion of program
Self-Characterization Occasion 4	Collaborative (researcher and individual students) extraction of elicited constructs	Purpose Rep. Grid analyses	Six months after completion of program
Rep Grids Occasion 4	Individual factor analyses and comparison of individual grids	Collaborative information and processing	Six months after completion of program

6.7 INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Self-characterizations and repertory grid analyses were the main instruments for the data collection. Questionnaires, informal interviews and observations were used to provide the information that gives breadth to findings from the main instruments.

Instrument	Frequency	Data Attained
1. Questionnaire (given on four occasions)	Occasion 1 Occasions 2 and 3 Occasion 4	To obtain baseline data of students' (i) perception (ii) qualities of carer (iii) personal aspirations (iv) learning style To obtain information of students' perception of own abilities as students and as carers, personal goals and aspirations
2. Self-Characterizations (given on four occasions)	Self-Characterization 1 Self-Characterization 2 Self-Characterization 3 Self-Characterization 4	For elicitation of personal constructs
3. Grid Analyses (given on four occasions)	Grid Analyses 1 Grid Analyses 2 Grid Analyses 3 Grid Analyses 4	To monitor students' movements in the direction of the personal goals and aspirations (the person I would like to be)
Informal Interviews	Researcher and students (progressive) Researcher and students (progressive)	To examine students' perception and the effectiveness of a humanistic/accelerated strategies pedagogy To evaluate students' progress and acquisition of program competency
Observations	Students' performance in the program (progressive)	

6.8 THE SETTING

The study took place at a large private Registered Training Organization in the Melbourne Business District. Because of its central position, the organization attracts students from surrounding metropolitan and regional districts. Typically, students enrolling in Certificate III in Aged Care Work come from Melbourne's inner and outer suburbs and from its immediate rural regions.

6.9 THE PROGRAM

Certificate III in Aged Care Work is a nationally accredited VET/ CBT program. According to the National Training Package, the general aim of the program is to provide learners with the required set of 16 competencies that will certify them to work in the aged care industry

The length of the program was similar to most programs in Certificate III Aged Care Work, delivered by other accredited education providers. It consisted of 400 hours (17 weeks). Of the 17 weeks, 10 weeks were classroom teaching and the remaining seven weeks were workplace-learning experience. The workplace experience was the main of the program and the major requirement of the National Training Package. It was during the workplace experience that students implemented and were assessed on work competencies. In the program, each week consisted of four days' attendance: Mondays to Thursdays.

The workplace experience had been structured for students to attend three different settings, each setting delivering a different level of care. It was in these settings that students were supervised and assessed by one of their classroom teachers (Appendix i program timetable).

6.9.1 Workplace experience I

The first workplace consisted of one week in a Day Centre. Day Centres are usually easygoing friendly environments and they provide a positive first experience to students. The clients attending the Centre live in their own homes independently, or are cared for by family members. They come to the Centre one or two days per week for various social and recreational activities. The main skills required by the students were interpersonal skills: the ability to initiate and maintain conversation and through conversation to establish a positive and meaningful rapport with the older person.

6.9.2 Workplace experience II

The second workplace experience was one week in a hostel (low care). In this setting, residents require minimum assistance with their daily activities. During the hostel experience, students put into practice their skills in supporting residents to maintain their independence and quality of life.

6.9.3 Workplace experience III

The last workplace experience was the nursing home (high care). This comprised five weeks and was the most challenging of all experiences. In this setting, students were required to provide total personal care to frail and sick residents. The pace was fast, the work demanding and the students had to know how to work independently as well as in teams. During this experience, a classroom teacher was with the students at all times.

6.10 THE STUDENTS

The total class cohort consisted of 21 students. Of these, 19 students participated in the study. The two students who chose not to participate, took part in all the research activities, but their data were not included in the findings.

Of the students who participated, all but one was new to aged care work. This student joined the program to gain the qualification, so that she would be able to continue working in her present organization. Four students had left their previous employment for a career change, and of the remaining students, most had been unemployed for over 12 months.

The educational qualifications of the group ranged from Year 10 to University Degree. Of the students who had post-secondary qualifications: two had a TAFE Certificate, one a Diploma, one an Associate Diploma and one a Degree. In the group, there were 12 females and seven males. The ages ranged from 19 to 55 years. The qualifications and ages are characteristic of students enrolling in this program and in keeping with the findings by Richardson and Martin (2004) and by Martin and King (2008) as previously mentioned in Chapter One.

6. 11 THE RESEARCHER

In the program, I was the teacher/coordinator and in the study I was the researcher. Because of my dual role there was a possibility that students might have felt intimidated and compelled to participate. I did not want this to happen. My intention was to assist and advocate for students not to impose undue pressure on them. I chose to implement the research in this program because as the coordinator I was able to guide the program, its philosophy, assess students' learning needs and implement appropriate teaching strategies. As in the research project I had carried out some years before with nursing students, I believed that also in this study I could direct and govern the atmosphere of the learning environment, and therefore be in a better position to investigate the research question.

6.12 THE TEACHERS IN THE PROGRAM

Three teachers including myself, delivered the program. All were Registered Division I Nurses, had Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and had between 5 to 15 years teaching experience. Teachers taught in their area of expertise. They had different personality and teaching style and adjusted their style to fit with the needs of students and content taught. As a small team, we worked closely together, sharing information and giving each other feedback. Because we knew how each worked, there was a synchronicity in the content and in our teaching approach.

6.13 THE CONCERN OF TEACHER/COORDINATOR BEING THE RESEARCHER

For many students the program was an opportunity to return to the workforce, an opportunity that they were not going to risk. Therefore, to ensure that students felt free to choose whether or not to participate in the study, certain procedures were put in place. Firstly, and most importantly, the study did not commence until the third week of the program, at a time when it was considered that the students felt safe with me, with the other teachers and with each other. If that sense of safety did not occur within the first six weeks, the study would have been postponed until the next group started.

Secondly, the Department Manager took on the task of explaining to the students the purpose and the requirements of the project. She made a point of emphasizing that students would not be penalized for not participating and that they could withdraw at any time without detriment to their studies.

The Manager also made herself available to students if they had concerns on any aspects of the research process. In addition, students were made aware that the on-site psychologist was also available if they wanted to discuss any aspect of the research. These procedures were presented and approved by the University Ethics Committee. Students and teachers received a letter outlining the purpose of the research, the requirements of participants and contacts to discuss concerns regarding the research. In addition students were not required to sign the consent form immediately, but were given two days to decide if they wanted to participate.

At the commencement of the study, there was still a little ambivalence about how students might feel as the study progressed, although the relationship between the students and me became closer, more relaxed and genuine.

6.14 CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

As much as possible, the learning environment was maintained in its natural state. In the classroom there were the usual pictures and logos of the organization, desks were arranged either in a horseshoe or clustered depending on the teaching activity. The intention was not to interfere with the setting or with the program structure. The setting and teaching strategies used in the study corresponded to those used with other groups. The only addition to this group was the research activities.

Information was collected on four occasions and on each occasion the students were required to participate in four sequential tasks:

- i. write the self-characterizations
- ii. interview to elicit constructs from self-characterizations

- iii. rate the repertory grids.
- iv. interview/reflect on the graphic representation of the repertory grid.

The self-characterization and repertory grid, were done in class on the last session of the week. In the workplace, the same tasks were done on site at mid-morning, the least busy time of the shift.

To support the written data, two semi-structured interviews were used on each of the four occasions. The first interview took place after the self-characterization was written. The aims of this interview were to discuss the self-characterization and to elicit five constructs. These five constructs were then included in the repertory grid together with the five supplied constructs. The purpose of the second interview was to discuss the graphic output of their repertory grid.

When students were in class each interview took place in the classroom. When students were on workplace experience, the self-characterization was written on one day and elicitation of constructs took place the following day. Reflections on the second graphic output took place when students were back at the Training Organization for their final week.

After the program was completed, most interviews continued to be held at the Training Organization. For three graduates, the interviews took place at their workplace or in nearby coffee shops.

From the very first interview, a trusting rapport was established between the student and myself, the researcher. The interview was like a friendly conversation between two people. Generally, the interviews followed the flow of the conversation, with the exception of certain questions that I, as the researcher specifically facilitated, such as the qualities and function of aged care workers. To maintain the flow of the conversation I took few but brief notes of information that I wanted to remember. The aim of the interview was for me as the researcher to be engaged at all levels of the dialogue to be attuned to the words used, tempo, the hesitations, body language, flow of ideas and so forth, with minimal interruptions. Impressions were summarized immediately after the interview. The interviews ranged from 20 to 45 minutes duration depending on the students, some students were very willing to talk about their experiences while others were more reserved.

Throughout all the interviews I maintained what Kelly (1991) calls the “*credulous*” attitude, taking in what I saw and heard at face value. According to Fransella (1995), the credulous approach is important for establishing a sense of trust, respect and acceptance between the researcher and participant. However, Fransella adds that, as the relationship matures, the researcher could if necessary, challenge the participant. During the study, students were open and their information was

congruent. It was only on the last data collection, six months after completion of training, that I felt it necessary to challenge the responses of one participant, as discussed in Sally's story in Chapter Seven.

6.15 METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

Self-characterizations and grid analyses were used for the investigation. Each of the two instruments has been designed by Kelly (1991) to investigate personal meaning. In therapy, they are generally used individually but in this research they have been used conjointly. The self-characterization provided the narrative from which the students elicited five constructs, the repertory grid analyses provided a graphic plot of the position of the elements and proximity to the elicited and supplied constructs. Both the self-characterization and the graphic plot provide means for discussion and understanding of one's construct systems.

6.15.1. Self-characterization

Self-characterization is widely used in PCP, especially in therapy to elicit individual constructs (N. Crittenden & Ashkar, 2012). The aim of the self-characterization is to enable the person to describe him/herself in the third person in a way that is less threatening than direct questioning (Bannister & Fransella, 1986). Developed by Kelly (1955) self-characterization continues to be used in therapy primarily as an idiographic narrative providing qualitative information (Neimeyer, & Gaines-Hardison, 2012). According to Fransella (1995), every aspect of the self-characterization is deliberately devised to enable the expression of constructs in a manner that is flexible and non-intrusive. Kelly (1955) refers to it as a character sketch where the *sketch* conveys a sense of greater latitude of expression that is more acceptable and less threatening than terms such as "self-description" or "self-analysis".

Self-characterization is written in the third person, usually in the form of a letter that the participant writes to his/her close friend (being him/herself) who, as Kelly suggests, knows him/her *intimately* and *sympathetically*. Kelly's (1955) interpretation of *intimacy* denotes closeness in the relationship between the writer and the friend and *sympathetically* implies a sense of acceptance (Fransella, 1995).

Writing a letter in the third person enables participants to distance themselves from the situation, thus alleviating possible inhibitions or resistance. Thus, writing in the third person proved to be most appropriate for the students in the study as it was less threatening than asking them to *write about themselves*. Another advantage of the self-characterization is that the letter writing does not have to conform to any length or structure. This made it less threatening to those students who lacked confidence in writing. Kelly strongly emphasized that the length and structure of the self-

characterization were to be left open to enable the person freedom to express their interpretations of the world in ways that made sense to them (N. Crittenden & Ashkar, 2012).

As an instrument, self-characterization can provide a great deal of information regarding the person's construct system. The opening and closing sentences, words used, tone, organization, transitions and omissions of ideas are all revealing. "The clinician should look carefully at the language structure where it remains intact and where it breaks down, how words are redefined in the client's lexicon, how he [sic] compartmentalizes his [sic] thinking by means of punctuation, and so on" (Kelly, 1991, p. 253).

In the study, I examined the content and presentation of the self-characterization. Its main purpose however, was to promote dialogue with the students and to elicit five constructs that were to be included in the repertory grid.

6.15.2. Implementation of the Self-characterization

The four self-characterizations were written at specified intervals during the 12-month period.

i. *Self-Characterization I* (Four weeks into the program)

"Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/ Mary Brown. Harry/ Mary Brown is writing to you telling you that he/she is doing a program in aged care work. What would he/she write?"

ii. *Self-Characterization II* (Fifteen weeks into the program)

"Pretend that you are a close friend. Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you once again telling you that he/she is about to finish the program in aged care work. What would he/she write?"

iii. *Self-Characterization III* (Three months after completion)

"Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/ Mary Brown. Harry/Mary is writing to you, telling you that he/she has just finished a program in aged care work. What would he /she write?"

iv. *Self-Characterization IV* (Six months after completion)

"Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/Mary Brown. Six months ago Harry/Mary had completed a program in aged care work. Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you telling you how he/she is doing. What would he/she write?"

Example of Self-Characterization I as written by Julie

Dear Julie

How are you? Well, I hope.

I'm currently completing a program of study in the City so I don't have any transport hassles, as the train ride is very fast. There are about 20 of us in the program, with a good cross-section of people, so we have fun together and also learn from each other. The program started in July and ends on the 3rd of December. As well as classroom work in a range of subjects there are three professional attachments. These are four days at a day centre, four days at a hostel and five weeks at a nursing home.

The teachers are enthusiastic and readily share information and life experiences. From the information they provide and also from increasing public information, it appears that employment options will be good after the 3rd December, and also study options to increase any skills and knowledge in aged care or beyond are available. My first practical attachment is next week. I'll write again to tell you about it.

Take care.

Regards

Mary

6.15.3. The Constructs

Kelly (1955) defines a construct as "... a way in which some things are construed alike and yet different from others" (p. 105). A construct may be a quality such as *caring* or a condition such as *safe* that is perceived in relation to its opposite. For example, one person may regard *uncaring* to be the opposite of *caring* (*caring/uncaring*) while another such as Mary, one of the participants in the study, regarded being late as the opposite of *caring* (*caring/being late*). When discussing this construct Mary explained that if you cared for someone you would not be late.

Fransella, Bell and Bannister (2004) explain, "Personal constructs are bipolar dimensions which each person has created and formed into a system through which they interpret their experiences of the world" (p.16). It is the bipolarity of the construct that distinguishes it from a concept. For example, when the quality *caring* is presented by itself, it is a concept, but when it is presented in relation to its opposite (*caring/uncaring*) or (*caring/being late*), it becomes, in PCP terms, a construct. In the study, the term *elicited pole* refers to the part of the construct that the student names as one quality, whereas the *implicit pole* refers to what they perceive as the opposite quality (Jankowicz, 2004).

6.15.4 Elicited constructs

From each of the four self-characterizations, students elicited five constructs. These constructs represented attributes or conditions that the students saw to be relevant to aged care. For example, from her self-characterization, Julie elicited the following constructs:

Elicited Poles

1. *Learns from one another*
2. *Has theory and practice*
3. *Has good employment options*
4. *Has teachers talking from first-hand experience*
5. *Has future study options*

Implicit Poles

- not sharing information*
has only theory
has not employment options
has teachers with no industry experience
has nothing further to learn

The five elicited constructs were incorporated in the repertory grid together with five constructs supplied by the researcher.

6.15.5 Supplied constructs

The five supplied constructs were similar for all participants and for all occasions. The supplied constructs served to compare commonalities between students in relation to the significance that students gave to these constructs and to their position in relation to elements.

The first four supplied constructs were selected from the questions employers commonly ask of referees such as: does the person work well with others or does the person demonstrate initiative? These questions were relevant to employers' expectations of the characteristics of an aged care worker. In the study it was relevant to see how students perceived themselves in relations to having those characteristics. The fifth construct (*has a good self-concept/has a poor self-concept*), was included to examine the plotting of this construct in relation to elements, in particular to the element (1) *me now*, as this served as an indicator on how the students saw themselves at that particular time.

The supplied constructs were:

Elicited Pole

6. *Has initiative*
7. *Works well with others*
8. *Is confident in own abilities*
9. *Is positive toward others*
10. *Has good self-concept*

Implicit Pole

- lacks initiative*
does not co-operate with others
lacks confidence
is critical of others
has poor self-concept

6.15.6. Elements

An element may be best described as an exemplar of or sampling of, a particular group which is used to identify a set of constructs on a given topic (Jankowicz, 2004). In the study, nine elements were used: five representing the participant, one representing someone who the participant perceived as having had an influence on him/her, two representing characters in industry: a manager and aged care worker. One unrelated element *(6) person I don't admire*, was included to serve as a construct to the other elements in the plot.

The elements used in the Repertory grid were:

1 Me now, 2 A carer/nurse I would like to be, 3 Me achieving my goals, 4 A carer/nurse I admire, 5 Me, as a person I would like to be, 6 Person I don't admire, 7 A person who has influenced me in my work, 8 A supervisor I admire, 9 Me, two years from now.

These elements were incorporated into the repertory grid together with the five elicited and the five supplied constructs.

6.15.7 The Repertory Grid

The repertory grid is defined as, "... a simple, powerful rating-scale technique" (Jankowicz, 2004, p.15). In PCP, a repertory grid is the most common instrument used for obtaining quantitative measurements of a person's construct system (Costigan, 1990). According to Kelly (1991) the repertory grid goes beyond the interpretation of the client's language to an understanding of context. It consists of three parts i) constructs [c], ii) elements [e] and iii) e x c intersects.

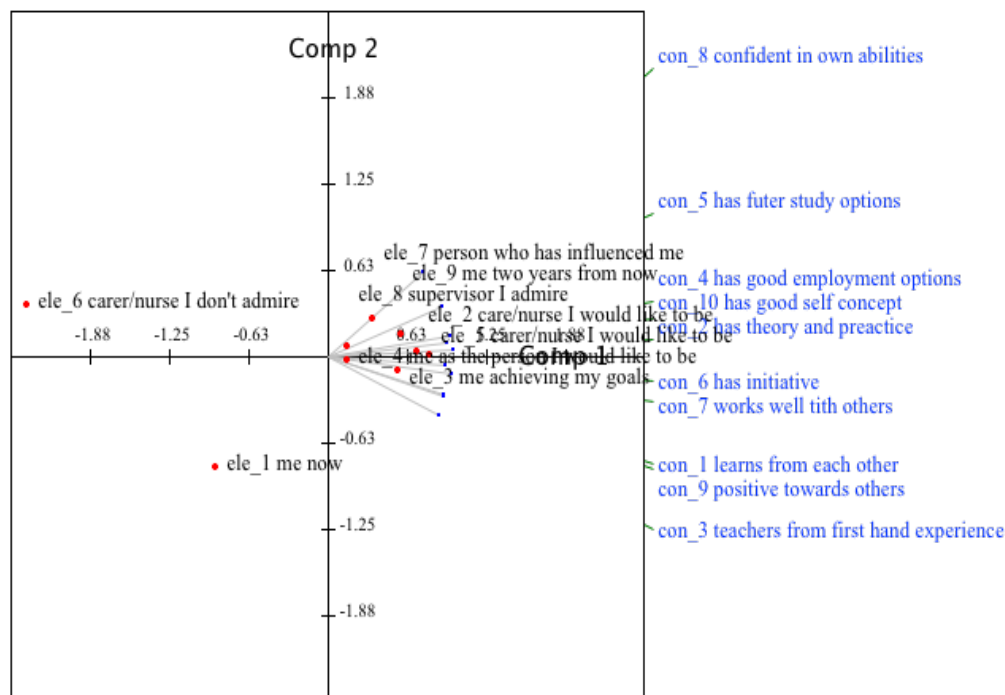
When he first developed the repertory grid, Kelly (1955) used it to interpret the results by "eyeballing" the scores. However, today an array of software programs has been developed to analyze the scores and produce graphic plots.

In this study the Idiogrid, developed by Grice (2008) Version 2.4, has been used. The Idiogrid was chosen, as its software is specifically designed for one-to-one interpretation. The software can generate a number of analyses. At first, it was chosen because of the analyses it could generate. However, from the very first use of the Idiogrid, it was felt that the conversations and reflections that occurred when viewing the graphic plot were rich and insightful and that, by themselves, they represented the spirit of the research. Therefore to maintain the students' personal voice, the phenomenological perspective was used, with their experiences being narrated from student their perspective. Below is an example of a repertory grid.

Example Repertory Grid from Julie - Grid for Occasion 1

ELICITED POLES	Me now	Carer/nurse I would like to be	Me achieving my goals	Carer/nurse I admire	Me as the person I would like to	A carer/ nurse I don't admire	Person who has influenced me	Supervisor I admire	Me two years from now	IMPLICIT POLES
Learn from each other	7	8	8	7	8	3	8	8	7	Not sharing with others
Has theory and practice	5	8	8	7	8	3	7	7	8	Has theory only
Teachers from firsthand experience	7	8	8	7	8	3	6	7	7	Teachers with no industry experience
Has good employment options	6	8	8	7	8	5	8	7	8	Has limited employment opportunities
Has future study options	6	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	Has nothing further to learn
Has initiative	6	7	6	7	8	4	7	6	8	Lacks initiative
Works well with others	6	8	8	8	8	2	8	7	6	Does not cooperate with others
Confident of own abilities	5	8	8	7	8	4	8	8	8	Lacks confidence
Positive toward others	7	8	8	7	8	3	7	8	8	Is critical of others
Has good self- concept	5	8	8	6	8	4	7	6	8	Has poor self-concept

From the graphic output the raw data from the repertory grid on the previous page were submitted to the principal components analysis which produced the following graphic output:



6.15.8. Student's reflections on their graphic output

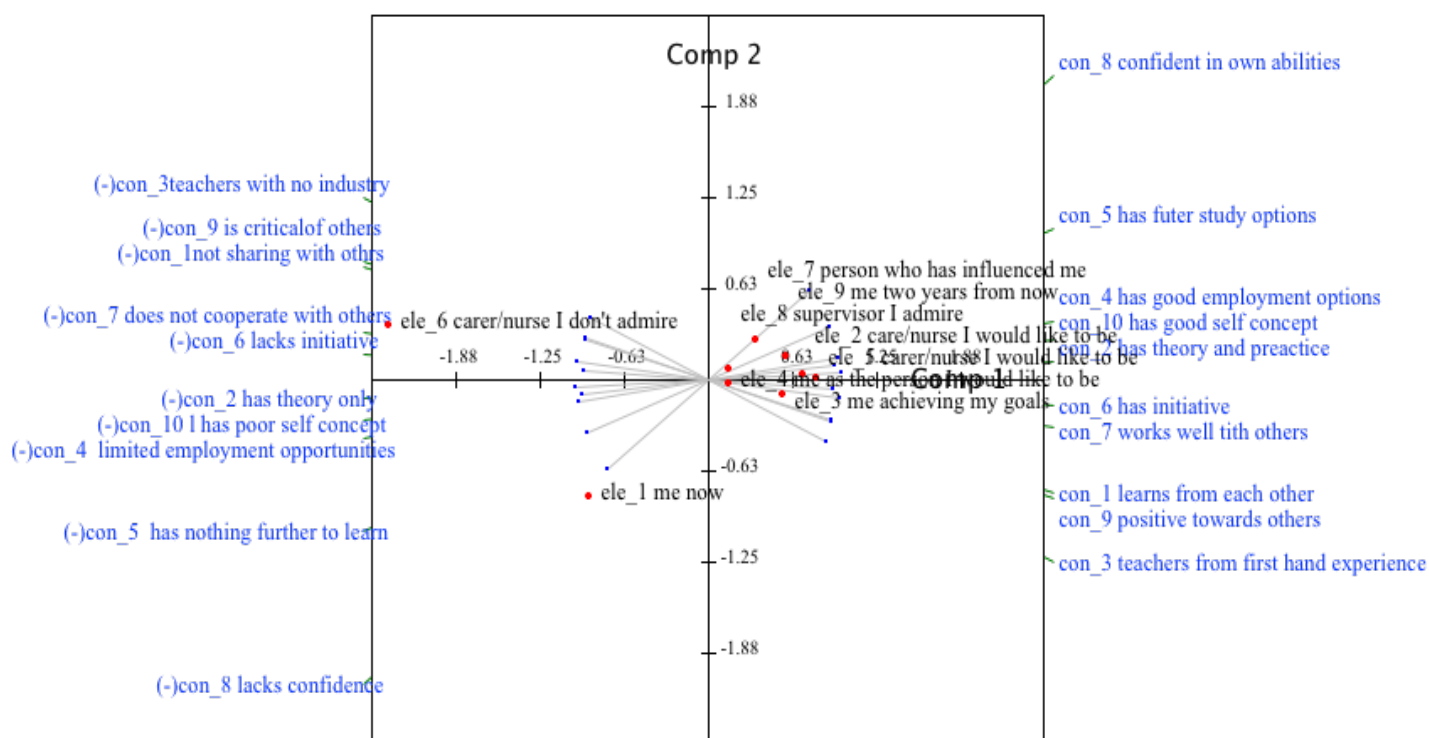
Once a graphic output was generated a time was set for students to view it. My role as the researcher was to draw the students' attention to the weight given to individual constructs, their relation to elements and the relation of elements to elements. While examining the plotting students were encouraged to freely express their interpretation. They did not have to agree with the output: what was important was whether it made sense to them. On the second, third and fourth occasions, students were able to compare the current graphic output with those of the previous occasions.

When examining the graphic output students first examined the formation of the constructs, so that they could monitor shifts in direction, in particular to the position of element (1) *me now*. Constructs with longer axes are, according to Grice (2008) greater in value and therefore have greater significance. The constellation of elements and their location in relation to constructs were also examined. Finally, the position of elements with particular references to elements (1) *me now* and (5) *me as the person I would like to be* was also examined.

6.15.9. My reflections on implicit poles

The Idiogrid Version 2.4 as developed by Grice (2008) has the flexibility of providing a graphic output showing the axis of the elicited pole by itself and also the axes of both the implicit poles. It was more supportive for the students to view only the emergent poles, which, in most instances presented a positive connotation, furthermore the aim was for students to focus on the positives. For the students, the purpose of this exercise was educative rather than therapeutic. The aim was to explore how they see themselves and reflect why this was so. Therefore, examining the plot from the perspective of the emergent poles would have an affirmative effect on students.

However, after each interview I examined the graphic output with its implicit pole to gain a better understanding of the student and his/her situation.



6.16 SUPPORTING DATA

In the study, questionnaires were also used to supplement the data derived from the self-characterizations and grid analyses.

6.16.1 Questionnaires

Three sets of questionnaires were used in the study. Each of the questionnaires was designed for a particular purpose.

Questionnaire 1

This questionnaire was presented three weeks into the program. The purpose was firstly, to promote reflection on the three areas of personal understanding relevant to the research: i) self-perception as a learner, ii) his/her perceived qualities of a carer and iii) and his/her sense of personal aims and direction. It was anticipated that when students were introduced to the self-characterization and repertory grid, they would already have reflected on the concepts under investigation. Secondly, the aim was to provide baseline information on these areas.

The questionnaire consisted of a Likert-scale rating (see in the following page) consisting of “*tick the box*” responses to 20 questions. Students scored each question on a five-point scale, “*Very true,*” “*True,*” “*Don’t know,*” “*False*” or “*Very false*”. The five-point scale was selected to give students the opportunity to tick the mid-point “*Don’t know*” if they were uncertain of the answer.

This questionnaire was done in the afternoon of the last day of the school week. To maintain the continuity of teaching, the questionnaire followed the class discussion. In the early phase of the study, it was necessary to emphasize to the students that the questionnaire was to be used only for research purposes and not to assess their progress in the program. It was important that the students answered the questions according to what they considered the most appropriate response rather than the most acceptable answer.

QUESTIONNAIRE 1

Comments	Very true	True	Don't Know	False	Very False
1. Successful people have many skills					
2. To care for people in Nursing Homes it is better to have kindness than knowledge					
3. Most people have an idea or image of what they would like to be					
4. I believe that I have abilities to do well in my work					
5. One does not need lots of theory to care for people in Nursing Homes					
6. People who are successful usually know what they want					
7. With time I will develop the skills to be a good carer					
8. A person's skills should be respected					
9. High marks in school means that one will be a very good carer					
10. I do have some idea of what I would like to achieve					
11. Hard work does not always mean success					
12. In most circumstances one can make learning easy for him/herself					
13. Successful people can also be kind					
14. I feel that people recognize my skills					
15. Kindness is all that is required to care for people					
16. I feel that I can develop the skills to achieve what I want					
17. I generally feel comfortable with whom I am					
18. It is important to have a sense of what one wants to be/do in life					
19. People who feel they have the skills usually have a good self-concept					
20. On the whole I am a good student					

6.16.2 Questionnaire 2

This questionnaire was given on the ninth week of the program, just before term-break. It consisted of eight open-ended questions (see below). Questions 1 to 4 centred on students' perception of their strengths and those they would like to develop. Questions 5 and 6 focused on the students' learning strategies. Question 7 examined how students perceived themselves and finally, Question 8 invited students to add any other comment.

This questionnaire had a dual purpose. The first was to gain information about students' learning styles and strengths and the second was to enable students to reflect on their abilities and needs as learners. Like the previous questionnaires this one was also given on the last class of the week. Once again the questionnaire followed the flow of the lesson, with care taken that the material did not directly influence students' responses.

Students took approximately 30 minutes to complete the exercise. A discussion followed on their strengths, needs and career aims.

Students' personal review

It was explained to the students that the purpose of this questionnaire was to give them the opportunity to discuss their progress in the course and to discover their strengths and areas needing more support. For this questionnaire, the tasks were:

1. In your own words, please describe how you rate your overall performance in this course.
2. What strengths and abilities have you brought to the course?
3. What strengths and abilities have you developed since starting the course?
4. Describe other skills or abilities you would like to develop in the course.
5. Are there strategies that you have developed to help you with your learning?
6. How can the teachers assist you in the course?
7. Overall, how would you describe yourself as a student?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?

6.16.3 Questionnaire 3

This questionnaire was the last exercise of the study. The now new graduates filled in this questionnaire six months after the completion of the program. It was given to the graduates when they returned to the Training Organization for a reunion.

This questionnaire contained three open-ended questions. The first two questions related to the students' professional aims and aspirations and the third question asked the then graduates to describe the necessary qualities/conditions of aged care workers. This questionnaire was similar to the one given when the students had first applied for entrance into the program. It took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

1. What were your aims when you joined the course?
2. Did the course help you to achieve those aims?
3. Pretend that you are old and in need of care, describe the type of person that you would like to take care of you.

A discussion followed between the graduates and myself about how their perception of the qualities of an aged care worker had changed since starting the program.

6.17 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave a description of the research methodology and reasons for its choice in the study. The theory of PCP provided the instruments to enable students to monitor and reflect their movements in the direction of their personal goals as aspirations as represented by the (1) *person I would like to be*. The chapter described the research process and gave examples of how the instruments of self-characterization and grid analyses were used to examine students' achievement of their personal goals.

The following chapter presents the personal stories of four students. Through these stories, we will follow their individual progress. At times, their progress is expected, at others, it is surprising, but at all times the progress is special and unique to that student.

CHAPTER 7

INTERPRETATION OF INDIVIDUAL FINDINGS

Man looks at his world through transparent patterns or templets which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed. The fit is not always very good. Yet without such patterns the world appears to be such an undifferentiated homogeneity that man is unable to make any sense out of it. Even a poor fit is more helpful to him than nothing at all.

(Kelly, 1991, Volume 1, p.7)

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses in detail the findings of four students: Erick, Elizabeth, Sally and Martin who participated in this research project. The students were selected for the discussion after the study was completed and the findings collated. The reason for selecting these students was that each represented similar characteristics and similar life goals to those of other others in the group. Erick for example, the youngest of the 19 students, had characteristics similar to David and Jack, two other young students. Elizabeth on the other hand, had the maturity, sophistication and the aspiration of making aged care her new career, shared by Rose, Peter, Julie, Jacquie and Jane. Martin was private and determined, as were Ted, Ann, Rebecca, Helen, Joseph and Nancy. Sally came to the program after a long period away from study and from work, and had a similar social background to Mary and Margaret.

For Erick, Elizabeth, Sally and Martin the insights gained from the self-characterizations and repertory grids gave them an understanding of where they saw themselves in their career path, and a direction of where they were going. The patterns of their movements, the shifts and the understanding they gained were unique, but there were also somewhat similar to those of other students. In this chapter, the findings and reflections of these four students are presented. The chapter is divided into four sections: a section for each student.

7.2. ERICK'S STORY

At the time of the study, Erick was 19 years old. He was the youngest in the group and he was shy and quiet. He was very disillusioned when he joined the program, as he wanted to become a primary teacher but had just missed out on a university place. During the first few months of the program, he seemed to be daydreaming and distant in class. He contributed little and did not try to fit in with the group. Being the youngest, his behaviour was accepted and even defended by the other students, especially by the more mature female students, who saw him as being young and shy.

7.2.1 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION I

Self-characterization I

“Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/Mary Brown. Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you telling you that he/she is doing a program in aged care work. What would he/she write?”

Erick’s response to Self-characterization I

Dear Erick,

How are you? I am good, but very busy. Since I last wrote to you I have worked in retail, but I hated that. So now, I am studying to become a Personal Care Attendant. I bet you never saw that coming. Basically what a P.C.A. does is, looks after old people e.g. showering, dressing and keeping them entertained. How is your university program going? Are you finding it hard to cook for yourself? Since I left home, I have learnt how to cook a few basic meals like boiled water, 2-minute noodles, spaghetti, Chicken Kiev’s and scrambled eggs. Keep well and out of trouble.

Harry.

Erick’s Self-characterization I

Throughout the self-characterization, Erick gives the impression that he is not satisfied with his present situation. He writes how unexpected this career move has been for him, *“I am studying to become a Personal Care Attendant. I bet you never saw that coming”*. He seems to be unprepared and has a limited understanding of the type of work that he will be doing *“... a P.C.A. looks after old people e.g. showering, dressing and keeping them entertained.”* Immediately after describing the role of the aged care worker (which he refers to as personal care attendant – P.C.A.), he asks his friend how he is doing at university. This question appears to present a yearning to be there.

When we discussed the self-characterization, I asked Erick how he felt about the program. He replied that he had always wanted to be a primary school teacher and, in the following year, he would re-apply for a place at university.

In examining the self-characterization, Erick felt that it did not provide sufficient material to elicit the constructs for the grid analysis. In such situations, Fransella (2005) suggests that the respondent be given the opportunity to provide the material required. Consequently, Erick elicited the constructs below during our interview.

Elicited pole

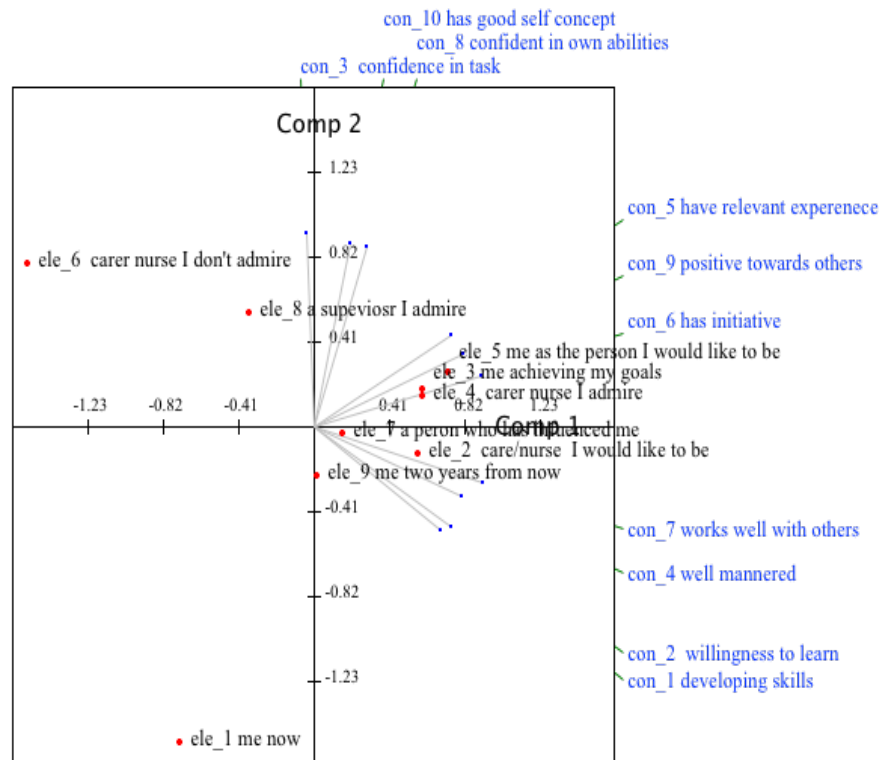
1. *Developing skills*
2. *Willingness to learn*
3. *Well- mannered*
4. *Confident in task*
5. *Have relevant experiences*

Implicit pole

- staying with the same skill level*
unwillingness to learn
rude
shy
no experience

These constructs were added to the supplied constructs in the repertory grid. All constructs were then scored from 8 to 1 against each of the nine elements. Data from the repertory grid were submitted to the Idiogrid Version 2.4, (Grice, 2008) for principal components analysis that produced the following graphic output:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid I



Erick's reflections on the graphic output

Position of constructs

In the graphic output, the arms of the construct axes are open and fan-shaped. The length of each of the axes indicates the significance that each of the constructs has for Erick. The longer the axes; the more significant is that construct.

In the diagram, the grouping of constructs (3) *confident in task/shy* (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* and (10) *has good self-concept/poor self-concept* appear at the top of the diagram and significantly away from the other constructs. Their proximity to each other indicates their connection, but also their separateness from other constructs.

Position of elements

What is most apparent from the graphic output is the position of element (1) *me now* situated at the bottom of the left quadrant, away from the other elements, and from the emergent poles of the elicited constructs. Element (9) *me two years from now*, is situated in the lower right quadrant close to the centre of the graph and close to the cluster of elements (2) *carer/nurse I would like to be* and (7) *person who influenced me the most in my work*, who is named Andy.

When Erick and I discussed the way in which the elements were plotted, he was surprised to see the position of element (1) *me now*. He had assumed that this element would have been separate from the others, but did not expect it to be so far away. Erick did not disagree with the way it was positioned, but it did concern him.

During this interview, we talked about his intention of becoming a teacher and during the conversation we were able to discuss the advantages of doing this program. In the conversation, Erick stated that when he qualifies as an aged care worker he could get a job and an income to support him whilst studying to become a teacher. In addition by working in aged care, he would develop people skills that are good to have in any profession. When we finished the conversation, Erick appeared to be a little more comfortable and positive about the Aged Care program.

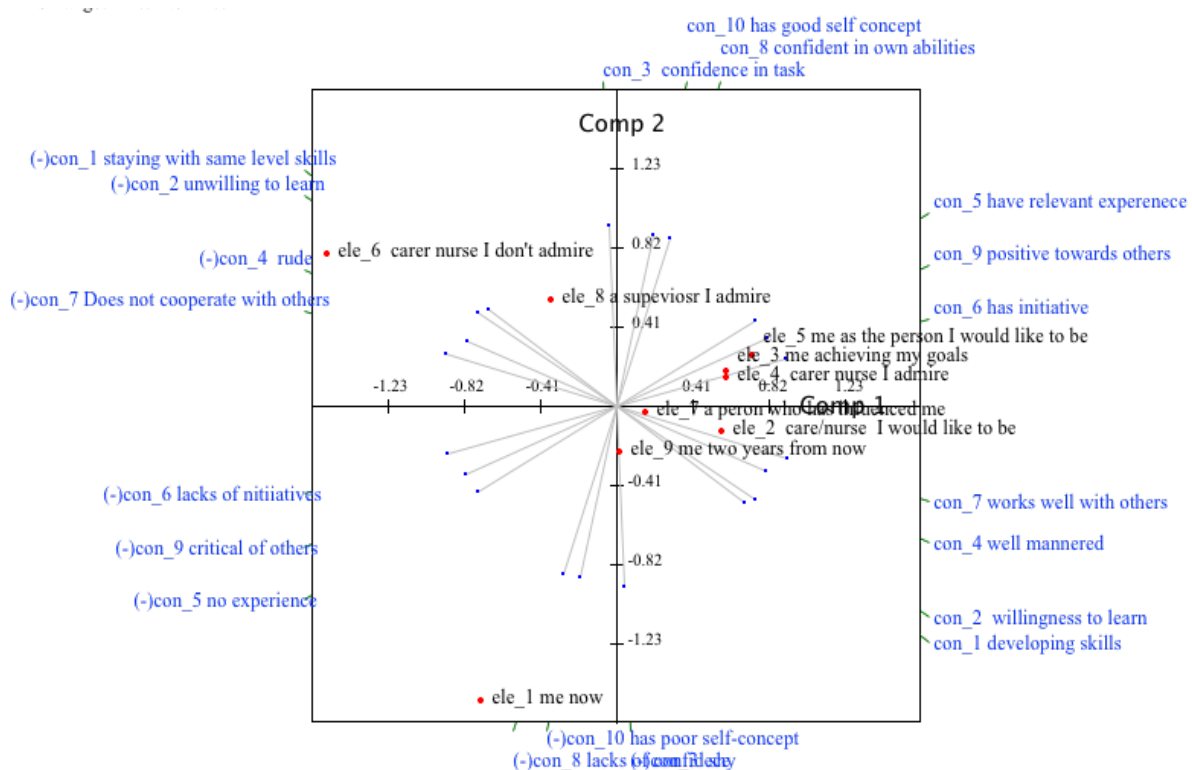
My reflections on the implicit poles

Some days later, I examined the graphic output with the implicit poles. The intention was to examine the relation of element (1) *me now*, with the constructs. The implicit pole of construct (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* and (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept*, are the closest to element (1). As with other students, Erick did not see the graphic input with the implicit poles as the aim was to concentrate of the positive qualities or

characteristics as presented in the elicited poles. However, I felt I could understand Erick better by examining his grid in relation to the implicit axes.

On this occasion, element (1) *me now* is far away from the implicit axis of all the constructs; the closest being construct (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept*, (3) *confident in task/shy* and (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence*. This configuration reinforced that Erick was a shy young man, who felt somewhat out of place in this program and who lacked confidence in his abilities. It is by examining Erick's grid that I was able to gain a greater insight into his experiences. When the information is in written form as in the grid output, it cannot be misconstrued or overlooked. It stays as a reminder of that person's internal world and I, as a teacher, need to be aware of it through my teaching strategies and provide to the student the necessary support.

Graphic output with implicit poles for Repertory Grid I



7.2.2 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION II

On this occasion, the self-characterization was written two weeks prior to the end of the program, at the time when Erick was completing his workplace experience in the nursing home. He seemed to have had a difficult time on this placement. The two clinical teachers who supervised the students, were concerned about his performance. They both felt that his attitude was letting him down and he was struggling to carry out many of the tasks. They saw him as lacking time-management skills and poor interaction with residents and staff.

A week before Erick wrote the second self-characterization, he had had a confrontation with one of the teachers. During this confrontation, he had lost his temper and had threatened to walk out of the nursing home and the program. Apparently, he had gone as far as the door and then went to the staffroom where he stayed until the end of the shift. As was standard practice, I visited the students at the workplace to discuss their experiences. In one of these visits I was able to discuss with Erick his management skills.

Erick was concerned that his time-management skills were not as good as that of other students. In the conversation, I explained that some people are very good in organizing priorities and managing time, while others at the beginning are not as good. It depends on the type of learner one is, I explained. I referred to the works of Honey and Mumford (1984) and Myers-Briggs (1962) covered at the beginning of the program, and when the students had identified their individual learning styles. I asked Erick if he remembered what his learning style was. He thought he was a “reflective learner”.

“Well, time management does not come too easily to us reflective learners”, I replied. “But once we become confident in the particular task, then it comes easily without us even realizing it.” There was a pause, and I recommenced the conversation by saying, “I heard that you nearly walked out a few days ago.” Erick replied that he did not walk out. He felt that he needed time out of the Unit and was going to go outside, but then changed his mind and went to the staffroom. We talked a little more about the difficulties that he was facing, such as attending to the needs of old and frail residents, getting up early every morning, and other such issues that were faced by all students. I asked if he had thought any more about doing teaching. He replied that he did not know whether he was going teaching, and added that that perhaps he could become a nurse.

After this meeting, the two clinical teachers commented that Erick’s attitude and performance had improved enormously. One teacher commented that he seemed to be a different person, performing all the activities well and diligently and that he was doing so much better in his time-management and communication skills.

A week after the meeting, I returned to that nursing home to guide the students through the second self-characterization.

Self-characterization II

“Pretend that you are a close friend. Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you once again telling you that he/she is about to finish the program in aged care work. What would he/she write?”

Dear Erick,

How have you been since we last spoke? I have been working seemingly endless hours at the nursing home, but it is all about to come to an end when next week we have 3 more days back at school. It was a lot harder than I thought it would be. I am surprised that carers are so busy all the time and they hardly complain. It is a very physical job and also depressing when a resident dies. I finally have things to talk to them about, for a while it was very awkward. I am going on holidays starting next week. I plan to go to the beach for a week.

See you soon

Harry

Erick's Self-characterization II

In this self-characterization Erick chose to write the letter as Harry rather than John or Mary. I did not inquire why Erick chose to write as Harry, it could be a genuine oversight, or it may be that Erick wanted to express his own individuality and personal identity or it might have been for a different reason. Erick writes that he has been working very hard and appears to be concerned about how hard the carers have to work “*I am surprised that carers are so busy all the time*”. However, he presents a sense of achievement of being able to talk to the residents and a sense of satisfaction in finishing the program and being able to on holidays. From this self-characterization, Erick elicited the following constructs:

Elicited pole

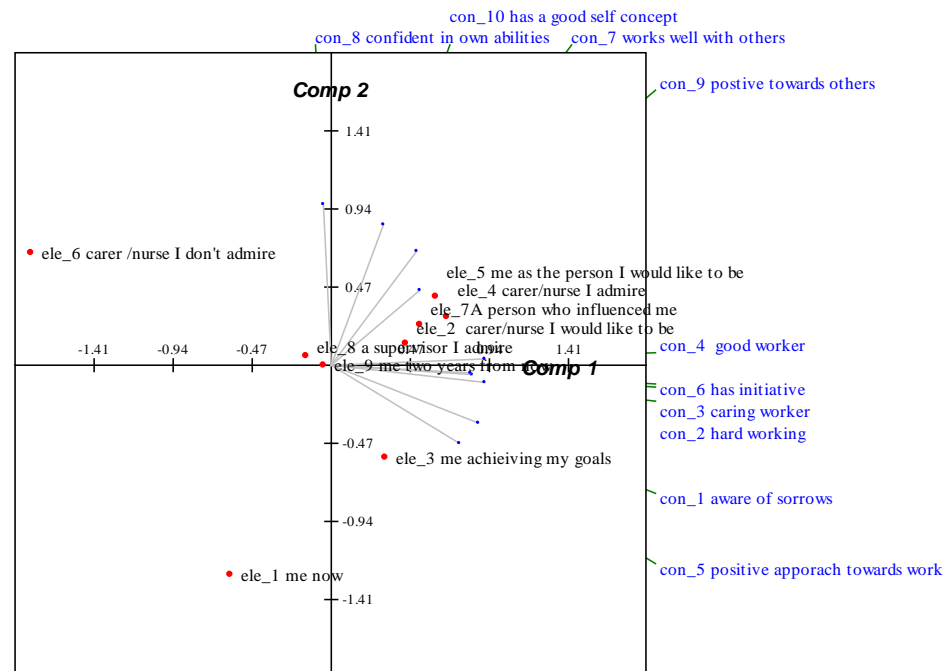
- 1. Aware of surrounds*
- 2. Hard working*
- 3. Caring worker*
- 4. Good work ethics*
- 5. Positive approach to work*

Implicit pole

- unaware of surrounds*
- lazy worker*
- uncaring worker*
- bad worker*
- negative approach to work*

As with the first occasion, these constructs were submitted to the repertory grid and the score submitted to the Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice, 2008) for principal components analysis. The following graphic representation was produced:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid II



Erick's reflections on graphic output

Position of constructs

In this diagram, the constructs are once again well spread out in an open fan-shaped representation. Construct (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* is once again significant and plotted on the right top square of the diagram with construct (10) *has a good self-concept/has a poor self-concept* near it. Construct (5) *positive approach to work/negative approach to work* has the axes extending at the lower end of the diagram and also appears to be significant.

Position of elements

As with the graphic output for the first occasion, element (1) *me now*, is situated on the lower left side of the diagram. However, in this diagram, element (1) has moved closer to element (3) *me achieving my goals* and element (9) *me two years from now*.

On this occasion, Erick was not surprised to see the position of element (1). He agreed with the represented plot that at present, he felt somehow a little closer to achieving his goals, which to finish the program and find a job. However, he was not sure of what he was going to

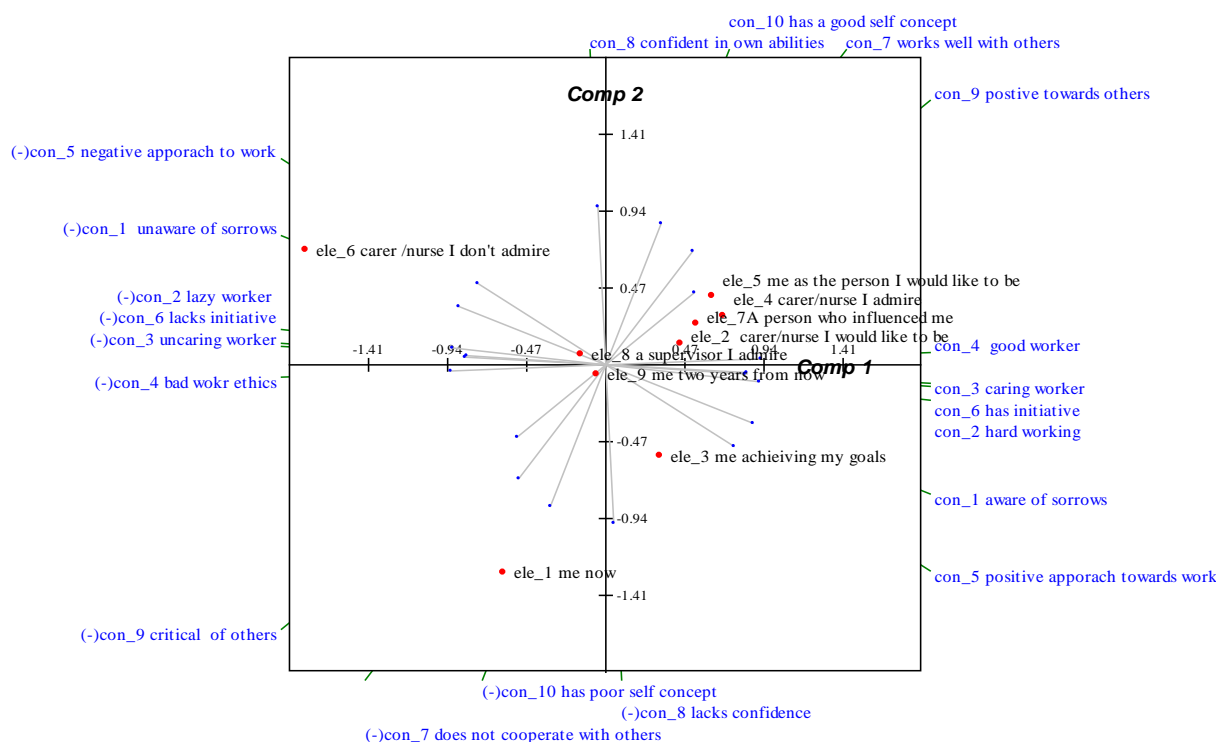
do in the future. He felt that completing this program and having a qualification was certainly a great achievement.

My reflection on the implicit poles

In this graphic output, the axes of the implicit construct (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept* is the closest to element (1) *me now*. The implicit axis of construct (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* is the next nearest to element (1) *me now*. The proximity of these axes to element (1) represented Erick's character at that point in time.

The element (9) *me two years from now* is situated very near to the horizontal midline of the quadrant and sitting on the implicit axes of constructs (9) *positive towards others/ critical towards others* and (7) *works well with others/ does not co-operate with others*. Although element (9) *me now* represents how Erick may see himself in the future, it was apparent that his reflection was influenced by the work issues that he was currently experiencing.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid II with implicit poles



7.2.3 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION III

The third data collection was taken three months after the program. At this time, Erick was employed at the Day Centre where he had done his very first workplace experience. In comparison to most, this Day Centre was average in size. It catered for the social and recreational needs of a total of 80 clients who attended the Centre on different days of the week.

Three to five staff, including the manager, worked at the Centre, attending to 15 to 20 clients per day.

Erick's response to self-characterization

Self-characterization III

"Pretend that your close friend Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you, telling you that he/she has just finished a program in aged care work. What would he/she write?"

Dear Erick

I have finished my study in December, had a bit of a rest and somewhere at the start of January it suddenly occurred to me that I needed a job. So I rang a few places and I finally rang the place where I did some of my training. The lady to whom I spoke was very nice. I have been working there since then. I started with being on call and now, only two months later, I am doing 4 shifts a week. Enough about that, my Easter was good. I had 2 days off in a row. So, I saw every member of my immediate family. They are well and happy. I am off to the beach in July school holiday.

Write back soon

Bill

My reflections on Erick's self-characterization

In contrast to the two previous self-characterizations, the tone of this self-characterization is happy and light. In the letter, Erick points out that he has a job at the place where he had done his second clinical placement and that he is doing well as he had been offered more shifts. It seems that he had been working very steadily, and that he considered himself lucky to have two days off in a row during Easter. Erick finishes off the self-characterization saying he is looking forward to holidays at the beach. Interestingly, in this self-characterization, he signs off as Bill, rather than John or Mary, perhaps like in the first self-characterization he might have wanted to express his own individuality.

As with the other occasions, Erick felt that this letter did not provide the constructs he wanted to include in his data collection. Therefore Erick elicited constructs that are appropriate to this data collection.

Elicited pole

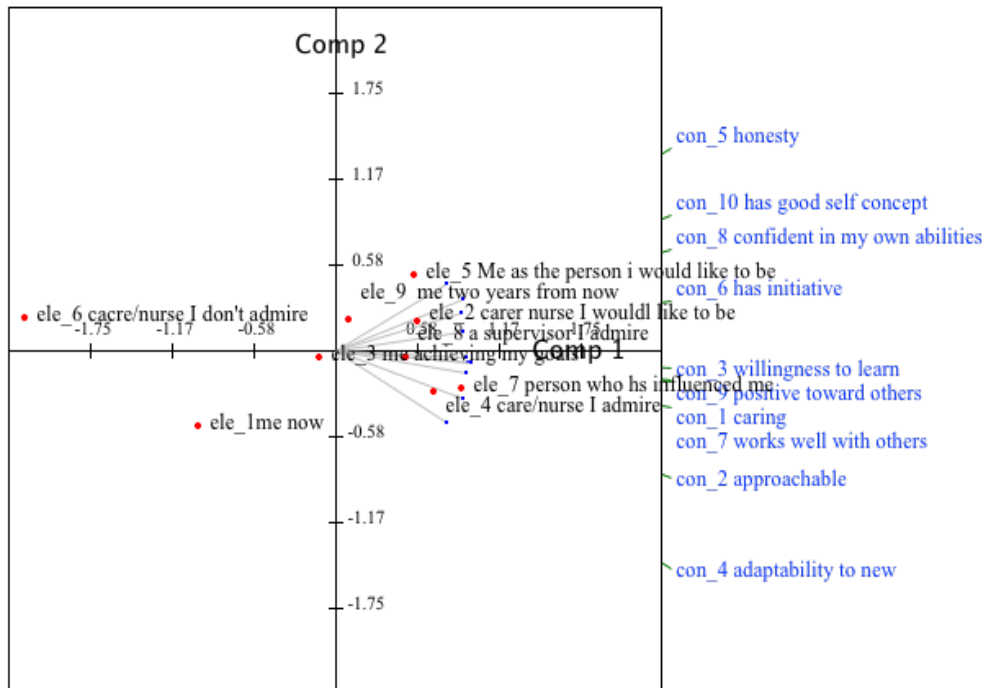
- 1. Caring*
- 2. Approachable*
- 3. Willingness to learn*
- 4. Adaptability to new techniques*

Implicit pole

- uncaring*
- distant*
- stubborn*
- doing their own thing*

The constructs were added to the five supplied constructs of the repertory grid and submitted to Idiogrid Version 2.4 that produced the following plot:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid III



Erick's Reflections on graphic output III

Position of constructs

In contrast to the two previous graphic outputs, the axes of the constructs in this output are shorter and closer together. For example, construct (5) *honesty/dishonesty* appears to me to be the most significant in this diagram, with construct (10) *has a good self-concept/has a poor self-concept* and (8) *has a good self-concept/has a poor self-concept* appearing to have less importance. Construct (4) *adaptability to new techniques/doing their own thing* and construct (2) *approachable/distant* also appear to be significant on this occasion because of their length.

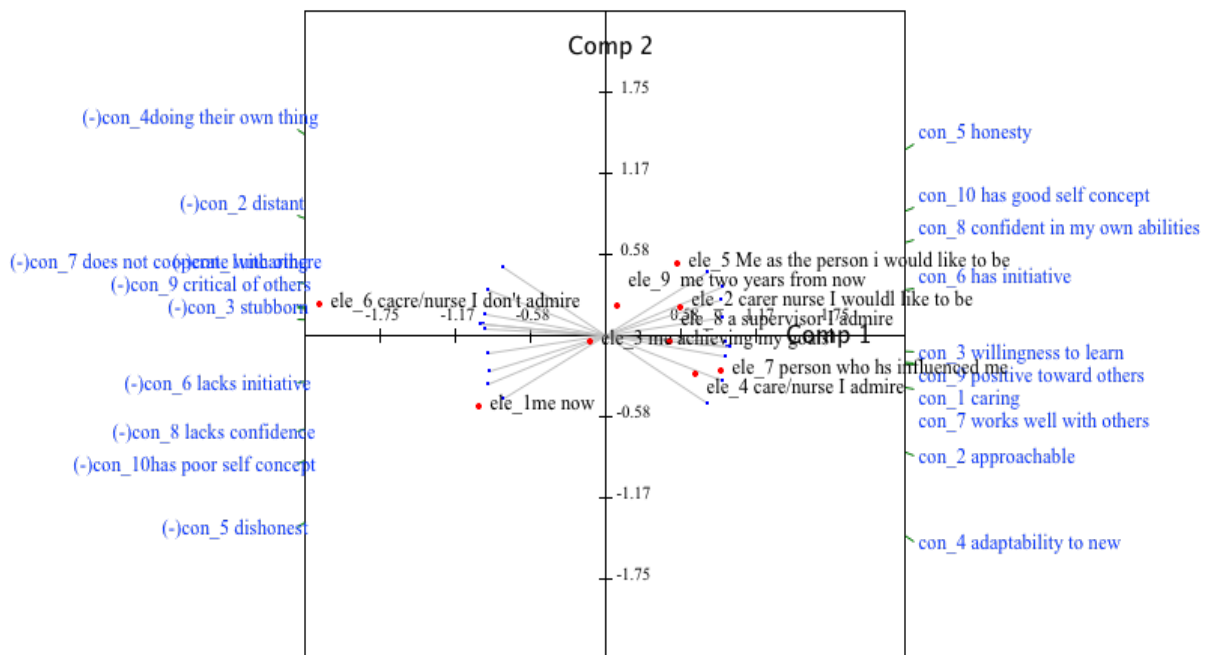
Position of elements

In the diagram, element (1) *me now*, has moved towards the centre line, still residing on the left lower quadrant but, on this occasion, closer to element (3) *me achieving my goals*. In Elements (1), (3) and (9) *me two years from now*, are in a straight line. Element (3) *me achieving my goals* and (9) *two years from now*, are close to each other, indicating movements towards achievement of goals in the next few years.

When we talked about the plot, Erick agreed with the configuration. He felt that it did represent what he was experiencing. He was satisfied with himself and looked contented. He liked the place where he was working. He felt that he was learning material that he found very interesting. He enjoyed the work, but he would like to have a position that was more permanent. When asked if he felt he was achieving his personal goals, he replied that he felt alright with what he was doing right now. Erick did not elaborate any further, except to say that he felt quite happy with what he had achieved.

My reflection on the implicit poles:

On this occasion, element (1) *me now*, has moved well up on the left lower quadrant and is situated near the implicit axes of construct (5) *honesty/dishonesty* and (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept*. The position of element (1) *me now* to construct (10) *has good self-concepts/has poor self-concept* is not unexpected, however, the presence and proximity of the implicit axis of construct (5) *honesty/dishonesty* remains unexplained because I did not question him on the attributes of honesty.



7.2.4 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION IV

When Erick came for the last meeting and data collection, he had been working in the same place for six months. He had put on some weight and looked lively and was more talkative than usual. We talked for a while about his work. He felt well supported by the staff especially by the program manager who, in his previous self-characterization he referred to as “a nice lady”. He had been given more responsibility and felt that he was carrying out his role

well. In fact, he felt a senior member of the team. Most importantly, he had just started the program in Division 2 nursing and was enjoying it. He sounded very happy.

Self-characterization IV

“Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/Mary Brown. Six months ago he/she completed a program in aged care work. Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you telling you how he/she is doing. What would he/she write?”

Dear Erick

I am writing to tell you about the past 6 months. I have been very busy with work and study. I have gone back to full time study and I am feeling great. My back is no longer sore and I have more energy. I am swimming 3 times a week and eating a little better.

Every time I go to work, I am enjoying it & I learn more almost every time (illegible) about various problems and diseases.

Just a short message to say Hi

Best of luck.

Erick’s response on the self-characterization

In this self-characterization, Erick writes that “My back is no longer sore and I have more energy” revealing that he is feeling “great”. Once again, Erick could not find enough material in the self-characterization to formulate the constructs that he wanted. He listed five constructs he felt to be relevant to this occasion.

Elicited pole

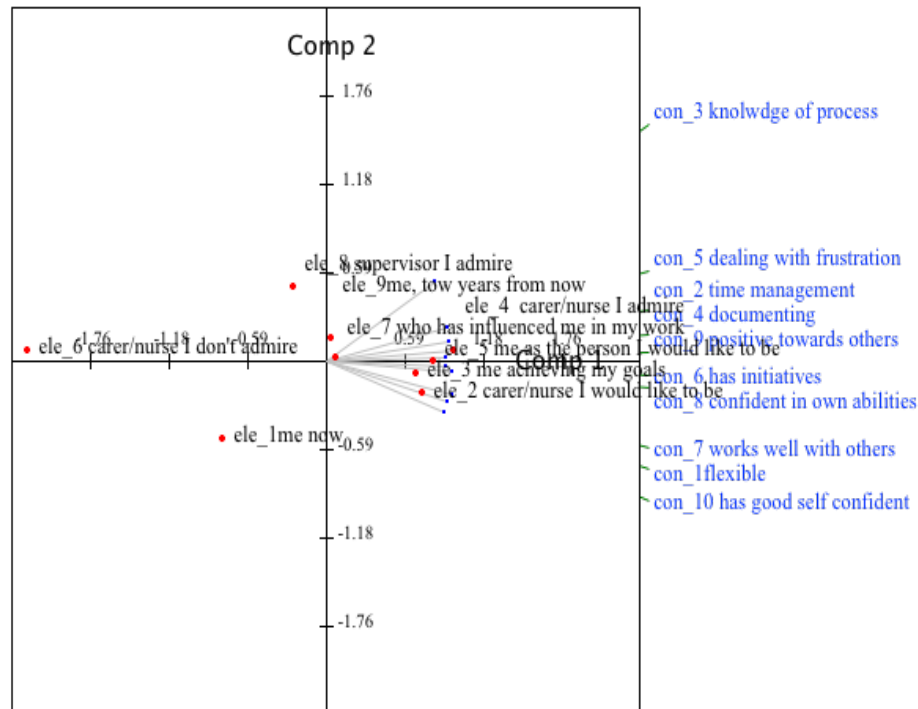
- 1. Flexible*
- 2. Time management*
- 3. Knowledge of process*
- 4. Documenting*
- 5. Dealing with frustration*

Implicit pole

- inflexible*
- unable to manage time*
- unaware of correct process*
- not documenting*
- unable to cope*

These constructs were added to the five supplied constructs in the repertory grid and submitted to Idiogrid Version 2.4 that produced the following plot:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid IV



Position of Constructs

In this graphic output, the construct (3) *knowledge of process/unaware of correct process* is presented as the greatest significance: appearing on the upper right quadrant. On the other hand, construct (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept* is, on this occasion, presented on the lower left quadrant and close to constructs (1) *flexible/inflexible* and (7) *works well with others/does not work well with others*.

Position of elements

Element (1) *me now* is again situated on the right lower quadrant away from other elements and away from the poles of the emergent constructs. Element (7) *the person who has influenced me the most* is the element closest to element (1) *me now*. Clustered with element (7) is element (9) *me, two years from now*. Elements (2) *nurse carer I would like to be* (3) *me achieving my goals*, (4) *carer/nurse I admire* and (5) *me as the person I would like to be*, are clustered along the axes of the emergent poles of constructs (1) *flexible/inflexible*, (7) *works well with others/does not work well with others*, (8) *confident own abilities/lacks confidence* (6) *has initiative/lacks initiatives*, (9) *critical of others/positive of others*, (4) *documenting/notdocumenting*, (2) *time mangement/unable to manage time* and (5) *dealing with*

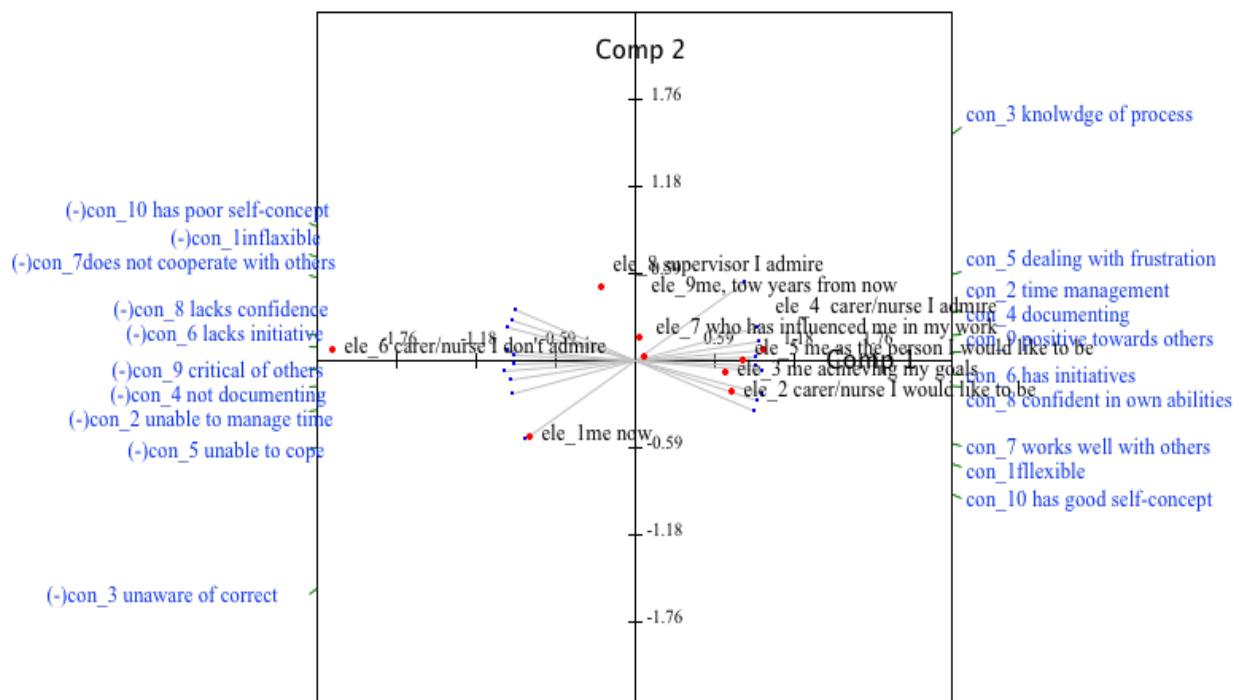
frustration/unable to cope, representing a relationship between these elements and the attributes as presented by the emergent poles of the constructs.

Discussing the graphic output, Erick stated that he felt good about his work and about studying Division 2 Nursing. He was not sure where he would like to work as a nurse, he thought perhaps in pediatrics or in community care. Some days later, I examined the graphic plot with the implicit constructs added. What I found interesting was the significance and the closeness of the implicit axes of construct (3) *knowledge of process/unaware of correct process* to element (1) *me now*.

My reflection on the implicit constructs

In this graphic output, element (1) *me now* is plotted in the same position in the upper left quadrant, as on the previous occasion. Contrary to all previous occasions, on this occasion element (1) *me now* is distant from the implicit axis of construct (10) *has good self concept/has poor self concept*. Instead, this element is now situated on the implicit axis of construct (3) *knowledge of processes/unaware of correct process*. I did not have the opportunity to talk to Erick about the relation of element (1) *me now* to construct (3), but it may indicate Erick's concern about knowing the right processes in his new job situation.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid IV with implicit poles



7.2.5 SUMMARY OF ERICK'S STORY

When Erick joined the program he was not happy with his personal situation. He had wanted to go to university, however his marks had not been high enough for him to be accepted. At the beginning of the program, he often spoke of wanting to be a teacher and he seemed heartbroken at not being able to study teaching. In the first few months of the program, Erick kept telling me that he was going to leave to undertake teacher training and I always replied "I hope you do become a teacher Erick, if this is what you want."

The common theme emerging from his four self-characterizations is going on holiday to the beach, not an unusual topic for a 19 year old.

The graphic output for Occasions I and II the construct axes are long and well spread out. On these two occasions constructs (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* and construct (10) *has good self-concept/poor self-concept* are presented close together, representing the emphasis that Erick gives to these two constructs.

In the graphic output for Occasions III and IV, the constructs appear shorter and closer together. Constructs (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* and (1) are no longer clustered together. The element (1) *me now* has moved from being at the bottom of the lower left quadrant towards the centre and closer to element (3) *me achieving my goals*, since Erick was closer to achieving his immediate goals. However, as he was gaining more skills and confidence he appeared to be less certain about working in the aged care field. On reflection, I believe that even when he presented as being uncertain, he had a sense of what he wanted to be in the longer term.

A few months after the last data collection, Erick came to the Training Organization. Erick saw me teaching through the glass panes, opened the door and came in the classroom. In fact, that had been his classroom some nine months before. I was very pleased to see him. He looked different, he was upright, looked confident and somehow looked bigger, not so much in terms of weight or height, but rather in the space he was taking up. I greeted him and as I could not stop the class, I asked him if he could wait for 30 minutes. He replied that he was passing by and had just come to thank me. Blushing, he proudly announced in front of the class that he had just passed his first nursing exams and he looked very happy. I congratulated him and wished him well. He smiled and nodded and left straight away. It was not until I was going through the data that I looked at Erick's application form.

Question 1: Reasons for wanting to do Certificate III in Aged Care Work, he wrote:

"To use it as a stepping stone for Division 2 (Nursing) and possibly for Division 1. I love dealing with people. I have waited to be a nurse for 5 years, but I did not

have high enough marks to undertake university studies. I would like to work with the hearing impaired in a (nursing home) day activities situation.”

This response showed that Erick was searching to do something he felt meaningful. He genuinely wanted to help people, if not through teaching, then through assisting people with age or disability needs.

7.3 ELIZABETH'S STORY

Elizabeth was in her early forties. She was softly spoken and articulate. She had completed a Diploma in Business Studies some years before and had been an office manager up to the time of joining the program. In the last couple of years, Elizabeth had helped to care for her sick mother. At the time of joining the program, she had learnt that her closest friend had been diagnosed with an aggressive cancer with a poor prognosis and during the program her husband was also diagnosed with cancer. This is her narrative as presented in Self-characterization I.

7.3.1 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION I

Self-characterization I

Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/ Mary Brown. Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you telling you that he/she is doing a program in aged care work. What would he/she write?

Dear Elizabeth

Exciting news! I am finally doing the aged care program that I have talked about in a roundabout way for years!!

I have been doing it now for about 8 weeks & love it. I really should have done it 20 years ago! It's funny, when you do something & you think “hey, I've finally found something I really want to do!”

When I'd enrolled for the program there was part of me that thought I was doing it because my mum had died recently and my friend Lynda, being so sick with cancer, that I was just trying to fill gaps in my life – but Oh no – this is just it!! Also the more I do, the more I want to know. I really do want to have a go at palliative care now.

The course is also run extremely well. It's a great mix of theory and practical.

The teachers are very inspiring. Everyone is treated with much respect & it really is all about learning & accepting the different backgrounds that we all come from.

There are about 20 in the group ranging in age from 20-55 (approx.) and are from diverse cultures and backgrounds. The teachers manage to extract such great stories from us all, that all of them seem to help with our understanding of “ageing” & all that it brings.

Being a full time student is certainly a luxury I so enjoy, I even enjoy the homework – but as usual I still leave it until the last minute – but it’s usually mulling over in my head for some time before hand.

The ... is a great venue with lovely lunch spots – you should join me one day for a catch up. Next week will be our first practical placement (Day Centre), so I am excited but also a bit nervous.

Plans for the future change a bit, but I think I should get a job for a while, and just start to feel confident and relaxed in the area.

Anyway, will fill you in on all finer details when we catch up!

Bye for now

Mary

My reflections on Elizabeth’s Self-characterization I

Elizabeth’s letter has a sense of excitement which is maintained “... *when you do something & you think “hey I’ve really found something I really want to do”* and further down “... *this is just it!!*” “*Being a full time student is a luxury I so enjoy*”. The central theme of the self-characterization is doing the program that she had wanted to do for a long time. A large part of the self-characterization is devoted to her positive perception of the teachers, the students and the learning experience. She disclosed other aspects of herself, for example revealing that it was not her mother’s and best friend’s illnesses that had influenced her decision to undertake the program, but that it was really her passion for palliative care.

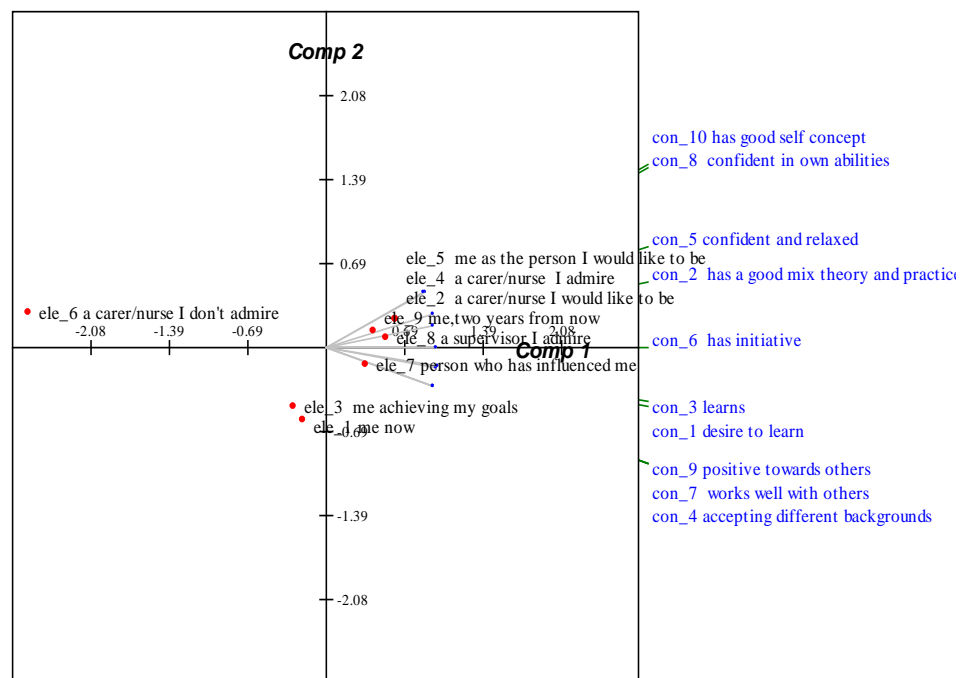
A few days later, when we were reading the self-characterization, I asked her for her reason for doing the program. She replied that caring for people was something she had wanted to do for a long time, but had not the courage to take that step till now. I did not explore her response further, rather got the impression that giving up her job and taking this step had been a difficult decision.

From this self-characterization, Elizabeth elicited the following constructs.

<i>Elicited pole</i>	<i>Implicit pole</i>
1. <i>Desire to learn</i>	<i>not interested</i>
2. <i>Has a good mix of theory and practice</i>	<i>unbalanced structure of program</i>
3. <i>Learns</i>	<i>is ignorant</i>
4. <i>Accepting of different backgrounds</i>	<i>is rigid in own belief</i>
5. <i>Confident and relaxed</i>	<i>nervous does not want to know</i>

These elicited constructs together with the supplied constructs were submitted to Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice 2008) for principal components analysis. Below is the grid graphic output:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid I



Elizabeth's reflection on the graphic output

Position of Constructs

The axes of the graphic output are close together, representing minor differences between each of the emergent poles. The emergent poles at each end of the fan are (10) *has good self-concept has poor self-concept*, (4) *accepting of different backgrounds/rigid in own beliefs* and have the longest axes, indicating the significance that these constructs have for Elizabeth.

When asked about constructs (8) *Confident in own abilities/lacks confident* and (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept*, Elizabeth was a little baffled and replied that she felt

good about her decision and knew that she had made the right choice. When asked about the other three constructs with prominent emergent poles (4) *accepting of different backgrounds/is rigid in own belief*, (7) *works well with others/does not co-operate with others* and (9) *positive towards others/critical of others*, Elizabeth replied that for her, these constructs were very important for a good working relationship and to be accepting of all people. I made the passing comment, “This group is very diverse”. Elizabeth looked straight in my face and smilingly uttered a very clear “Yes”.

Positions of elements

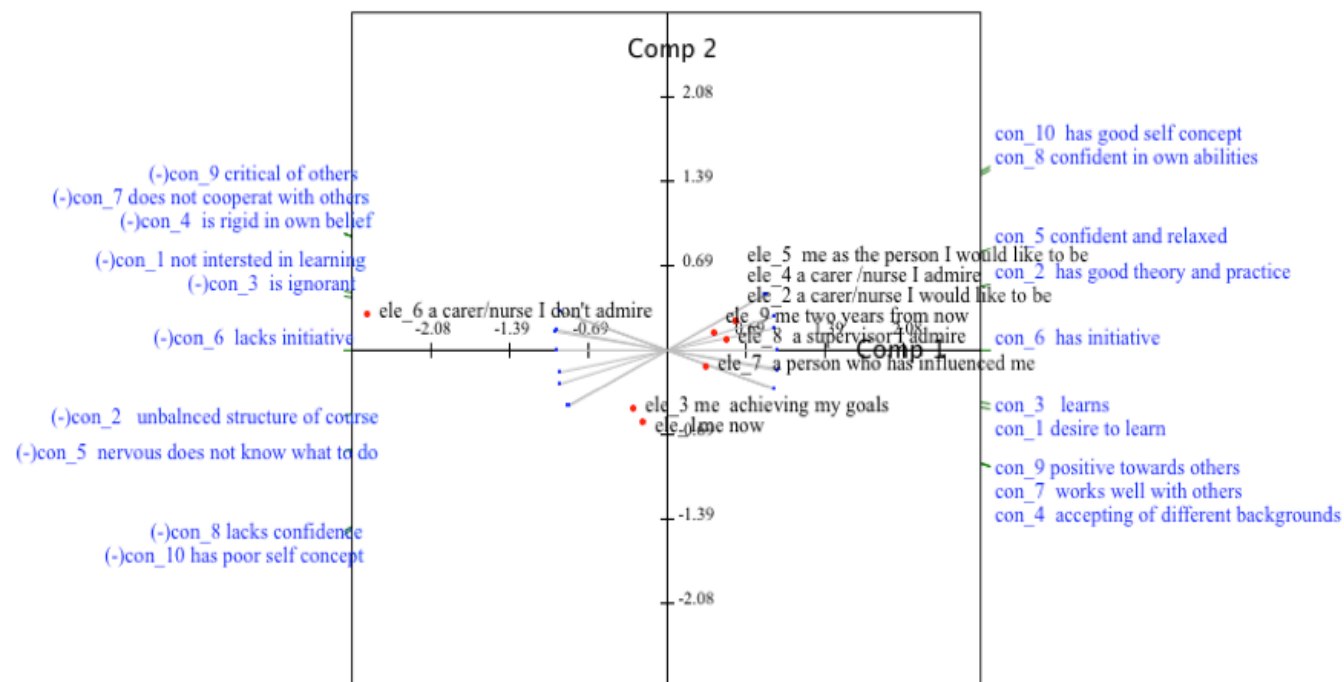
In the graph, element (1) *me now* is close to element (3) *me achieving my goals*. These elements are the farthest away from any of the emergent axes. While element (7) *person who has influenced me the most* is sitting on the axis of emerging poles (4), (7) and (9) suggesting that the character represented by this element, (whom she named Ethné) had those attributes. Also element (7) *person who has influenced me the most* is close to (8) *supervisor I admire*. While the elements suggesting the future (9) *me two years from now*, (2) *carer/nurse I would like to be*, (5) *me as the person I would like to be* and (4) *carer/nurse I admire* are also close to element (8) *a supervisor I admire*.

When asked what she thought of this configuration, Elizabeth explained that Ethné was a manager that she had known some years before when caring for her mother and she felt that Ethné had the qualities represented by those constructs. Hardison and Neimeyer (2012) explain that attributing a person’s name to an element signifies the importance of that person to the respondent. I believe that this was so for Elizabeth.

My reflection of implicit poles

In this graphic output, element (3) *me achieving my goals* and element (1) *me now* are clustered close to the vertical midline of the left quadrant. The implicit poles of construct (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept* is the nearest to these two elements. This configuration may be indicative of Elizabeth’s anxiety of doing her first clinical experience.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid I with implicit poles



7.3.2 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION II

Self-characterization II

Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/Mary Brown. Harry/Mary is writing to you once again telling you that he/she is about to finish the program in aged care work. What would he/she write?

Dear Elizabeth

Have recently been doing a Certificate III in Aged Care, I will finish in a few days. The program was an excellent mix of practical and theory. I found that I enjoyed the theoretical side very much, learning about diseases & how the body functions & works was just fascinating. The program gave me a taste of maybe what I would like to do more of.

However, all the theory did not prepare me for the weeks in nursing home as a p.c.a.!! The first few days in the home I felt very confronted & shocked by what I saw. I understand now though, why it's important to do four weeks, because as the time went on, things become less confronting & much more clear.

I enjoyed the relationship with the new residents that developed over this time & with the p.c.a. who worked there. I have a great respect for these people who

work so well in a team. ~~I really enjoyed the patients with dementia~~ I found myself thinking about the residents at home & wondering how they were doing today.

This program has given me a taste to learn more of, to have a greater knowledge as to where I can help & belong.

Best wishes

Harry Brown

My reflections on Elizabeth's Self-characterization II

The characterization was written at the nursing home a few days before the end of that workplace experience. This letter is somewhat shorter than the one written on Occasion I, probably due to the fact that it was written on site and Elizabeth might have been pressed for time or lacked the energy for a longer letter.

This was never explored and I can only make assumptions about the experience of the environment at that time. Nonetheless, even though a little more subdued, she remains positive towards the program and towards her desire to continue with her studies. At the end of the letter, she says: *"This program has given me a taste to learn more to have a greater knowledge as to where I can help & belong"*. In this letter, Elizabeth was not specific about what she wanted to do after completing the program.

In conversation, I asked her about her relationships with the residents. She laughed and stated that the phrase "relationships" was inappropriate. She had found the workplace experience confronting. When asked if she would like to work in this nursing home, she responded, *"No (pause), I like the residents (pause), I like caring for them (pause) that staff are nice (pause) but no (laugh) I would not like to work here"*. "Why not?" I asked. *"Look, I don't know a lot, but things need to be changed with regards to caring."* This statement was followed by a conversation on issues associated with delivery of care in a nursing home setting.

From this self-characterization, Elizabeth elicited the following constructs. These constructs together with the five supplied constructs were incorporated into the repertory grid.

Elicited pole

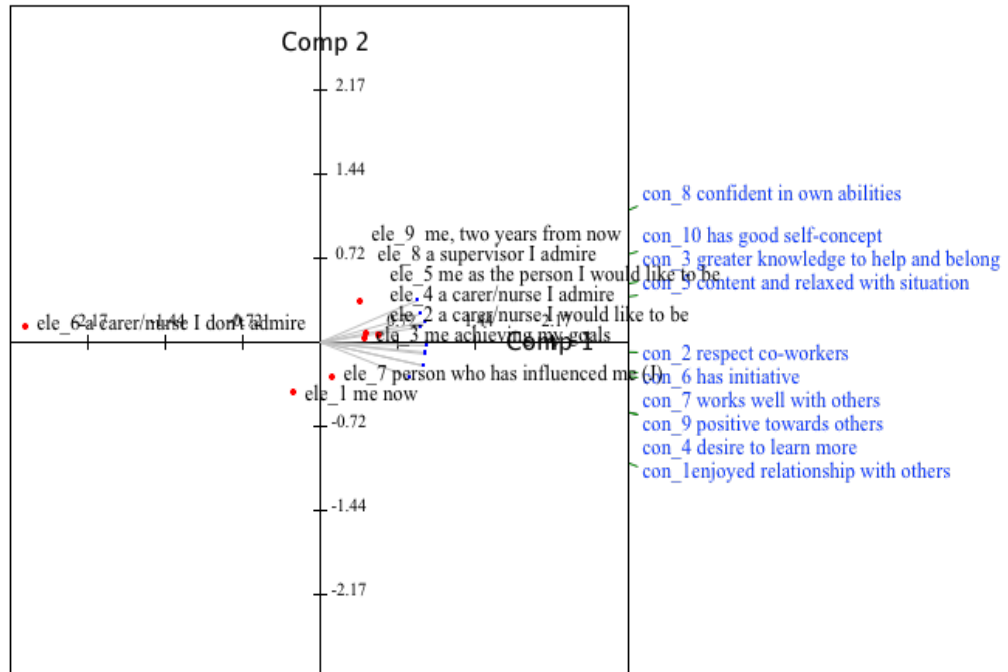
- 1. Enjoyed relationships with residents*
- 2. Respect for co-workers*
- 3. Greater knowledge to help and to belong*
- 4. Desire to learn more*
- 5. Content and relaxed with situation*

Implicit pole

- dislike being with residents*
- disrespect co-workers*
- ignorance about self-development*
- disinterested in learning*
- confronted and shocked*

The principal components analysis produced the following graphic output:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid II



Elizabeth's interpretation of the graphic output

Position of constructs

In this graph, the axes of the emergent poles were closer together than on the first occasion. Of all the constructs, construct (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* and construct (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept*, are again the most prominent and occurring in the upper right quadrant of the graph. Construct (1) *enjoyed relationship with residents/dislike being with residents* and construct (4) *desire to learn more/disinterested in learning*, are also prominent and occurring below the mid-line of the right quadrant.

Elizabeth noted that they were less open than the ones on the previous occasions and this surprised her. She stated that she did not feel confident in her skills and that there were times when she had felt that she had to work hard to develop the skills of an aged care worker. As the program was nearing completion, she was wondering if she would ever have the confidence to work unsupervised.

Position of elements

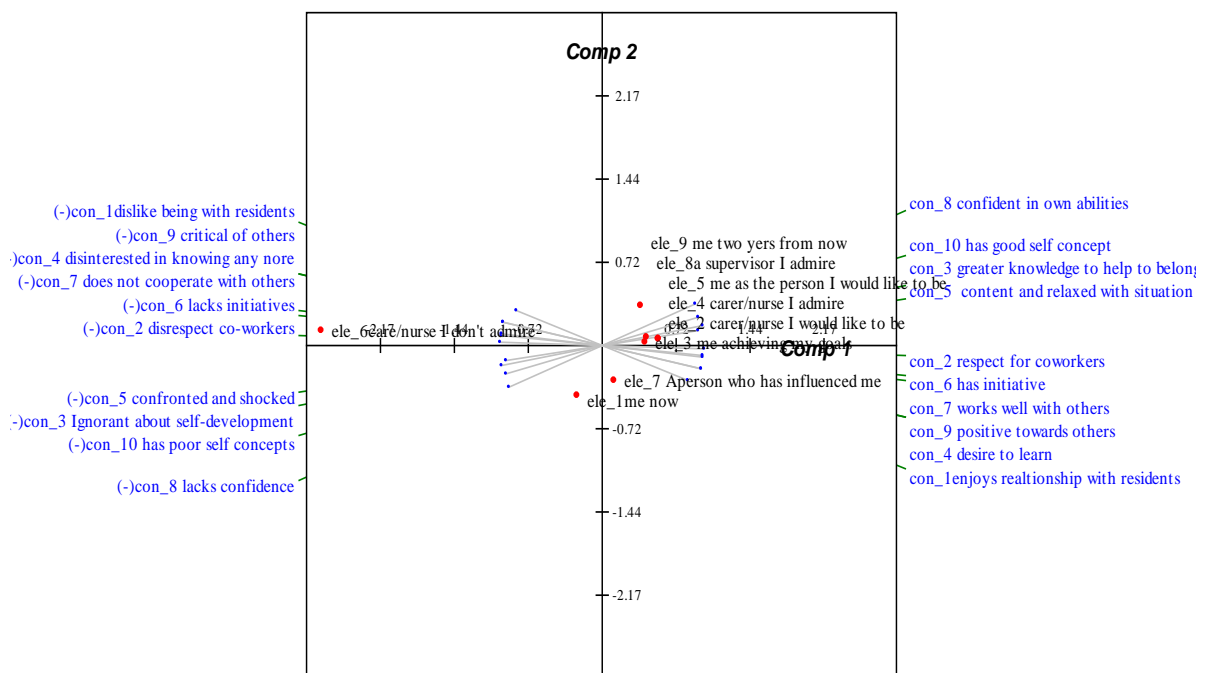
In this graph, the element (1) *me now* has moved a little closer to element (7) *person who has influenced me in my work*. Interestingly, the character represented by element (7) has been given a different identity from “Ethne”, now represented as “J”. In conversation, Elizabeth

revealed that the “J” stood for her husband’s name. A few months before, her husband had been diagnosed with bowel cancer and this had affected her greatly. Elements (8), (3), (2), (4) and (5) are clustered together close to the mid-line, while element (9) *me two years from now*, is a little further from the mid-line in the left quadrant. Elizabeth laughed when we discussed the position of her element (9) and replied, “Yes, I am getting there, but I’m not there yet.”

My reflection on the implicit poles

In this output, the element (1) *me now* has moved in the upper quadrant, closer to the midline. The axis of the implicit pole of construct (8) *lack confidence/confidence in own abilities* is the nearest to element (1) *me now*. Because the axes of the constructs are so close to the midline of the diagram it appears that these constructs are of equal significant to Elizabeth.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid II with implicit poles



7.3.3 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION III

Three months after the program, Elizabeth wrote the third self-characterization. She had just been employed as co-ordinator for a section of an aged care facility run by a religious Order. She was excited about her new role and felt that this job most suited her. It involved co-ordination and delivery of care to forty elderly women with intellectual disabilities. She felt comfortable with the responsibility and felt that she would be able to do the job well.

Self-characterization III

Pretend that your close friend Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you, telling you that he/she has just finished a program in aged care work. What would he/she write?"

Dear Elizabeth,

Finished my program in Aged Care in Jan. It was excellent to finish, but also good to have the time to reflect on all I had learnt. The program gave an excellent insight into aged care & where it may all be heading for the future. I've also had time to think about me, & where I want to head towards in the future. I made a conscious decision to look for work in an environment that was committed to the community around it.

This has led me to apply for a job with the ...This position sounds very exciting & very energetic. It's a good mix of personal care & administration.

At the interview, they took me to the nursing home to meet some of the women. I realized how relaxed, comfortable and confident I felt in this environment. I thought about this afterwards and I realized it was my learning that had made me feel this way. Having experience & knowledge certainly gives you confidence.

Also having done personal care during the placement, I realize that I will have more empathy with the carers & what their pressures may be.

I am looking forward to the job, developing new relationships & also to pushing myself a bit further in the direction of where I'd like to be, who knows – more study?

Regards

Harry.

My reflections on Elizabeth's Self-characterization III

In the first paragraph, Elizabeth explains the reason for applying for the position. Throughout the letter, she refers to the interview and to thoughts about undertaking this new role. Although the focus of this self-characterization is on the new job, the themes of feeling satisfied with the program, wanting to learn more, developing new relationships, are also occurring in the self-characterization.

The following constructs were elicited

Elicited pole

1. Committed to the community

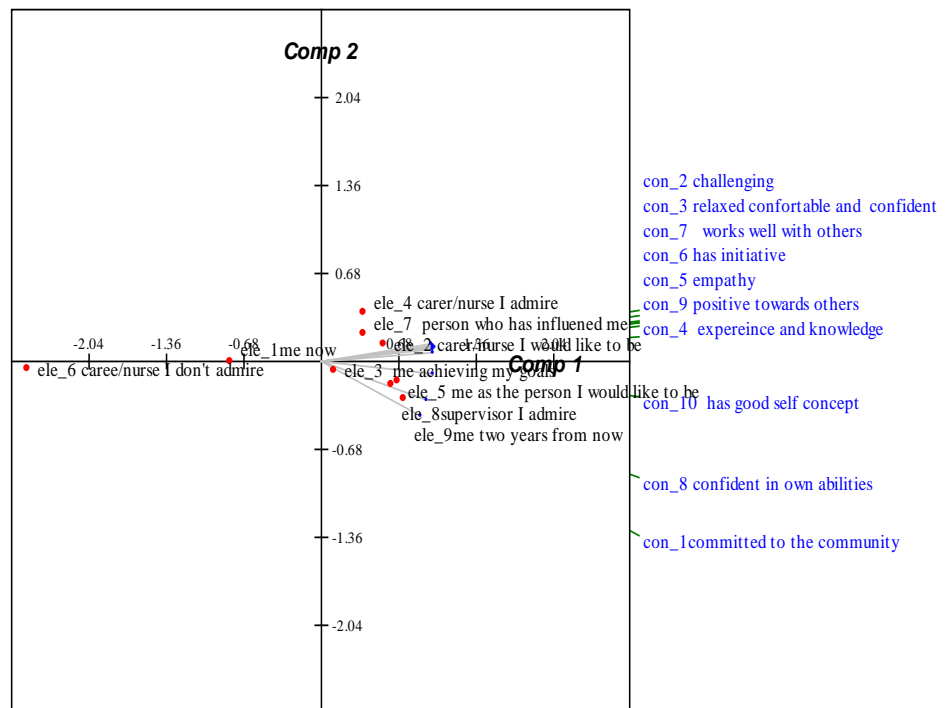
Implicit pole

profit making business

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2. <i>Challenging</i> | <i>profit making business</i> |
| 3. <i>Relaxed comfortable/confident</i> | <i>stressed/nervous</i> |
| 4. <i>Experience and knowledge</i> | <i>lack of experience and knowledge</i> |
| 5. <i>Empathy</i> | <i>not understanding the other person's experience</i> |

These together with the five supplied constructs were included in the repertory grid. The ratings of the repertory grid were submitted to the Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice, 2008) for principal components analysis, which produced the following output:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid III



Elizabeth's reflections on graphic output

Position of constructs

In the graph, constructs (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* and (1) *committed to the community/profit making business*, appear to be more prominent, with the axes extending to the lower right quadrant. Construct (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept* is still significant, but in this grid, its significance is slightly less than on the previous occasions. The

other constructs (5) *empathy/does not understand the other person's experience* (9) *positive towards others /critical of others*, (6) *has initiative/lacks initiatives* (7) *works well with others/does not co-operate* and (2) *challenging/profit making business*, are close together and appear to have lesser significance.

Position of elements

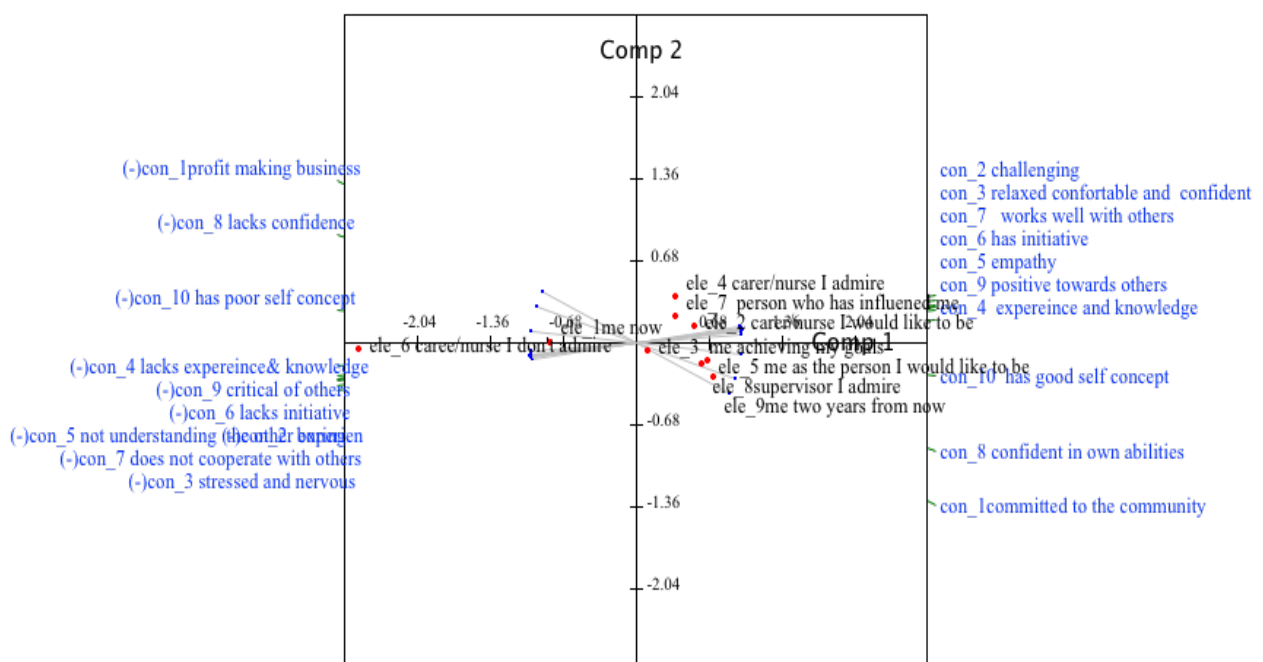
Also, element (1) *me now* has moved away from element (3) *me achieving my goals*, and is situated on the left side of the diagram, distant from the poles of the elicited constructs and more in the direction of the implicit poles.

When asked about this, Elizabeth replied that it did sound true. She was starting a new job, and although she felt that she had the skills, she did feel somewhat apprehensive about her new role.

My reflection on the implicit poles

To find out more about the significance of element (1) *me now* I examined its position in relation to the implicit constructs, which although situated on the vertical line and almost in the neutral position, it still sat on the implicit axes of construct (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept* and (4) *has experience and knowledge /lacks experience and knowledge* again indicating that they are less of a concern to Elizabeth.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid III with implicit poles



7.3.4 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION IV

Six months after the program, Elizabeth came for the last data collection. She wore her uniform, a navy blue suit. On the jacket of the suit, she wore a badge with “co-ordinator” and her name written on it. I felt that she came more as a chore to complete the last task of the study. She appeared settled in her job and did not seem to have the need to discuss any particular issues. She appeared happy but hurried, and did point out that she had made a particular effort to come to this meeting.

Self-Characterization IV

Dear Elizabeth

Well, the program finished and a few months later I was successful in finding a job with... as a coordinator of Aged Care Services. The job involves looking after 47 women and 1 man, not as a personal carer, but as an advocate on behalf of these people.

I take three people out regularly on a one-to-one basis. Very few of them have any family, so it is my job to build up their trust in me. I've been in the job 6 months now, & feel that I have finally found something I love doing. It's challenging but I enjoy this.

I speak with personal carers, doctors, nurses & a variety of other people on their behalf, so obviously I have to know what it is they want & what I think is best for them. I report to the (unreadable) leader, who is the legal guardian of these people, who ultimately has the final decision.

The program that I did gave me confidence, skill & knowledge to feel comfortable around older people & the facilities they live in. I have decided that I want to learn more & would probably be in the counselling/social work area, however I have given a commitment to these people that I will stay there for a while & so my studies will be part time. ~~The skills we learnt above~~

My reflections of Elizabeth's Self-characterization IV

In this letter, Elizabeth describes the role of her job. She points out that she does not work as a personal carer but as an advocate, speaking on behalf of the residents in her care and seems to be proud of that. In her last paragraph, she writes that the program has given her the confidence and skills to work with older persons. But also immediately suggests that she will not be staying very long in that job, as she would like to do counselling and social work.

This letter was finished in a hurry, there is no salutation and the last line, which has been struck out, does not fit in the context.

From this self-characterization the following constructs were elicited.

Elicited pole

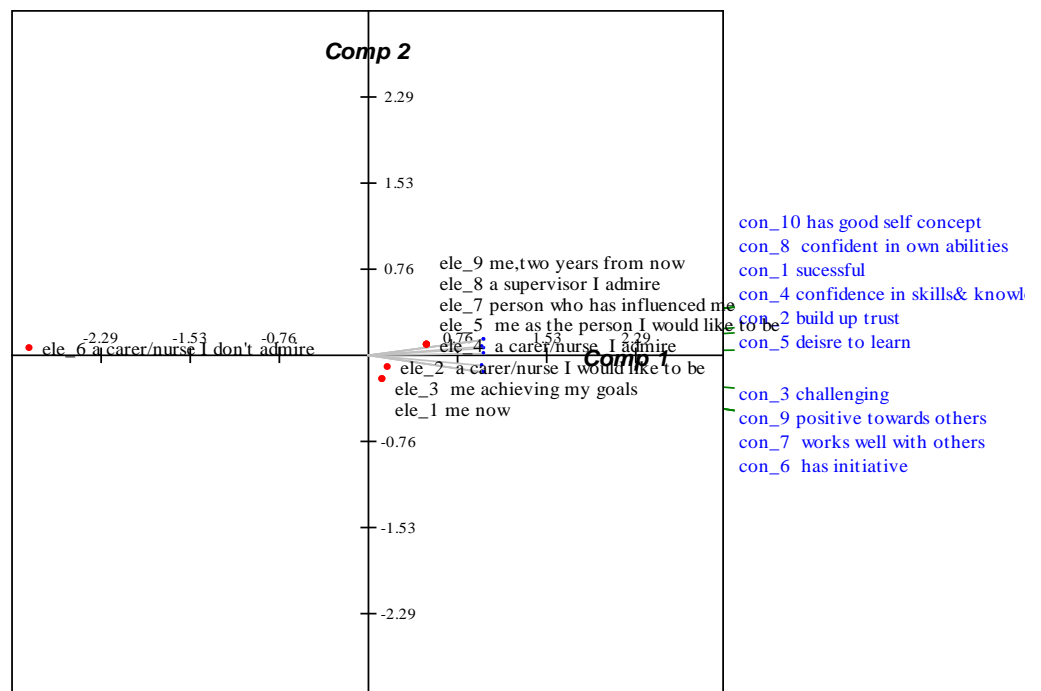
1. *Successful*
2. *Build up trust*
3. *Desire to learn*
4. *Challenging*
5. *Confident in skills and knowledge*

Implicit pole

- loser*
- dominating*
- believe to know everything*
- boring*
- ignorant*

These constructs together with the supplied constructs were scored against the elements and submitted to Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice 2008) producing the following graphic output:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid IV



Elizabeth's reflections on Graphic output

Position of constructs

In this output, the construct axes remain close together. Construct (10) *has good self-concept/poor self-concept* and construct (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence*, remain the more prominent.

Position of elements

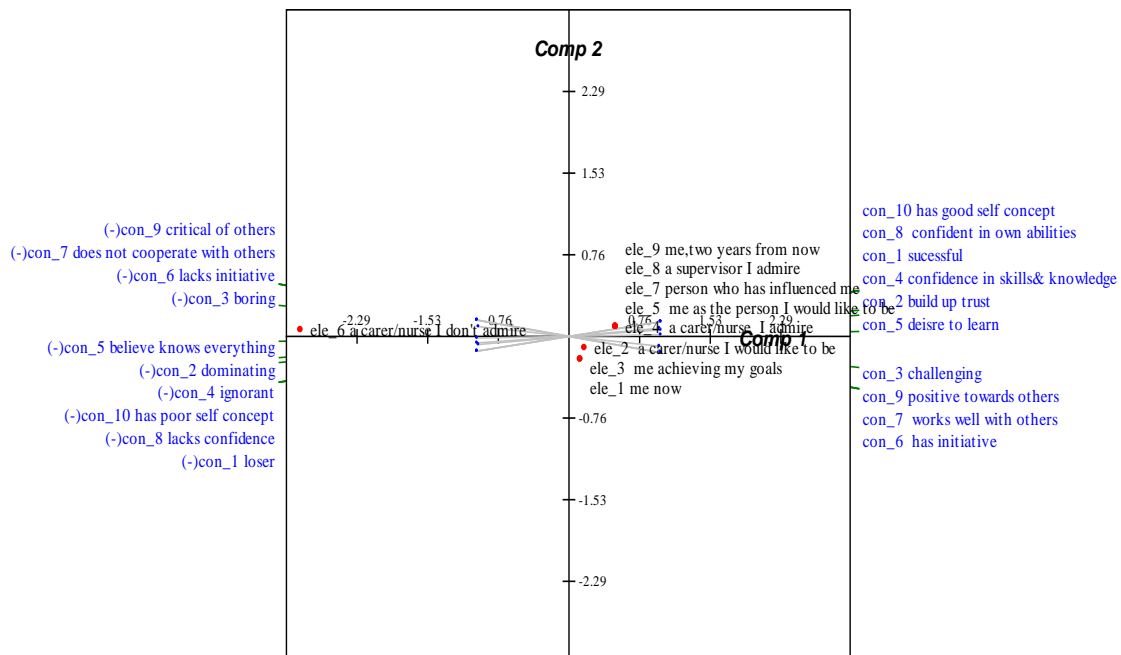
On this occasion, element (1) *me now* is clustered with elements (3) *me achieve my goals* and (2) *the carer nurse I would like to be*. Elements (4) *a carer/nurse I admire*, (5) *me as the person I would like to be* (7) *a person who has influenced me in work*, (8) *a supervisor I admire* and (9) *me two years from now*, form a second cluster.

In seeing the two clusters, Elizabeth said that, “Yes, for the time being I have achieved my goal.” She felt proud and satisfied with her achievements.

My reflection on the implicit poles

In this graphic representation, all the elements are plotted on the right side of the quadrant and close to the midline, confirming that she is satisfied with her achievements. No further explanation of their relation to the implicit poles is required.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid IV with implicit poles



7.3.5 SUMMARY OF ELIZABETH'S STORY

Elizabeth joined the program with the intention of becoming a personal carer. She was excited at being in the program and in the first self-characterization she wrote, “*This is something I wanted to do for years.*” She hoped that the program would give her the skills to work in palliative care.

Towards the end of the program, Elizabeth was definite that she did not want to work in a nursing home and found the setting too restrictive for meeting the needs of residents. Three months after completing the program, she was successful in obtaining a position as a care co-ordinator for a group of elderly women, and felt that the program has given her the confidence and skills for this role.

Six months after completing the program, Elizabeth seemed to have grown in her new job. Her role involved co-ordination of care and advocacy. She liaised with personal carers, doctors, nurses and solicitors. She valued the one-on-one interaction with residents and the provision of services that meet their needs.

Throughout the four self-characterizations, Elizabeth presented similar themes. These themes were: gaining new knowledge, satisfaction with program, wanting to continue to learn, accepting and interacting with people. It is not surprising that six months after the program, she found herself in a position that demanded skills in interacting with and advocating for people.

7.4 SALLY'S STORY

At the time of the study, Sally was in her fifties. She had left school early and when young she had worked in a factory. For a short time, Sally had worked in an aged care facility, but prior to starting the program, she had been unemployed for more than three years. She was keen to go back to the workforce, and hoped that the program would give her the skills and the confidence to return to aged care work.

At the beginning of the program, Sally bonded with another female student of roughly the same age and background. The main differences between the two, was their personality. The other was outgoing, talkative and assertive. Sally, on the other hand, was reserved, quiet and appeared to be lacking in confidence. During the first months, the two did everything together: sat next to each other, worked in the same group and spent the class breaks together. However, as the program progressed, they began to rely less on each other.

In class, Sally was quiet and attentive. At times, I felt that her attentiveness appeared to be intense, and thought that it may be related to her desire to learn. However, whenever we spoke, Sally showed a good understanding of what had been taught. At times, her explanations and choice of words were not as sophisticated as those of other students, but her insights and attitude towards the topics were comparatively better. She was meticulous in the presentation of her work, which was always written in neat longhand script with well-rounded letters.

This is her story as presented through the self-characterizations and discussions.

7.4.1 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION I

Self-characterization I

“Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/ Mary Brown. Harry/ Mary Brown is writing to you telling you that he/she is doing a program in aged care work. What would he/she write?”

Dear Sally

Just writing to let you know how I am going in my studies, there is so much to learn. I am learning about disabilities at the moment, last week was exciting we went to an aged care facility where the clients had dementia. Next week we will be doing day activities with clients. I'm excited about getting back into the workforce. I hope that this letter finds you well.

Love Sally.

Sally's self-characterization

Immediately after Sally completed the self-characterization, she asked if she could re-write it, as it contained too many cross-outs and spelling mistakes. Sally copied the self-characterization in a neat

handwriting straight away. A few days later, when Sally was eliciting her constructs she was disappointed that she could not draw from the self-characterization any meaningful statements to use in the grid. Similarly to Erick, I asked Sally if she could think of five qualities or attributes that she could use. At that time Sally felt that she could not think of any and asked if she could write another letter at a later date, as this had too many spelling mistakes. In the following weeks, Sally went on workplace learning experience, firstly in a Day Centre and then in a Hostel. Consequently, Sally did not re-write the self-characterization until she came back from the workplace experiences two weeks later.

The following is Sally's second attempt to Self-characterization I.

Dear Sally

I am writing to let you know how I am doing. The subjects we have covered dementia, stroke, arthritis, Parkinson's disease & heart attack, are all mind-boggling.

My teacher's name is... We just had a workplace experience in a hostel, next week we're off to... (name of nursing home). The program runs for another 6 weeks then I'll be out in the work force again, to my delight. I will close now, hope this finds you well.

Love

Mary

From this self-characterization Sally was again unable to elicit any attributes or characteristics and like Erick, she decided to name five that she wanted in her grid. She chose the following:

Elicited pole

- 1. Understanding*
- 2. Work experience*
- 3. Knowledge*
- 4. Important person*
- 5. Enjoys work*

Implicit pole

- not knowing a thing*
- no experience*
- knows nothing*
- is a nobody*
- detests work*

My reflections on Sally's Self-characterization I

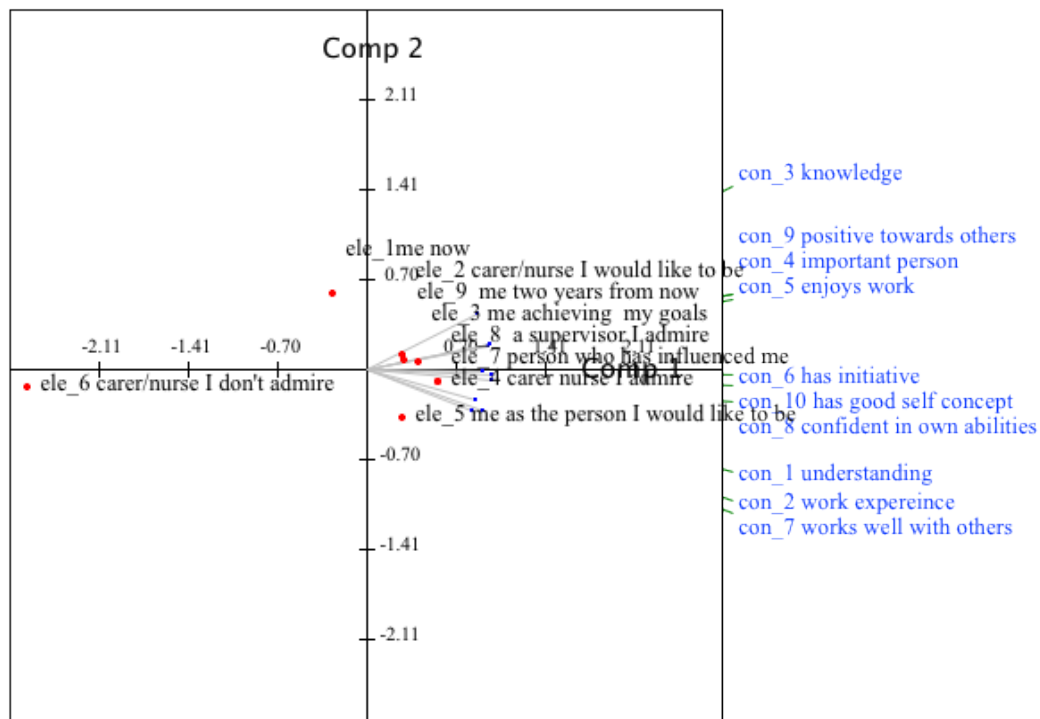
In the first self-characterization, Sally writes the letter in the third person as required, but she also signs the letter in her own name. At that time, I saw this as a genuine mistake; a mistake that Sally corrected in her second attempt. However, this oversight may have relevance when compared with the self-characterization for Occasion 4. An important observation was that Sally thought that her first self-characterization was not good enough and felt that she had to write another "properly" as she put it. "without cross-outs or spelling mistakes". The rewrite was presented in very neat handwriting. This rewrite was counted as Sally's first attempt to Self-characterization I.

In both attempts, Sally started by saying “*I am letting you know how I am doing*”. In the first self-characterization she states that “*there is so much to learn*” and in the second she describes, “*how mind boggling*” she finds the learning.

In the first attempt, she states how excited she is to have gone to an aged care facility, where there were clients with Dementia and how much she was looking forward to going on workplace experience. In the second attempt however, written immediately after the two workplace experiences, Sally appears to skim over those experiences, “*Just had work experience in a hostel, next week we are off to.....*” From the feedback received from the supervisors, Sally did do well on both workplace experiences. She was kind and attentive to the needs of clients/residents and followed instructions. However, in both settings, she needed a great deal of supervision and encouragement. Sally finishes both self-characterizations by stating how delighted she is of going out into the workforce again.

After selecting the constructs, Sally scored the repertory grid. The scores were then submitted to Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice, 2008) for principal components analysis that produced the following output.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid I



Sally's interpretation of the graphic output

The following day, we discussed the graphic output. Firstly, we examined the position of the axes. The arms of each of the axes are roughly of the same length, indicating that each construct is equally important to Sally. She agreed to this interpretation by stating that she thought all to be important in the care of older persons.

Position of Constructs

In the graph construct (3) *knowledge/ knows nothing* is the closest to element (1) *me now*. In viewing the position of construct (3) and element (1) Sally became emotional, stating that this was very true. She explained that she was doing the program so that she could learn how to care for older persons. She liked working in aged care but felt that she needed to know how to care for the residents. Almost holding back tears, she explained how much she wanted to go back to the workforce and to care for the residents.

Position of Elements

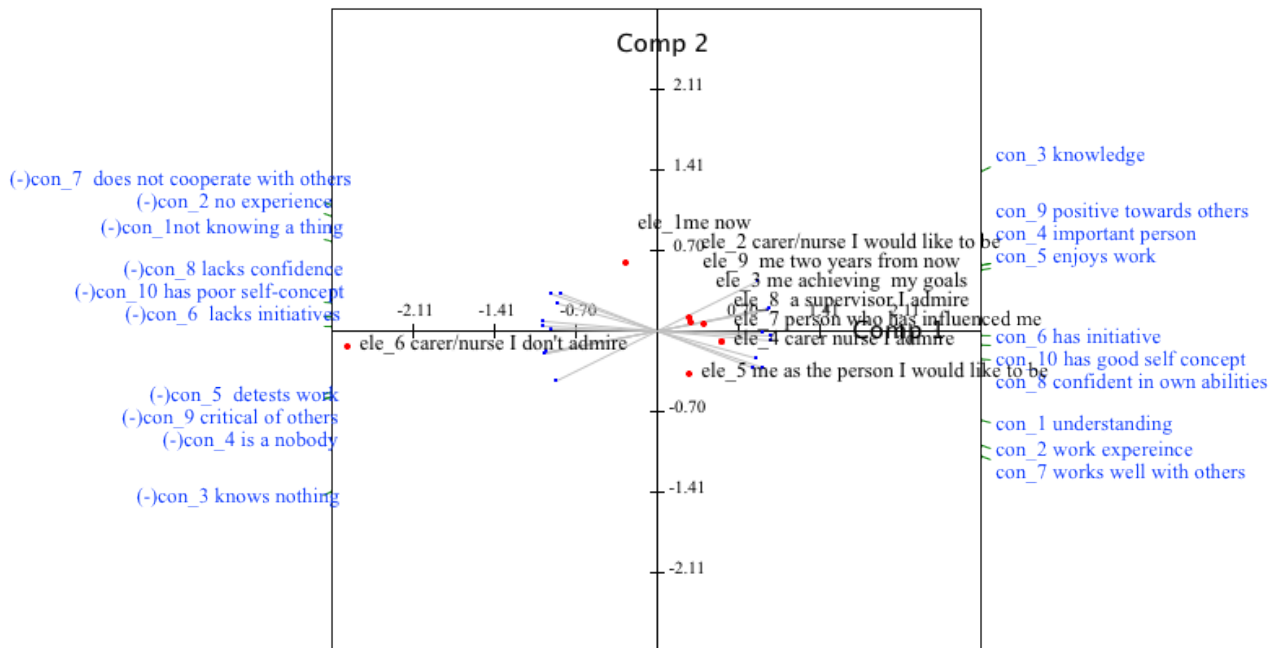
Next, we examined the position of the elements. What stands out in the graph is the position of element (1) *me now* situated in the upper left side of the quadrant and furthest away from the other elements. Sally was surprised to see how distant element (1) was from the others and wondered why it was so. However, she was pleasantly surprised to see that elements (2) *carer/nurse I would like to be*, (9) *me two years from now* and (3) *me achieving my goals* were the nearest to this element. This cluster of elements (2), (9) and (3) was close to the axes of constructs (3) *knowledge/ knows nothing*, (9) *positive towards others/ critical of others* and (4) *important person/ is a nobody*.

Another interesting feature in this output is the position of element (5) *me as the person I would like to be* which is also situated away from the other elements and is the furthest away from element (1) *me now*. When asked what she thought of the position of element (5), Sally smiled and said that right now she had a long way to go to be a good carer.

My reflections on implicit poles

After the interview, I examined the graphic output with its implicit poles. In this output, element (1) *me now* was not far from implicit axes of construct (7) *works well with others/ does not co-operate with others* and of construct (2) *has work experience/ has no experience*. Such configuration did make sense. In class, Sally seemed to want to work with the same people, usually choosing those students who were more mature and accommodating and with whom she felt she could work well, because she felt accepted.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid I with implicit poles



7.4.2 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION II

Sally wrote Self-characterization II in the on last week of the five weeks workplace experience at the nursing home. All students at that nursing home wrote their self-characterization at the same time.

“Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/Mary Brown. Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you once again, telling you that he/she is about to finish the program in Certificate III in Aged care Work. What would he/she write?”

Dear Mary,

As you know the program is just about to finish, putting it to practice was quite different from the study, I am learning time management at the moment, I find this tricky, for example Betty takes ½ hour on some days to drink her cup of tea, usually on the days I have to shower her. At first I wondered was this really what I wanted to do. After a week, I am now positive I picked the right career. Chatting with the elderly and getting to know them is a task. Some are happy to chat back. It is a demanding job, always a bed to make, or somebody to shower. The elderly have a good appetite. Overall I am enjoying this work. I will close now, all the best.

Sally

Elicited pole

1. *Take care of hydration*
2. *Assist with personal needs*
3. *Interact with elderly*
4. *Assist with nutritional needs*
5. *Assist with time management*

Implicit pole

- let them become dehydrated*
- leave them dirty*
- no communication*
- let them go hungry*
- chaotic*

My reflections on Sally's Self-characterization II

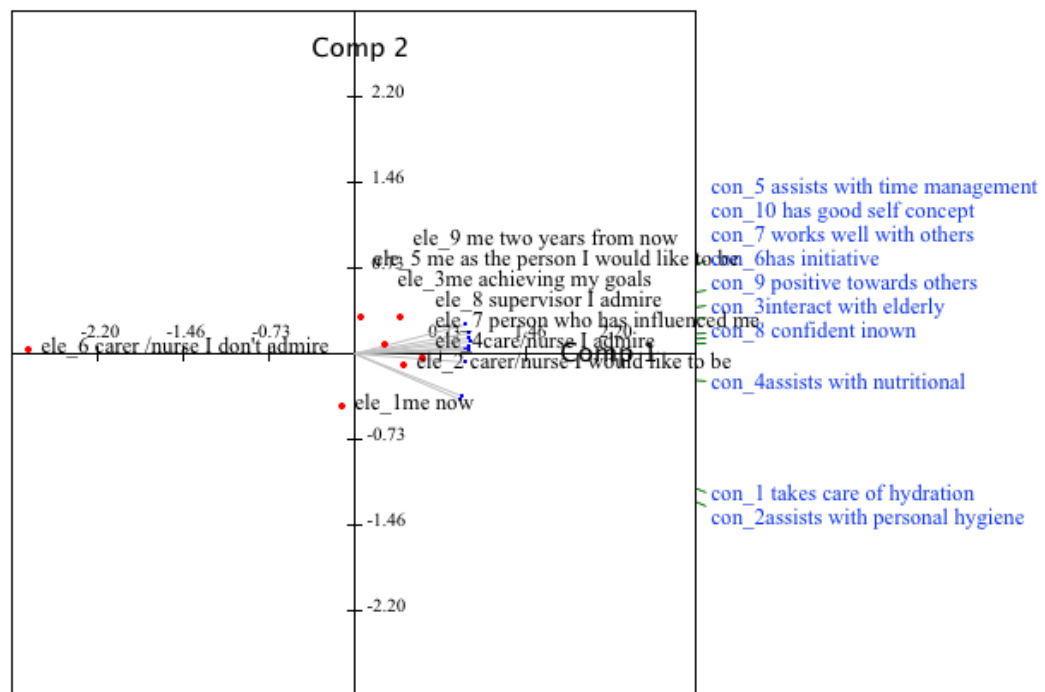
Sally commences the letter by stating that she is about to finish her studies, a statement very similar to a number of other students in the study. In her letter, Sally points out that it is very different putting into practice what she has learned at school. She writes that she is learning about time management but is finding it “tricky”. A concern also expressed by seven of the 10 students at that same nursing home. It was believed that the students’ concern with time management was due to the pressure placed on them by one of their clinical teachers, who placed great importance on the development of time-management skills.

In the letter, Sally implies her dilemma in meeting resident’s needs and worrying about the time constraints. “*Betty takes ½ hour on some days to drink her cup of tea, usually on the days I have to shower her.*” Reading through Sally’s statement I could feel her frustration and related it to my student-nurse days, when I wanted to my job well, but the more I tried to manage my tasks, the more chaotic my time management became. Despite the difficulties, Sally appears to be enthusiastic about the work as she writes, “*After a week, I am now positive I picked the right career*” and at the end of the letter Sally writes, “*overall I am enjoying this work.*”

Sally's reflection of the graphic output for repertory grid

As on the previous occasion, Sally scored the five elicited and supplied constructs against the elements. The repertory grid was then submitted to Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice, 2008) for principal components analysis, which produced the following output:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid II



Sally's reflections on the graphic output

Position of constructs

We first examined the length of the construct axes and noted that in comparison to the graph for the first occasion, the axes on this occasion were close together, with the exception of constructs (1) *takes care of hydration/lets patients become dehydrated* and (2) *assists patient with personal needs/lets patients be dirty*. The axes of the other eight constructs (5) *assist with time management/chaotic*, (10) *has good self concept/has poor self-concept*, (7) *works well with others/does not cooperate*, (6) *has initiative/lacks initiative* (9) *positive towards others/ critical of others*, having similar importance.

In addition to being close to each other, the axes of constructs (1) and (2) are also slightly longer than the others. When I asked Sally how important these two constructs were to her, she replied that they were important as they represented the tasks for which she was responsible: "*making sure that residents drank enough fluids, were clean and comfortable.*" Her response and position of constructs (1) and (2) confirm that Sally's preoccupations are caring about residents' wellbeing, as well as about their basic needs.

Position of elements

Next, we observed the position of the elements. On this occasion, element (1) *me now* was situated at the bottom and slightly off-centre of the left lower quadrant. As on the previous occasion, this element was distant from the others. On this occasion, the nearest to it is element (2) *the carer/nurse I would like to be*. This latter element (2) is also close to the cluster of elements (4) *care/nurse I admire*, (7) *person who influenced me the most* and (8) *supervisor I admire*. When we discussed the position of the cluster of these elements, Sally explained that she was working with a Unit Manager, who was very supportive and with nurses who were kind and efficient. She admired them for their ability to care for the residents with compassion and efficiency. “*They are very nice and they care for the patients and they are also so quick in doing what they are doing*”, she explained. I pointed out that this cluster is close to constructs representing positive attitudes, such as (7) *working well with others*, (10) *has good self-concept*, (6) *has initiative*, (5) *assists with time management* and (6) *is confident in own abilities*.

Element (3) *me achieving my goals*, (5) *me as the person I would like to be* and element (9) *me two years from now* were clustered furthest away from element (1) *me now*. Yet these three elements are close to the cluster of elements (4) *a carer/nurse I admire* (7) *a person who has influenced me the most* and (8) *a supervisor I admire*. When we discussed the characters represented by the cluster of elements (4), (7) and (8), Sally explained that they were very special and that she wished to be like them. In examining the plot, Sally stated that she felt that she was a long way from achieving her goals and being the person that she wanted to be.

We discussed what she wanted to do at the end of the program. She hesitated, but after a few seconds she replied that she would like to work at that nursing home. When asked why, she replied that everyone there had been very nice and that she liked the residents.

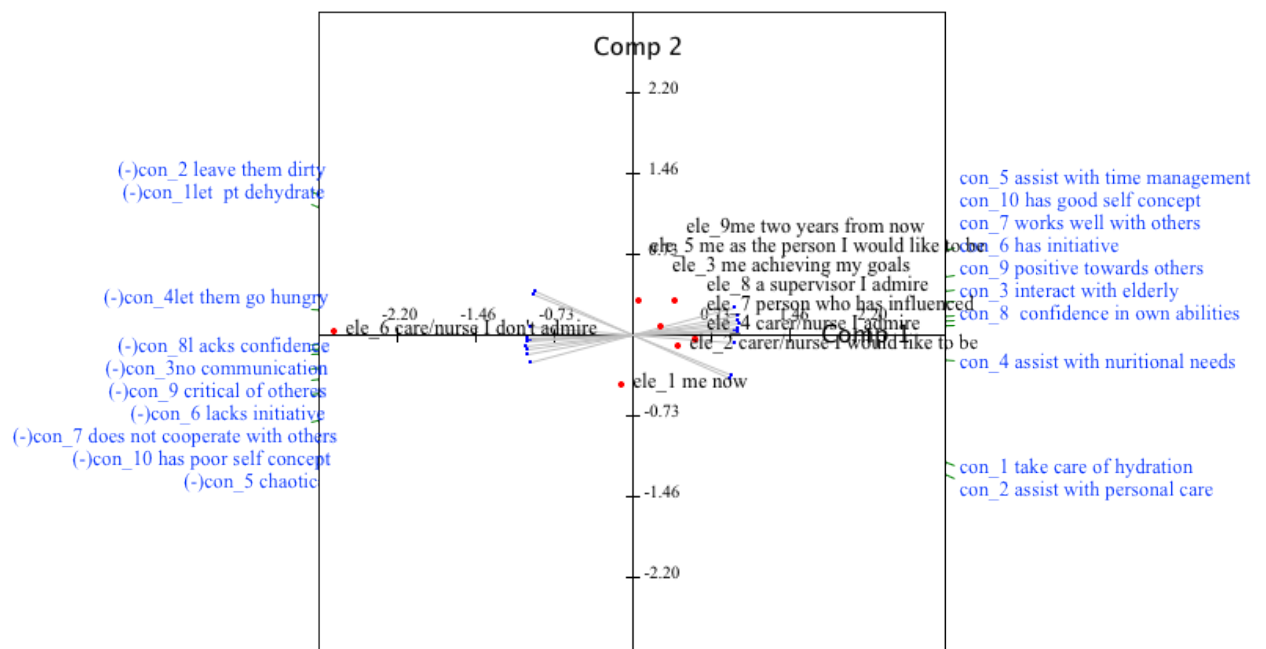
My reflection on implicit poles

The interview with Sally occurred at the nursing home and I felt that throughout the conversation, Sally was preoccupied with going back to the residents. It was not until later that day, that I was able to examine the implicit poles of Sally’s graphic output.

In examining the graph, element (1) *me now* was closest to the implicit axes of construct (5) *assists with time management/chaotic*, which seems to confirm the concerns that Sally was experiencing with her time management. I discussed Sally’s time-management skills with the clinical teacher. The feedback was that most of the students had poor time-management skills, but Sally’s skills were particularly poor. At the beginning of the program, students did a small exercise that gave them an indication of their particular learning style. The majority of students, including Sally, showed a preference for the reflective style of learning. According to Honey and Mumford (1982) learners with a preference for the reflective style

require time to learn new tasks. At first, these learners may appear to be slow in accomplishing a new task, but once they feel confident, they quicken their performance. With the clinical teacher, I discussed the importance of enabling students with such learning preferences to learn the tasks at their own pace. From my observations of students on workplace experiences I have found that students who have a reflective learning style usually are considered to be “slow”, “uninterested” and even “lazy” by their buddies and even by their teachers. In fact these students are often conscientious, willing to learn and wanting to perform the task correctly. In conversation with Sally I felt that this applied to her.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid II with implicit poles



7.4.3 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION III

The third data collection took place three months after the completion of the program. Sally came to the RTO with two other participants: Margaret and Mary. The three wrote their self-characterizations, elicited the supplied constructs, scored their grids and examined their graphic output in one sitting. Sally was now familiar with the procedure and could move from one task to the other with efficiency.

Self-characterization III

In this Self-characterization Sally wrote:

“Pretend that your close friend Harry/ Mary Brown is writing to you, telling you that he/she has just finished a program in aged care work. What would he /she write?”

Dear Mary,

Just writing to let you know I have finished my program, very pleased. I am now looking for work. I have applied for a position in... but because I don't have a car licence, it will be hard. There was a lot to learn in the process of ageing, makes me wonder about when I'm old. The nursing homes are marvelous, everybody works together. I find it is demanding work. Will close now.

Sally

From the self-characterization, Sally elicited the following constructs:

<i>Elicited pole</i>	<i>Implicit pole</i>
1. <i>Very pleased (with self)</i>	<i>feeling bad</i>
2. <i>Difficult finding work</i>	<i>easy finding job</i>
3. <i>Had to learn a lot</i>	<i>nothing to learn</i>
4. <i>Good team work</i>	<i>sloppy team work</i>
5. <i>Fulfilling</i>	<i>demanding</i>

The five elicited constructs were added to the grid for Occasion III and as with the previous occasions, Sally scored the nine elements from 8-1 against the 10 supplied constructs. The scores were submitted to the principal components analysis, Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice, 2008).

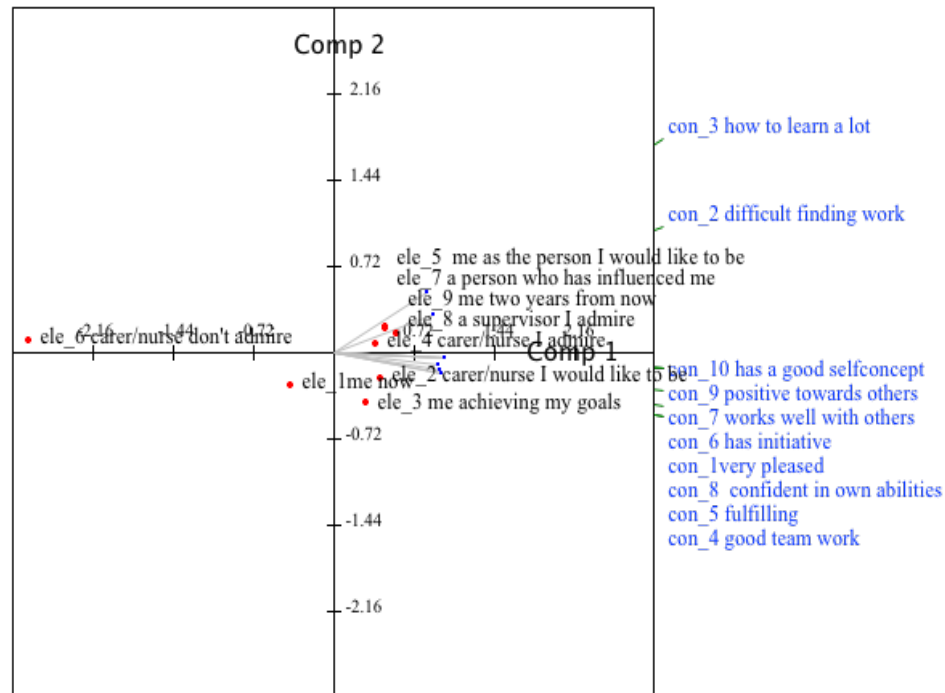
My reflection on Sally's Self-characterization

In this letter, Sally is writing to Mary. It appears that this was once again a genuine oversight. The letter commences by saying how pleased she is to have completed the program, and that now she is looking for work. The statement came as a surprise, because up to now, I had been certain that Sally was working. Prior to completing the program she had been excited about going back to the workforce and was talking about applying for a position in the hostel where she had done her second workplace experience, as this facility was not too far from home. I asked her how come she had not applied for a job. Sally explained that she had been very busy over Christmas. In January, when her daughter had been diagnosed with cancer, she went interstate for a couple of months to stay with her. When I inquired about her daughter, Sally explained that her daughter was doing much better and chose not to elaborate.

In Self-characterization III, Sally points out the difficulties she may have in finding a job, as she does not have a driver's licence. Towards the end of the letter she comments on how marvellous the nursing homes are and on how everyone works as a team. However, she finishes her letter by saying "*I find it is demanding work.*"

I am not sure how much of Sally's self-characterization has been influenced by the conversation she had with Margaret and Mary. Margaret, for example, was still looking for work. She wanted a weekend job, as she was busy during the week looking after her two young children and Mary had decided not to work as she wanted to stay at home to look after her elderly husband.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid III



Sally's reflections on the graphic output for Repertory grid III

Position of constructs

Firstly, we examined the length of construct (3) *had to learn /nothing to learn*. This construct had the longest axes, followed by construct (2) *difficult finding a job/easy finding a job*. Compared to the length of the other constructs, construct (3) was significantly longer. Sally was afraid of not having the skills to work as an aged care worker and as she explained, even if she did have a job she would not be able to care for the residents. She did sound anxious and stated that she was worried about entering the workforce. I took this opportunity to assuage her fears: as such concerns are true for all individuals when starting a new job. We discussed how, in nursing homes or hostels, new staff never work alone, they are buddied with a more experienced staff member, whose job it is to guide and support them. Sally appeared more at ease on hearing this and was nodding her head as if in agreement. When we examined the construct (2) *difficult finding a job /easy finding a job*, Sally stated that this construct was also important, as it was difficult for her to find a job, because she did not have a driver's licence.

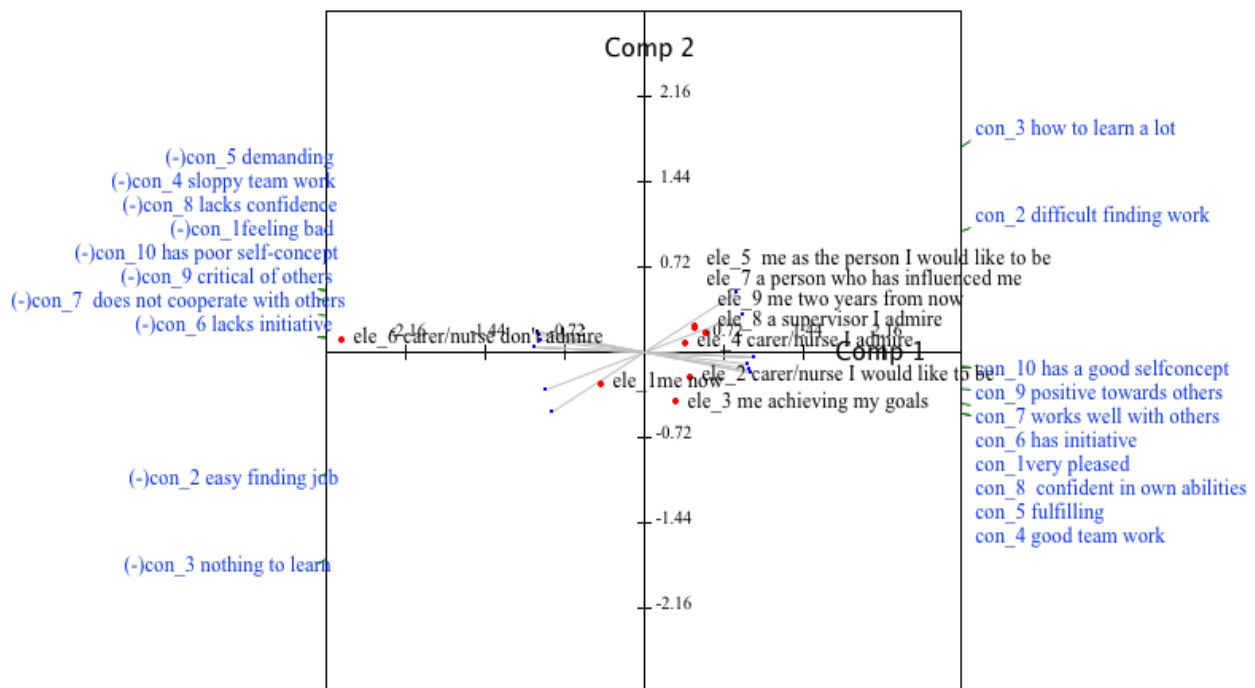
Position of elements

On this occasion, element (1) *me now*, was not too distant from element (3) *me achieving my goals* which in turn was close to element (2) *carer/nurse I would like to be*. I commented on the proximity of element (1) *me now* (2) *carer/nurse I would like to be* and element (3) *me achieving my goals*. We compared this output with those of Occasions I and II, to see how element (1) *me now* had moved. In comparing the three plots, Sally seemed surprised and pleased. She talked about going back to work. She noticed that also in this output element (5) *me as the person I would like to be* was close to element (7) *a person who has influenced me the most*, which in turn was clustered with elements (8) *a supervisor I admire* and element (9) *me two years from now*. In viewing this cluster, Sally spoke of the supervisor in the hostel where she was about to apply for a position, stating how helpful this person had been during her workplace experience.

Reflection of implicit poles

When I examined the output with the implicit poles, the position of element (1) *me now*, is close to the axis of implicit pole of construct (2) *easy finding a job/difficult finding a job* representing the significance that this implicit pole has to Sally. By not having a licence, Sally was limited in her opportunities to find a position in aged care.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid III with implicit poles



7.4.4 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION IV

Six months after the program, the participants were invited to the RTO. Of the 19 participants that took part in the study, 12 attended. Sally was one of the students who did not attend. She had been unwell, and came three days later.

Sally's response to Self- characterization IV

“Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/Mary Brown. Six months ago he/she completed a program in aged care work. Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you telling you how he/she is doing. What would he/she write?”

Dear Mary

Writing to let you know how I am going. 6:00 o'clock starts. I am up with the birds. Getting Mrs Joan into the shower is a chore, she fights all the way, and Mr Tom has dementia and takes a long time to feed. Making sure the client's skin is moisturised is important and keeping a record of bowel movements is important. I have to record every day. I am learning teamwork as there are 5 pca's working in this nursing home. I find mealtimes the busiest. Some have eating disorders so you can't hurry them, they have to chew slowly and swallow several times. It can take up to an hour to feed one client. I spend time making beds and hanging clothes. In the afternoon we have activities, this is good for the clients with dementia, it stimulates their senses, Mr Tom comes alive with music stimulation. So I am quite happy with my role.

John

From the Self –characterization, Sally elicited the following constructs.

<i>Elicited pole</i>	<i>Implicit pole</i>
<i>1. Able to observe hygiene results</i>	<i>grungy</i>
<i>2. Provides good care</i>	<i>neglects</i>
<i>3. Able to maintain records</i>	<i>lazy</i>
<i>4. Able to work as a team</i>	<i>no team spirit</i>
<i>5 Has good time management skills</i>	<i>dishevelled</i>

My reflections on Sally's Self-characterization IV

In this self-characterization, Sally addresses the letter, not to herself, but to Mary and signs off as John. Not mentioning her own name, may be an oversight by Sally. However, as she has done this

exercise three times before, it appears that Sally is trying to detach herself from this self-characterization. In comparison to previous self-characterizations, this self-characterization is longer and describes in detail her activities as an aged care worker/personal carer. Sally commences the letter by stating the time that she starts work. She then moves on to describing the care of Mrs Joan and Mr Tom and points out the importance of keeping accurate records and learning teamwork.

“Getting Mrs Joan into the showering is a chore, she fights all the way, and Mr Tom has dementia and takes a long time to feed”.

By emphasising words such as “*chore*” and “*fights*” Sally shows that she is frustrated with the requirements of her role. In the self-characterization, Sally also shows that she pays attention to detail “*making sure the client’s skin is moisturised... keeping a record of bowel movements.*” As in the previous self-characterization, Sally writes on the amount of time needed to assist residents with meals. Towards the end of the letter, Sally describes the other tasks—making beds and hanging out clothes. She finishes the letter by saying “*So I am quite happy with my role.*”

In reading the self-characterization with Sally, I was impressed by the description of her work. I asked if she was working in the hostel that she had mentioned three months ago. Sally replied that she had not applied and had not been working since completing the program. I commented that in reading her self-characterization, I felt that she was indeed working as the content sounded so real.

Sally explained that she wanted to work, but that her partner had made it difficult, as he wanted her to help in his fish and chip shop. She explained that two or three times a week, she travelled to the other side of the city to help in the shop. Her partner would get angry if she did not help out. She sounded sad and it seemed that she was caught between choosing what she really wanted to do and pleasing her partner, and she had chosen to please him. Sally had made the decision which she felt was the best for her, and I had to respect it. I pointed out to Sally that in the self-characterization, she did a very good job in presenting a very detailed picture of working in an aged care setting. She laughed. On reflection however, I felt that the self-characterization was representing her dreams. The vividness of the content also made me think that her heart was still in it. This is why it is significant that she has signed her letter in a different name.

As on the previous occasions, the elicited constructs were added to the repertory grid and scored from 8-1 against the elements. The scores of the repertory grid were submitted to Idiogrid Version 2.4, (Grice, 2008) for principal components analysis that produced the following graph:

Sally's reflection of graphic output for Repertory grid IV

Position of constructs

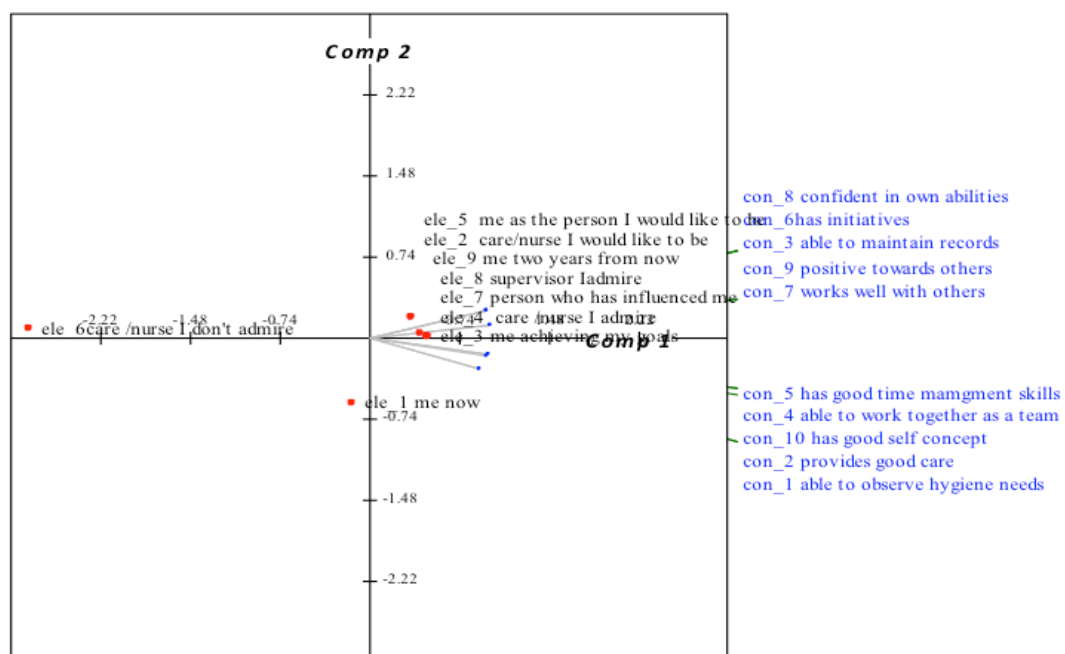
In comparison to the other graphs, the axes of this graph were almost all of the same length and in a tighter fan shape, indicating that they all had equal importance to Sally.

Position of elements

On this occasion, element (1) *me now*, was on the left lower quadrant, distant from the other elements and almost in the same position as on Occasion II. Element (5) *the person I would like to be* is close to element (2) *care/nurse I would like to be* and both are the furthest from element (1) *me now*. When I pointed this out to Sally, she was not surprised and laughingly said, "It sounds true". With the exception of element (6) *person I don't admire*, all the elements were positioned in the same graphic space on the axes of constructs (6) *has initiative/lacks initiative* and (7) *works well with others/does not co-operate with others*.

In this graphic output, Sally named her mother for element (7) *the person who has influenced me the most*. Sally explained that her mother had passed away some years ago, and that she had always been someone she could talk to. For element (8) *the supervisor she admired* Sally named the manager at the hostel where Sally had done the second placement and where she had intended to apply for a position. She explained that this supervisor had been very helpful during her placement.

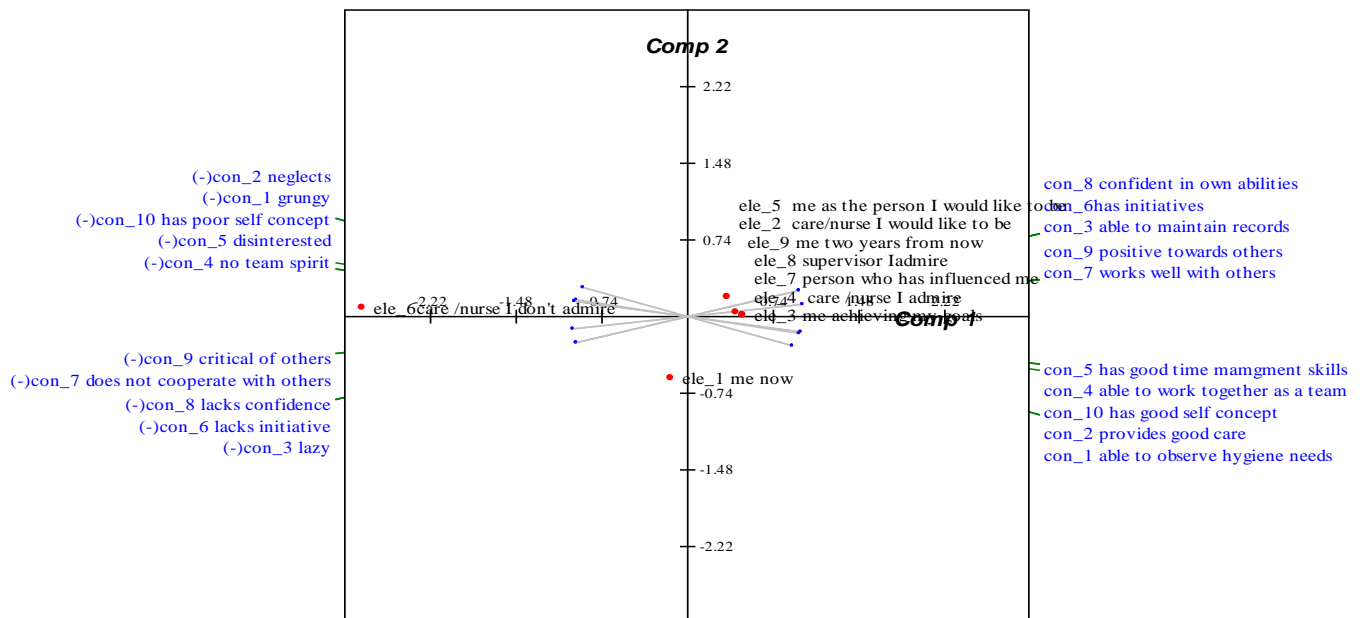
Graphic output for Repertory Grid IV



My reflection on implicit poles

There was little to add when examining the graph with the implicit poles, except that in this graph, the implicit pole of construct (8) *confident in own abilities/ lacks confidence* is the closest to element (1) *me now*, while the explicit pole (1) *able to observe hygiene needs/ grungy* is on the opposite side of the grid, the closet to element (1) *me now*. The themes of confidence/lacking confidence and meeting the needs of residents have been present in all of Sally's self-characterizations. At the end of the study these themes are still important to her.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid IV with implicit poles



7.4.5 SUMMARY OF SALLY'S STORY

Throughout the study, Sally presented as quiet and often non-assertive. But she also showed great tenacity and a strong mindset. In the group, she was selective with whom she associated. In class and in the workplace she tried her best. Her work was always neat and well presented and during workplace experiences Sally worked very hard, at times under difficult circumstances, and achieved all the competencies of an aged care worker. During the program, she was excited about returning to work. She was patient towards residents and meticulous in the delivery of care, but lacked confidence in her skills.

On all four occasions, element (1) *me now*, was plotted away from the other elements and leaning towards the axes of the implicit poles. Yet, in her personal character, Sally seemed a woman with great strength and determination. I believe that she had faced many difficulties in her life and had been able to work through them all. She wrote the last self-characterization with details and feelings as if she did work in aged care. She did what was expected, but she had made her final choice with grit and dignity.

7.5 MARTIN'S STORY

I met Martin three months prior to the program when he came for an early interview. At that time, he had just married and was going overseas for his honeymoon. He was keen to do the course and did not want to miss out on a place. Therefore, he asked if an interview could be organized prior to his trip.

At that time, Martin was working at a bank. He had been with the same bank for seven years and felt that he needed a career change. His wife was a social worker, and he explained with great excitement, how fulfilling she found the experience of working with people. He hoped to find the same fulfilment by becoming an aged care worker.

At the interview Martin presented well, he was articulate, a clear thinker and polite. He was very open about wanting a career change. He explained that having a job was very important for him and before resigning from his present job he wanted to be sure that he had a place in the program. He stated that he was prepared to work hard, both in the program and in the field. He was concerned that, despite his desire, he may not have the skills to be an aged care worker, but he was prepared to give it a go.

I felt that Martin did have the ability to do well, but I was concerned that the program may not be challenging enough for me. As he met all the requirements, he was accepted. However, I soon found out that I was wrong in my assumption, as his story will indicate.

7.5.1 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION I

Self-Characterization I

“Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/Mary Brown. Harry/Mary is writing to you telling you that he/she is studying to become an Aged Care Worker. What would he/she write in the letter?”

Dear Martin

Thought I should take some time to tell you about my ambitions of becoming an aged care worker.

For the last six weeks now I have been attending a course at the... in the City. The name of the course is Certificate II in Community Services (Aged Care Course).

I am extremely happy that I am doing this course, especially at the...

I have found that the transition back to full time study has not been as hard as originally expected. I put this down to the environment and the teachers. Not to mention my interest in the subject provided.

I have found both the subjects and teaching techniques very stimulating. It has instilled in me the drive and ambition to continue my studies and do more for our aged citizens.

The course has given me an understanding of the needs and feelings of the aged. It covers topics like;

First Aid

Occupation health and safety

Communication

Providing services of the aged

Anatomy and physiology and many more.

I am very excited about working with the aged and I am hoping that what I will learn here, together with my own qualities, will help me deliver a service and make the lives of people I work with a lot happier.

I already feel I am a better person, and it has only been five weeks

Yours sincerely Harry

My reflections on Martin's Self-characterization I

Throughout this self-characterization, Martin mentions happiness and excitement: at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the letter. From his statements, he appears to be satisfied, both with the choice of career change and with the program: the teaching and content which, as he points out, has instilled in him “*the drive and ambition to continue with his studies and to do more for the aged citizen.*”

He is very specific in his description, giving the full title to the program: “*Certificate III in Community Services (Aged Care Work)*” and providing a list of all the competencies covered so far. At the end of the letter, he states that he is excited about “*working with the aged*” and makes a general reference to his own qualities, which as he explains, together with the new learning, will make him a better person.

Two days later, when we discussed the self-characterization, I pointed out to Martin that to me, it appeared to be a fair representation of how he comes across: logical, objective and aware of his abilities. While perusing what he had written, Martin smiled, as if agreeing with me.

From Self-characterization I, Martin elicited the following constructs:

Emergent pole

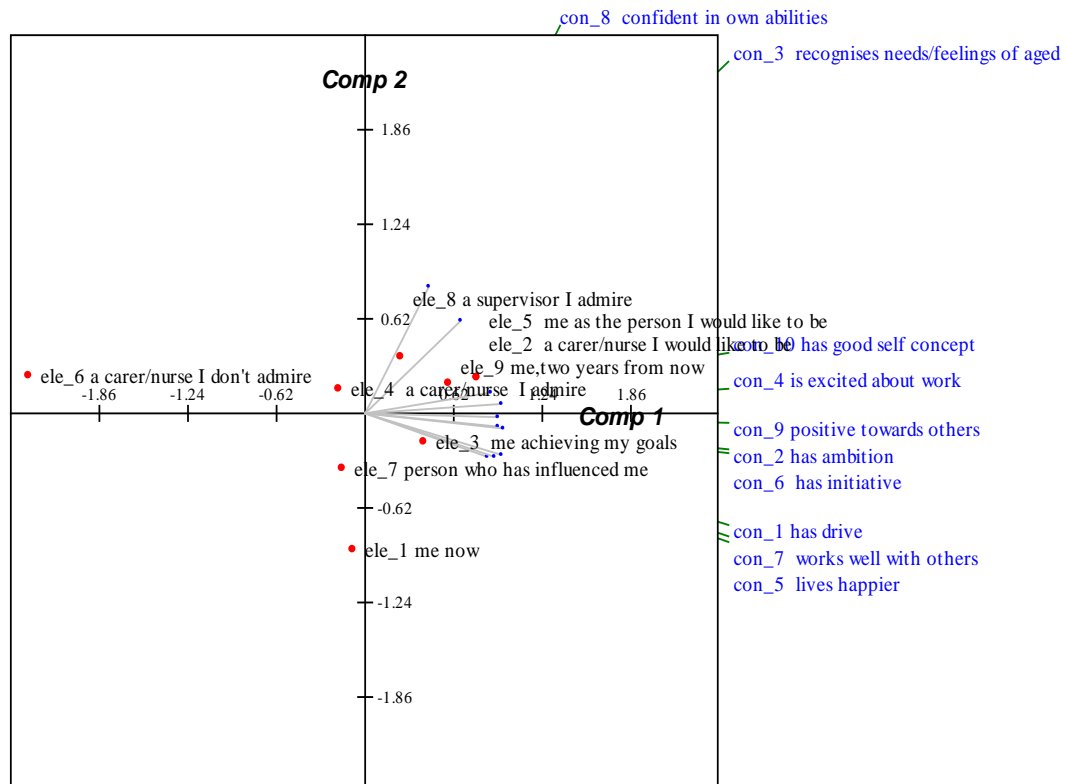
1. *Has drive*
2. *Has ambition*
3. *Recognizes needs and feelings of the aged*
4. *Is excited about work*
5. *Lives happier*

Implicit pole

1. *lacks drive*
2. *uninterested*
3. *apathy*
4. *does not like work*
5. *unhappy lives*

These constructs were added to the repertory grid, together with the five supplied constructs, which Martin scored against each of the elements. The scores of the repertory grid were then submitted to the Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice, 2008) for principal components analysis. From the analysis the following graphic output was produced:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid I



Martin's reflections on Graphic output

We examined the graphic output some two weeks later. At that time, Martin had just returned from his first workplace experience of three days at a Day Centre, an experience that he said he had greatly enjoyed.

Position of constructs

In this graphic output, construct (8) *confident in my own abilities/lacks confidence*, presents as the most prominent. There appears to be a correlation between the prominence of this construct and Martin's closing statement in the self-characterization '*together with my own qualities*'. When asked if there was a correlation, Martin was at first puzzled. At that time, he did not remember what he had written in the self-characterization, and was amused when he read the statement. He replied that there could be a correlation, but he quickly pointed out that the terms *qualities* and *abilities* could mean something different. I asked him to elaborate. He explained that according to him, "abilities are what one learns and qualities are attributes such as kind, generous and so forth, that come to people naturally."

Other prominent axes in the graphic output are from construct (3) *recognizes needs and feelings of the aged/apathy* and construct (7) *works well with others/does not co-operate with others*.

When examining the elements, the position of element (1) *me now*, is distant from any of the other constructs, the furthest being construct (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* and from the other elements, the nearest being element (7) *the person who has influenced me the most* who Martin explained was his wife.

Position of elements

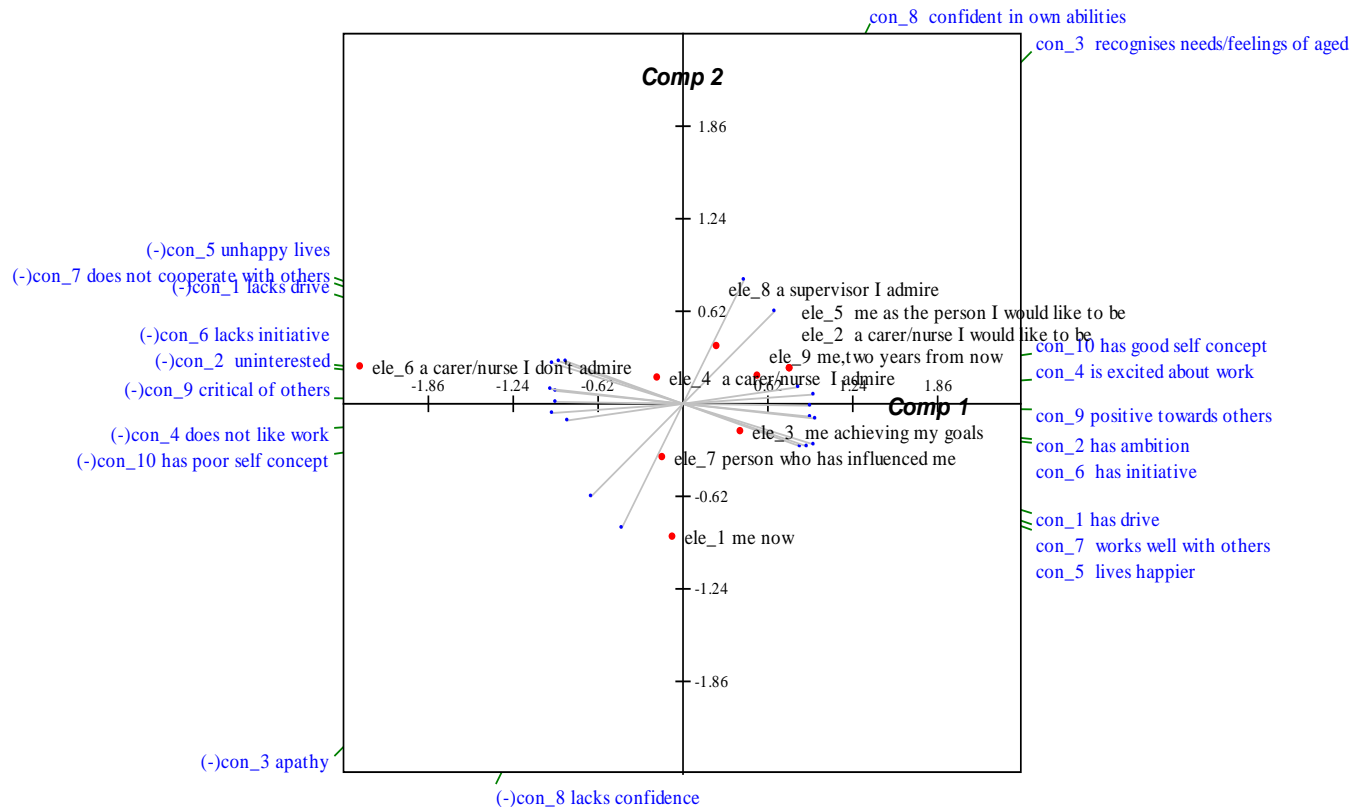
Element (3) *me achieving my personal goal* is nearest to element (1) *me now*. While elements (9) *me two years from now*, (5) *me as the person I would like to be* and (2) *the carer I would like to be*, are all clustered together on the same dimension. When I asked Martin how he interpreted the constellation of the elements, he nervously laughed and replied that, to him, it seemed that the constellation was a true representation of what he is feeling right now. He added that at present, he felt far away from achieving his goal to be the good nurse/carers that he wanted to be.

My reflections on implicit poles

When I examined Martin's graphic output together with the emergent and implicit poles, what was obvious to me was the proximity of element (1) *me now*, to the implicit axes of construct (3) *recognizes needs and feelings of the aged/apathy*. This indicates that, because Martin is not confident, he has a certain apathy. Another interesting configuration is the proximity to the implicit axes of construct (3) of

element (7) *person who has influenced me the most* (which he named as being his wife). In examining the plot, element (7) has been given a rating of 6 out of 8, the lowest rating given against this construct (7) *works well with others/does not co-operate with others*. As these are my reflections, done after the interview, I did not have the opportunity to discuss the position of element (7) to construct (7) with Martin, I can only speculate on the position of this element to the implicit pole of construct (7).

Graphic output for Repertory Grid I with implicit poles



7.5.2 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION II

Similarly to the other students, Martin wrote this self-characterization towards the end of the program, while on workplace experience at the nursing home. From the discussions I had with Martin, he appeared to be more confident in his abilities to be an aged care worker. He felt well supported by the staff and by the clinical teacher. In my brief observations with Martin, I saw that he was excellent in carrying out procedures, he was gentle and thorough with the residents, spoke to them respectfully for them. However, he was reserved with his emotions. Even when he was happy, his eyes twinkled, but his smiled was controlled.

Self-characterization II

“Pretend that you are a close friend. Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you once again telling you that he/she is about to finish the program in aged care work. What would he/she write?”

Dear Martin

I am writing to you to let you know what I've been up to for the last five weeks.

It is late November and I have almost completed my course in aged care work. The last three weeks have been the most interesting part of my course. So far I have been on placement at a high care nursing home. It certainly has been an eye opener. All the competencies of my course have come into practice, except for First Aid.

I am working with a lovely group of people at the ward at Nursing home. They have taken us under their wings and guided us through our daily tasks.

I have found it very enjoyable, except for the early hours. So far, I have managed to get here on time.

Another difficulty I find is knowing when you are not imposing on people's rights. It's hard to get people up in the mornings.

Apart from that it has been great working with the residents and staff.

Can't wait to finish and find a job.

Regards

Mary

My reflections on Martin's response to Self-characterization II

In this self-characterization, Martin continues to be positive about the program, workplace experience and of his choice of becoming an aged care worker. He finds the whole experience of working in the nursing home “*enjoyable, except for getting up early*” and “*not knowing when not to impose on people*”. For most beginning aged care workers, the ability to identify and accurately respond to residents' needs may be challenging, as residents may be unable to express their needs. As Benner (1984) points out it is, through experience that carers develop an *intuitive knowing*. Martin, at this point in his career, is still what Benner would call a novice and like most novices, he feels the frustration of not having the knowledge that comes with experience.

From his Self-characterization Martin elicited the following constructs:

Elicited Pole

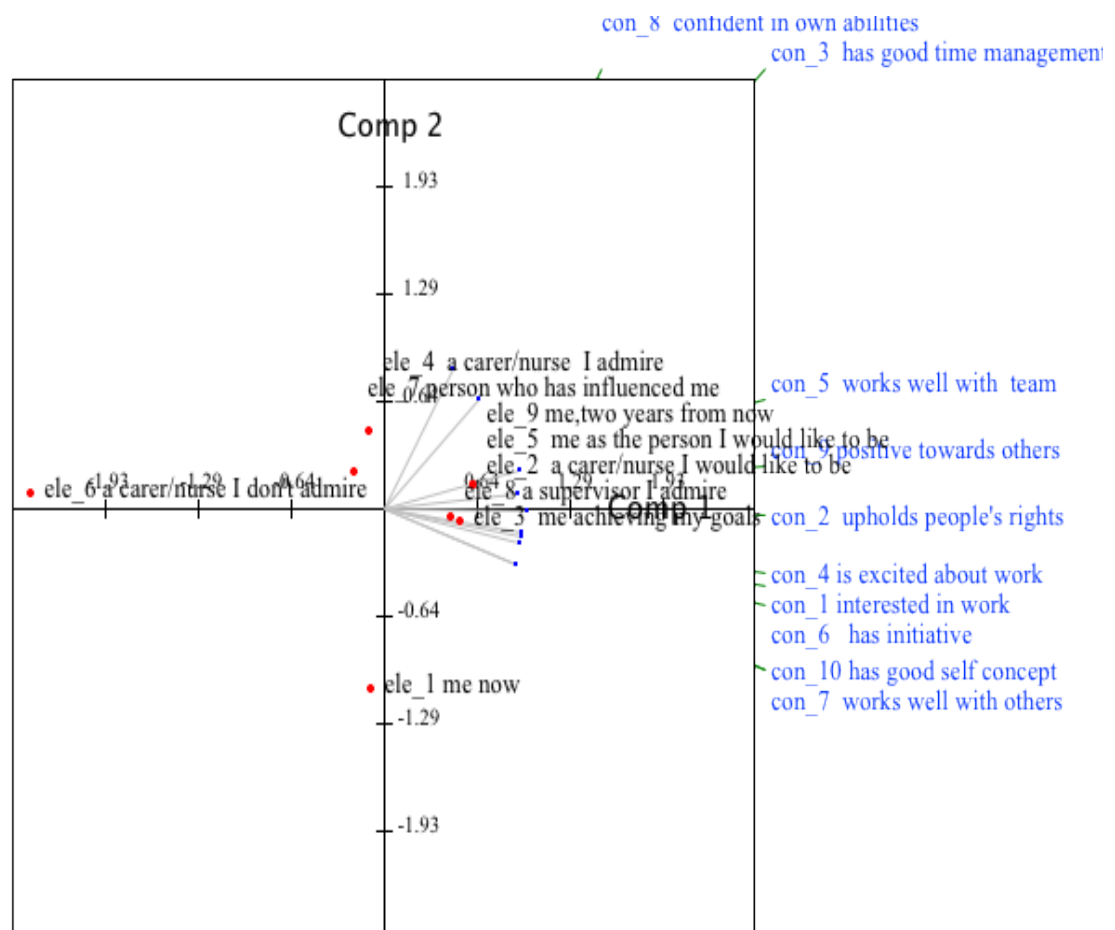
1. *Interested in work*
2. *Upheld people's rights*
3. *Has good time management skills*
4. *Work well with teams*
5. *Is competent*

Implicit pole

- not interested in work*
abuses people's rights
has poor time management skills
works alone
is incompetent

Martin's constructs were incorporated in the grid together with the five supplied constructs. Raw data were submitted to the Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice, 2008) for principal components analysis. The analysis produced the following graphic output:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid II



Martin's reflection on graphic output

Position of constructs

In the plot, construct (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* is once again prominent. Constructs (3) *has good time management skills/has poor time management skills*, (7) *works well with others/does not co-operate with others*, also appear to be significant for Martin, because of the length of the axes. During our discussion, Martin explained that it was very important for him to work well with others. He was keen to give a good impression and therefore, it was not surprising the importance that he gave to these constructs.

When Martin and I examined the graphic output, he spoke of his time-management skills at the nursing home. According to Honey and Mumford's (1982) Learning Styles, Martin's preferred style is reflective and like Sally, he also found challenging the pressure of being hurried into doing a new task. I explained to Martin that it was important for him right now to take his time, because this is how he learns best. As he gained more confidence he would automatically pick up speed without realizing it.

Position of elements

On this occasion, element (1) *me now* is still positioned close to the mid-line, but on this occasion, farther away from the other elements, the closest being element (3) *me achieving my goals* and element (8) *supervisor I admire*. Element (7) *person who has influenced me* and element (4) *carer/nurse I admire* are clustered in the left upper quadrant, away from other elements and from the emergent poles of the constructs.

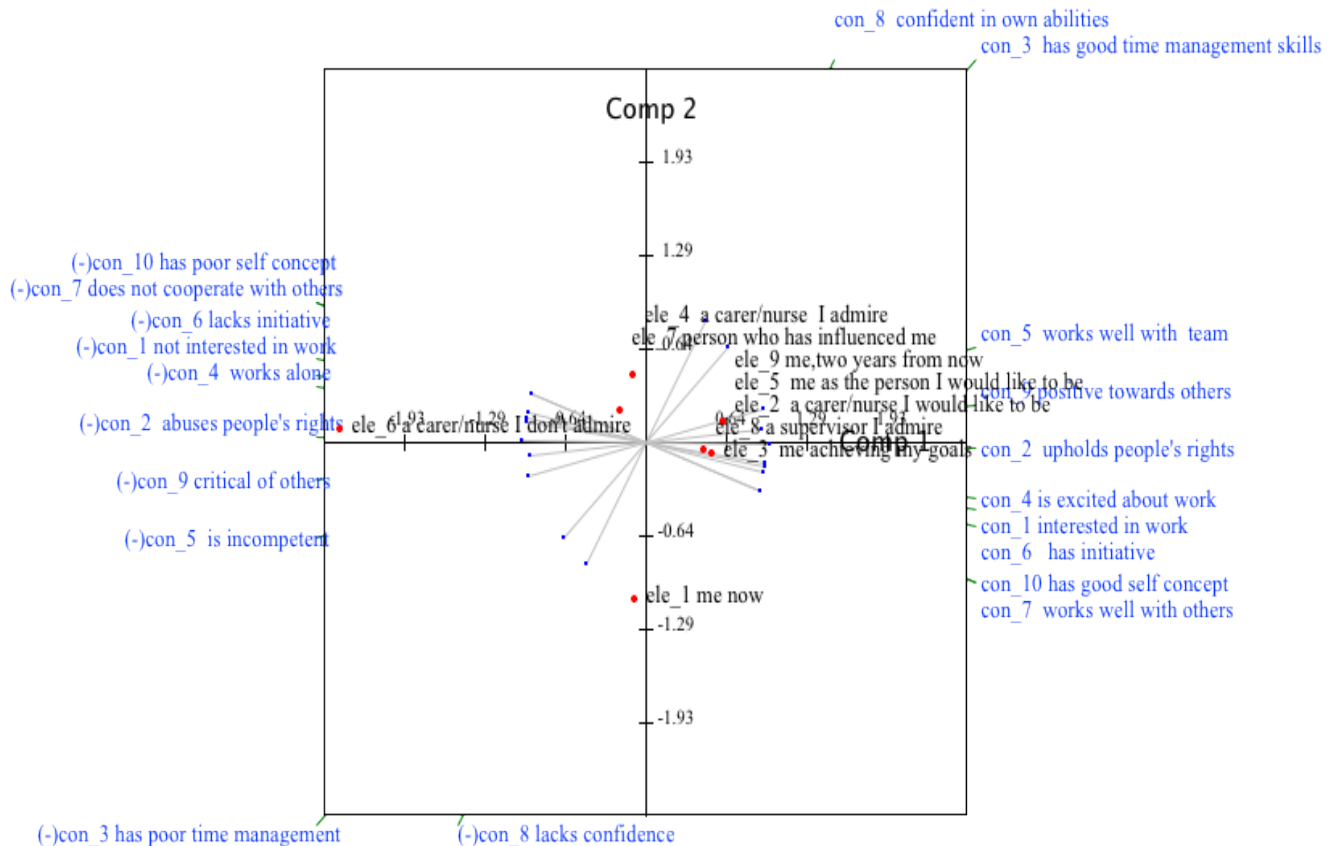
When we examined the relationship of element (1) *me now* with elements (3) *me achieving my goals*, (5) *me, as the person I would like to be* and (9) *me, two years from now*, the distance between these elements indicated that Martin still saw himself as having some work to do before attaining the knowledge and skills that he felt he was expected for him to have, and he explained this was why element (1) *me now* was so far away.

My reflection on implicit poles

When examining the graphic output with the implicit poles, element (1) *me now* is not too far from the implicit axes of construct (8) *confidence in own abilities /lacks confidence* and of construct (3) *has good time management skills/has poor time management*. This representation supports Martin's perspective of how much more is expected of him. It is therefore not surprising that the implicit axis *lacks confidence* of construct (8) is the nearest to element (1) *me now*. Time management is also greatly important to Martin and, therefore, it is not surprising that the implicit axis *has poor time management* of construct (3) is also not too far from element (1) *me now*.

Another interesting observation is the plotting of element (7) *person who has influenced me* and element (4) *carer/nurse I admire* are closest to the implicit axis of construct (10) *has poor self-concept* and of the implicit axis of construct (7) *does not cooperate with others*. From this plotting it may be implicit that Martin, lacking confidence in his abilities as an aged care worker.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid II with implicit poles



7.5.3 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION III

On this occasion, Martin came to the RTO. He had been unable to come on the day when the other participants came, so a time was set-aside for him to attend on his own. It had been just over three months since I had last seen him. He was working at the nursing home where he had done his workplace experience and sounded happy about his work situation. He said that he still had some difficulties keeping up with the more experienced staff, and mentioned some by name. I knew those carers; they had been working in the field for some 15 years and were experts in their work. Martin had worked with them during the workplace experience; they liked him and thought he was hard working, well mannered and capable. I assumed that he would have been well supported.

As we were talking about working at the nursing home, Martin announced that this wife was going to have a baby. He was smiling, his face lighting up as he told me how excited he and his wife were. However, he added that he was also very anxious about keeping his new job, especially with the new baby coming.

Self-Characterization III

Martin's response to Self-characterization III

"Pretend that your close friend Harry/ Mary Brown is writing to you, telling you that he/she has just finished a program in aged care work. What would he /she write?"

Dear Martin

It has been three months since we last talked, how have you been Martin? I have finished my course in aged care at the ...and have been working now for 3 months. It was a bit rocky at the start, trying to find my footing. But after 3 months, it was no longer scary. I can quite confidently say that I am comfortable and confident with doing the work required of me. I have found that what I have learnt at the... not only gave me the ability to work in the field, it also gave me insight to recognize the problem in the industry.

It has been great working with the elderly, especially when I can contribute to their cognitive and emotional needs. I am still assessing if this is the work for me, in the meantime. I am continuing to learn.

Good luck with your dreams

Your friend

Mary

My reflections on Martin's response to Self-characterization III

In reading Martin's self-characterization, he seemed to be satisfied with his work. However, the phrases '*It was a rocky start, trying to find my footing*' implies that he did have difficulties in settling down, which is a common experience for new carers.

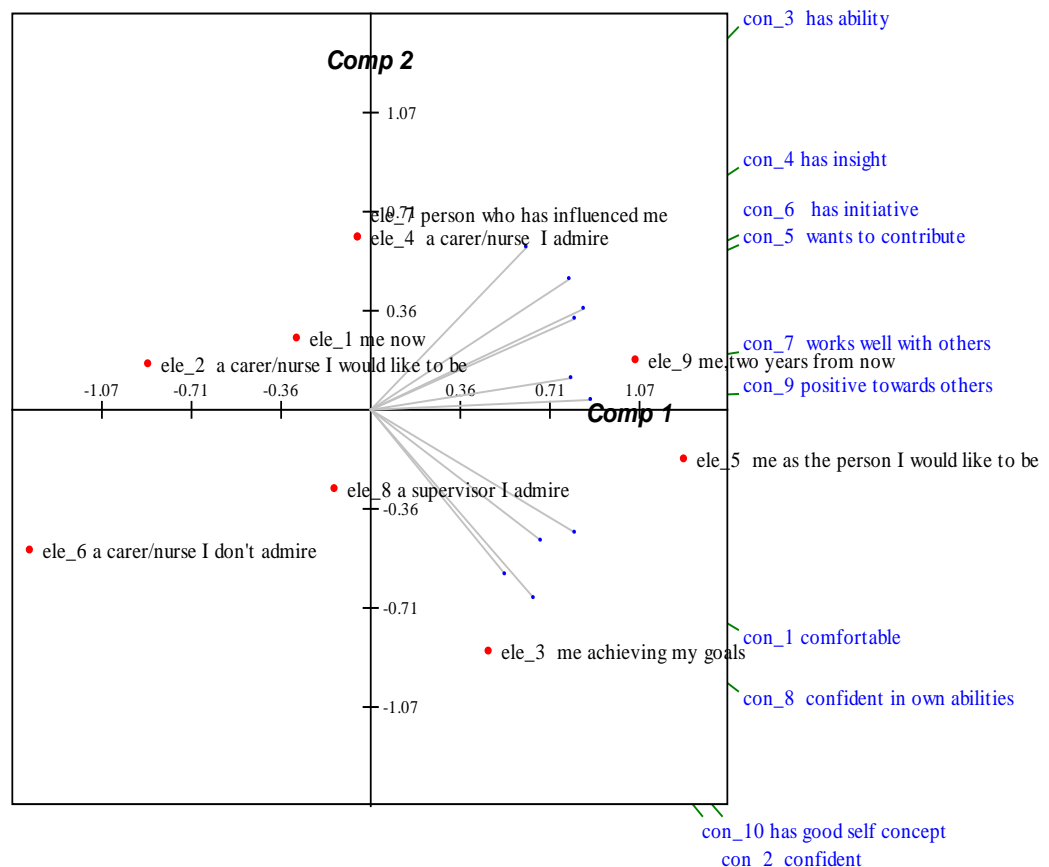
Martin makes an interesting remark towards the end of his letter: "*I am still assessing if this is the work for me*" which is the first indication that he is reconsidering his career choice in spite of his initial enthusiasm.

The constructs elicited from this self-characterization are:

<i>Elicited pole</i>	<i>Implicit pole</i>
1. <i>Comfortable</i>	<i>uncomfortable</i>
2. <i>Confident</i>	<i>scared</i>
3. <i>Has ability</i>	<i>feeling inadequate</i>
4. <i>Has insight</i>	<i>numb</i>
5. <i>Wants to contribute</i>	<i>does only what required</i>

As on the other occasions, these five constructs were added to the supplied construct and then scored against each of the elements. The raw data was then submitted to Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice, 2008) for principal components analysis that produced the following output:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid III



Martin's reflections on the Graphic output

Due to work commitments, it was difficult for Martin to come back to the RTO to score and discuss the repertory grid. I asked if he was able to score and discuss the grid that morning. He agreed and we completed all the data collection at the one sitting.

Position of constructs

On this, as on the previous occasions, the axes in the graphic plot are long and fanned out, their length indicating these constructs have greatly significance for Martin. Construct (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept* presents as having the longest axes. When I pointed this out, Martin replied that now, he felt more confident than ever before. He explained that, working at the same nursing home and, in particular, in the same Unit with the same people, had increased his confidence.

Position of elements

In this graphic output, element (7) *the person who has influenced me in my work* and element (4) *a carer/nurse I admire* were clustered together, while the other elements were spread far apart. Important in the grid is the position of element (1) *me now*, which on this occasion, is plotted on the left side of the grid and closer to element (2) *carer/ nurse I would like to be*. Element (8) *me achieving my goals* is furthest away from element (1) *me now*. When comparing this graph to that of the two previous occasions, element (1) has shifted up the upper left quadrant and is plotted between element (2) *carer/nurse I would like to be* and element (4) *carer/nurse I admire*, which in turn, is closer to element (7) *person who has influenced me*.

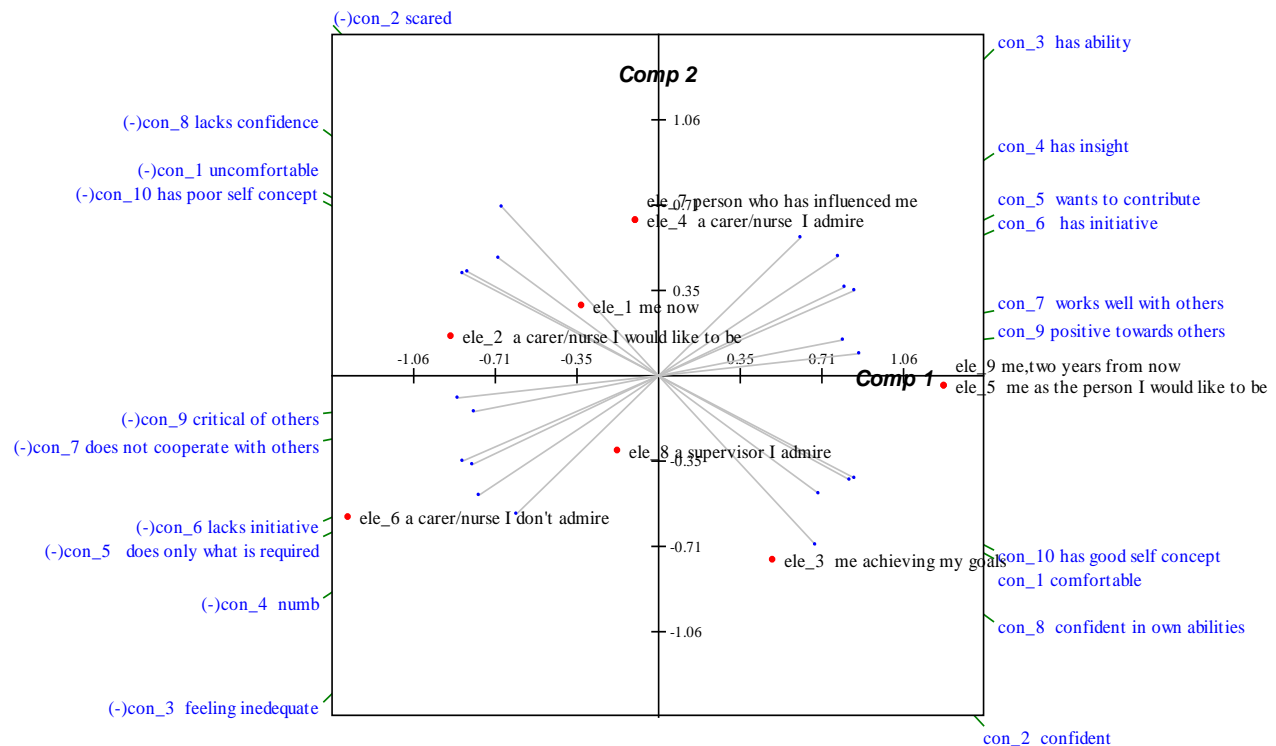
When I asked Martin how he felt about the constellation. He stated that he wanted to do well at the nursing home, as he wanted to keep the job, particularly now with the new baby on the way. He said that he would like to do nursing, but at the moment this was not his priority.

My reflection on implicit poles

When I examined Martin's graphic output with both the implicit and the emergent poles, element (1) *me now* was situated between the implicit axes of constructs (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* and (2) *confident/scared*. Both of these constructs reflected Martin's attitude to his work situation. On examining the self-characterization for this occasion, the statement in his letter: "...can quite confidently say that I am comfortable and confident with doing the work required of me" is incongruent with what is represented in the graphic output. On the other hand, element (3) *me achieving*

my goals, is the closest to the emergent axes of constructs (2) *confident/scared* and (8) *confident in own abilities/ lack confidence*.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid III with implicit poles



7.5.4 DATA COLLECTION FOR OCCASION IV

Three months after the third self-characterization, I met Martin at a coffee shop. For this meeting, the time was limited, as it was late morning and Martin was working afternoon shift. He explained that sometimes he works double shifts. He had just become a father to a baby girl, and in between work, he helped with the baby. It appeared that both he and his wife were very happy. He also appeared to be more confident and positive about his work. He had been given more responsibility and had become an active member on a number of committees. As on the previous occasion, all the data for this occasion were collected at that same meeting.

Self-characterization IV

“Pretend that you are a close friend of Harry/ Mary Brown. Six months ago he/she complete a program in aged care work. Harry/Mary Brown is writing to you telling you how he/she is doing. What would he/she write?”

Dear Martin

How have you been? It has been three months since we last wrote to each other.

As you know after completing the course in Aged Care I was employed almost immediately at... My time there so far, I must say has been an important and fundamental part of my professional development. I have found that the last six months at... has given me the tools and confidence to take the next step in my career path, not to mention the ability to enjoy my work.

In my short time there I have concluded that I have made the right decision in doing aged care.

The staff and management are generally very friendly and I feel that I am now one of the family.

I am in three committees, Bullying and Harassment, Occupational Health and Safety and Non Lifting [committee].

I look forward to moving forward

Love

Mary

My reflections on Martin's Self-characterization IV

In comparison to the previous self-characterizations, this is much shorter, perhaps because Martin was in a hurry and appeared to be uncomfortable about doing this work at the coffee shop. In this self-characterization, Martin again expressed his satisfaction with the program and with his choice of career. He states how the nursing home gave him “*the tools and confidence*” and he outlined his involvement on the different committees, giving a sense that this involvement was very important to him.

From this self- characterization the following constructs were elicited.

Elicited pole

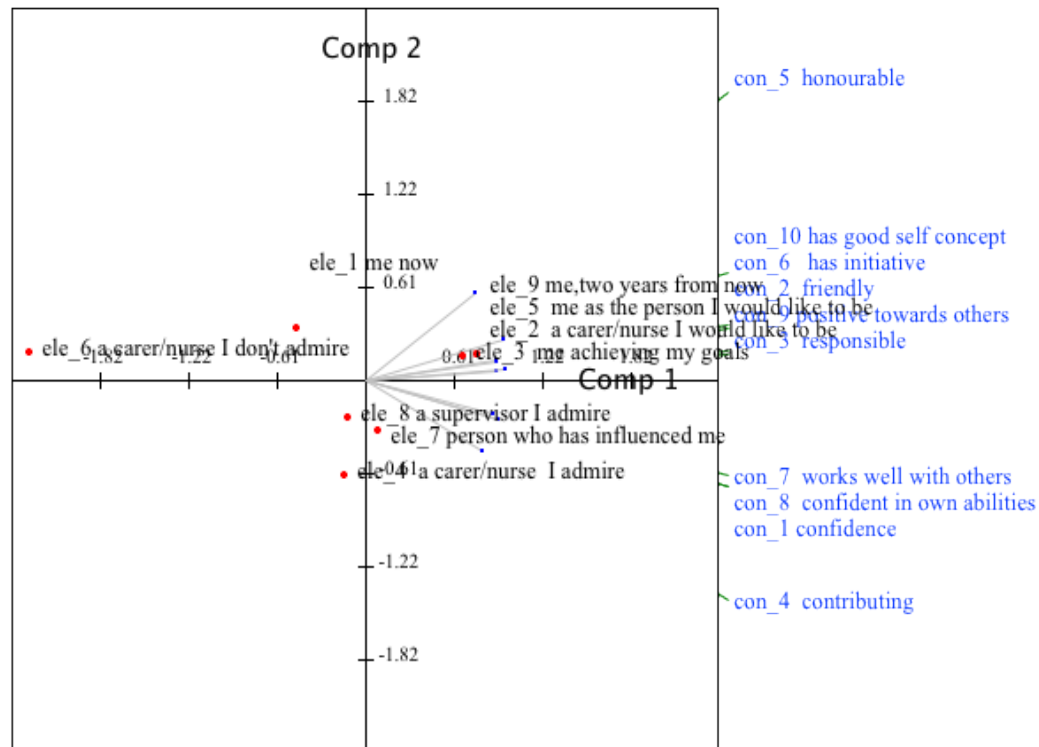
- 1. Confidence*
- 2. Friendly*
- 3. Responsible*
- 4. Contributing*
- 5. Honourable*

Implicit pole

- scared*
- intimidating*
- irresponsible*
- lazy*
- dishonourable*

As with the other occasions, the elicited constructs and elements were scored and the grid data submitted to principal components analyses, which produced the following graphic output:

Graphic output for Repertory Grid IV



Position of constructs

In this graphics output, construct axes are less dominant with construct (5) *honourable/dishonourable*, which is the longest, indicating that work ethics are of great significance to Martin.

Position of elements

In this plot, element (1) *me now* has one again moved. On this occasion, it is situated over the midline of the left upper quadrant. It is still situated well away from other elements. The nearest, obliquely situated just below the midline is element (8) *supervisor I admire*. Elements implying the future: element (9) *me two years from now*, element (5) *me as the person I would like to be* and element (2) *the carer/nurse I would like to be*, are clustered over the midline in the right triangle and in close proximity to constructs (10) *has good self-concept/has poor self-concept* and constructs (2) *friendly/intimidating*, (3) *responsible/irresponsible*, (6) *has initiative/lacks initiative*, (9) *positive towards others /critical of others*.

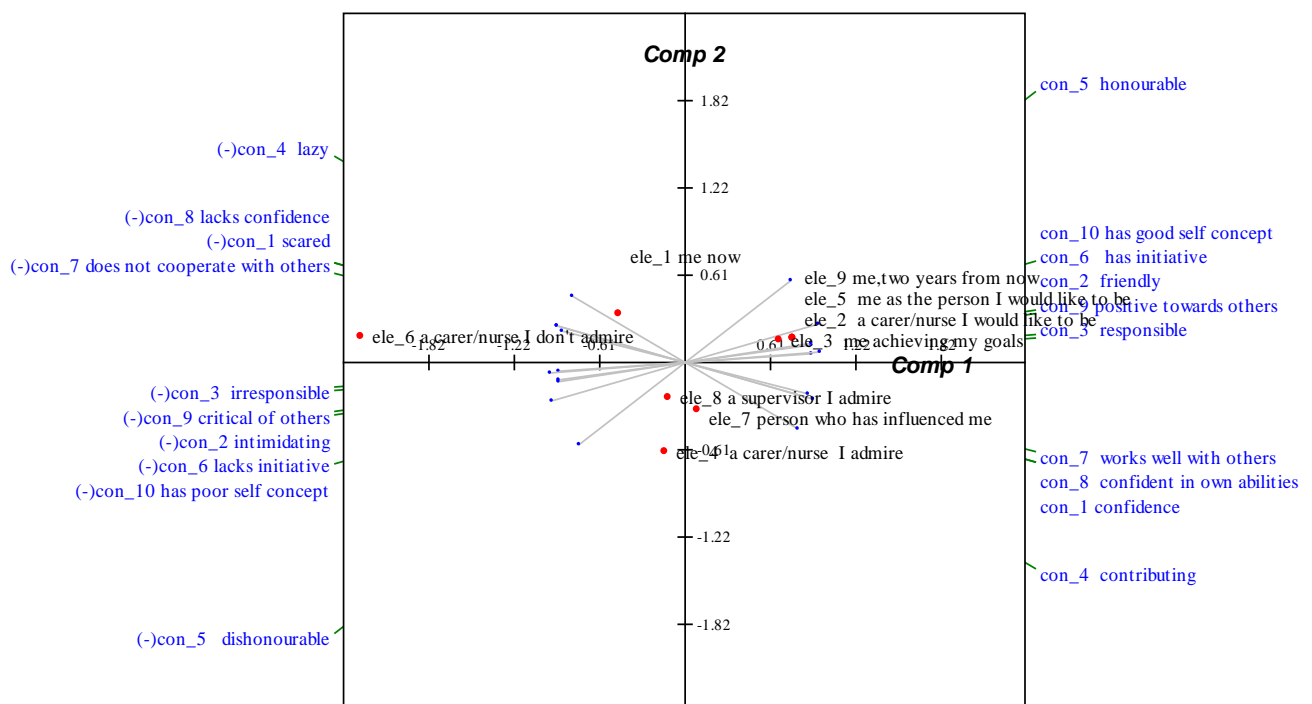
When discussing the grid with Martin, he replied how much he enjoyed being in a position where he could contribute to change because of his involvement in different committees. Interestingly, in the graphic output, construct (8) *confident in own abilities/lacks confidence* has become significantly less important, maybe because Martin appears to have become fairly comfortable in his skills and work situation.

During our conversation Martin announced that he had applied for secondment from the nursing home to do the Enrolled Nurse program. The Manager had told him that he had a good chance. At the time of the meeting, Martin was still waiting for a decision from Head Office.

My reflections on implicit poles

That afternoon, I examined Martin's graphic output with the implicit poles. In comparison to the previous grid, the axes on this occasion are smaller; still prominent, but not to the same degree as on the previous occasion. The constellation of the elements has also changed, with elements pertaining to the future (9) *me two years from now*, (5) *me as the person I would like to be*, (2) *a carer/nurse I would like to be* and (3) *me achieving my goals* being clustered close together.

Graphic output for Repertory Grid IV with implicit poles



Elements representing characters that have had an impact on Martin, such as element (4) *carer/nurse I admire*, (7) *person who has influenced me* and (8) *supervisor I admire*, are, on this occasion, at the bottom of the quadrant and clustered close to the midline. Element (1) *me now* is, as on Occasion III, plotted away from the rest of the other elements in the left upper quadrant and on this occasion, near the implicit pole of construct (4) *contributing/lazy*, indicating that Martin may be feeling more established and not have to work as hard to impress as was indicated on previous occasions.

7.5.5 SUMMARY OF MARTIN'S STORY

Martin joined the program after working at a bank for seven years. His reason for doing the program was to gain some fulfilment in helping people in the same way that his wife had found fulfilment as a social worker. In the program, he worked hard and did well. He was very quiet, methodical and often concerned with his lack of skills. During the nursing home experience, Martin tried hard to fit in and was well respected by the staff. Immediately after completing the program, Martin was employed by that nursing home. Later, he was sponsored by that nursing home to undertake a Certificate IV in Nursing (Enrolled Nursing). A few years later, he enrolled in the Degree of Nursing. I saw Martin at the university where I was then teaching. He was working at the same nursing home, but because of his study, he was only working at weekends. As I was walking with him, he flipped through his notes, and with a nervous laughter stated, "I don't know if I will be able to study all this." I replied, "Martin you know you can." He nodded and with his backpack filled with books, he hurried to the lecture.

7.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the stories of Erick, Elizabeth, Sally and Martin. Through their self-characterizations and grid outputs they examined and reflected on their progress towards the *person I would like to be*. For them, this progression was sometimes expected at other times it was surprising. At all times, the progression resulted in further reflections that led to greater insights about their present condition and future goals. For me as their teacher and researcher, working side by side with the 19 students gave me a deeper understanding and appreciation of them as unique beings wanting to improve their lives and making steps, sometimes big, sometimes small to achieving their personal goals and aspirations. The following chapter provides a summary of the findings of all the participants.

CHAPTER EIGHT

INTERPRETATION OF GROUP FINDINGS

“Learning” has become such a broad concept that I think it is nothing but a form of the verb “to become, or “to be” (Kelly, 1958).

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Adult learners enroll in VET for a number of reasons. They may, as it has already been suggested, enroll for the common purpose of developing personal or work related skills that they may see as instrumental to improving their life situations. However, the forces that impel students to choose one program over another, or that motivate them to complete the program and to move in a chosen direction, do differ from person to person.

As educators, we are aware of such phenomena. As the case studies illustrate, students are influenced by the learning environment but also, to a greater extent, by their immediate social environment. Every student has a family, a cluster of friends, a set of personal norms and personal identity that gives them a sense of purpose. These factors all have an influence on the person's perception of the learning environment and of themselves as learners and as workers.

Often in their interactions with students, we teachers overlook the underlying reasons of why students chose to do a particular program. Such an oversight is not because we do not care rather because we are distracted by the obvious and the tangible. We nobly employ teaching approaches and learning theories and believe, or at least hope, that these contribute to the development of the person.

Evidence in this study supports the premise that if an educational approach and teaching theory are harmonious with the person's values and specific needs, they become more effective. The aim of this chapter is to examine the qualitative data as they relate to the students as a group and in relation to their progression in the direction of their authentic goals.

8.2 PHASE 1: INDUCTION

Induction into the program occurred at the information interview/session. During this session the aims, structure and outcomes of the program were presented to the prospective students. Modeling of attitudes expected of aged care workers occurred during this first encounter. Inclusive language such as “we” rather than “you” or “the students” was used throughout the program. This included welcoming gestures such as the opening of the arms to bring the group together. While

delivering the presentation, I was careful to observe the body language and the responses of the applicants. However, what was most important during the session, was that connections were made with the applicants.

Such an approach had been used on similar occasions prior to and after this study. On each occasion, the outcomes were similar to those in this project. The atmosphere during the induction was relaxed and most of the applicants appeared to be at ease. At the end of the session, applicants stated and looked as if they were very interested and keen to undertake the program.

At the end of the presentation, applicants were asked to do a small exercise that included their reason for doing the program and answering a hypothetical question regarding provision of care.

Question 1: *Reasons for wanting to do the program.*

These are some of the responses to the question.

The responses of all participants are presented in Appendix iii.

Erick *“To use it as a stepping stone for Division 2 nursing and possibly for Division 1. I love dealing with people. I have wanted to be a nurse for 5 years, but did not get high enough marks to undertake University studies.”*

Elizabeth *“I am looking for a change of career, that I can use my experiences of life and also the previous work that I have done. I have reached a stage in my life where I feel I want to give back and contribute to my community. My family is growing up and they do not need me as much as they use to, so I want to find my own area.”*

Martin *“I would like to work with the elderly, I believe that by working as an aged care worker will give a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction.”*

Sally *“I like working with the elderly.”*

Nancy *“I want to this course because I want to extend my learning and understanding of old people.*

Rose *“I want to this course because I respect elderly and taking care of them is my choice. I have a few experiences with my grandmother. I also had experiences with the disabled when I worked as a volunteer at the Solomon Island Red Cross Centre.”*

Joseph *“Further development/training in health services and aged care”*

Mary *“I would like to be involved in satisfying community aged care opportunity. I’m planning to continue and extend my knowledge in the future prior to undertaking further studies in Certificate IV.”*

The common themes from the responses were:

- Contributing to the community; doing something to help others; providing a service
- Job opportunities
- Learning new skills
- Opportunities to continue with further studies, and
- Wanting to work with older persons.

Each written response was acknowledged without any judgment for the intention it represented. At this stage applicants were not selected for the reason they represented, but rather on their writing abilities. Later in the session, applicants participated in a group interview. The group interview consisted of eight applicants sitting in a semicircle with two teachers. Questions about qualities they considered important to aged care work, and what problems/difficulties they thought they might encounter were asked. The main purpose of the interview was to select applicant for their attributes and social skills.

8.3 PHASE 2 DURING THE PROGRAM

The humanistic approach to education and the application of teaching strategies to meet student needs, as described in the earlier Chapters were used throughout the program. It was believed that the combination of a humanistic approach and teaching strategies derived more specifically from the works from Assagioli and Erickson served to create an environment in which the students felt safe and successful.

It may be argued that the creation of such an environment was artificial and not a true representation of the real world to which the students would be exposed. However, it was believed necessary to provide an environment that would enable the students to perceive themselves in a positive way. A safe environment was essential not only for those students who had had experiences that had wounded their self-images, but it was also important for all students.

In, writing the first self-characterization students appeared to be at ease. This was even though the writing of the self-characterizations, the elicitation of constructs and the scoring of the repertory grid were procedures new to them.

Some students presented elicited poles using the same words and expressions that had been used in class as the following examples indicate.

<p>Mary</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Compensate for clients needs</i> 2. <i>Provide assistance with daily activities</i> 3. <i>Monitor and communicate changes in the health behaviour</i> 4. <i>Look after frail people</i> 5. <i>Respect the dignity of the client.</i> 	<p>Margaret</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Good worker</i> 2. <i>Caring worker</i> 3. <i>Working with the elderly</i> 4. <i>Being respectful</i> 5. <i>Enjoying studying about the elderly.</i> 	<p>Helen</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Knows about health and safety</i> 2. <i>Caring</i> 3. <i>Awareness of health of older people</i> 4. <i>Respectful of privacy</i> 5. <i>Is patient and understanding.</i> 	<p>David</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Well educated</i> 2. <i>Knows about safety</i> 3. <i>Works at the best of one's ability</i> 4. <i>Understanding and patient</i> 5. <i>Aware of the needs of the older person.</i>
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There might have been a number of explanations for such an outcome. Students used terms and concepts that they thought were acceptable to the teachers, or used terms that had become familiar to them.

On the other hand, other students used intrinsic terms to identify their elicited poles:

<p>Rose</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Excited about new endeavors</i> 2. <i>Good prospect of full time work</i> 3. <i>Different changes in my life</i> 4. <i>Having workplaces experience available</i> 5. <i>Further education.</i> 	<p>Jack</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Helps people</i> 2. <i>Professional development</i> 3. <i>Spiritual fulfillment</i> 4. <i>Supportive</i> 5. <i>Trusted.</i> 	<p>Ann</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Studying Aged Care</i> 2. <i>Enthusiastic and supportive</i> 3. <i>Having experience</i> 4. <i>Having listening skills</i> 5. <i>To be professional.</i> 	<p>Joseph</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Reflective</i> 2. <i>Trusting and honest</i> 3. <i>Able to integrate</i> 4. <i>Have integrity</i> 5. <i>Community spirit.</i>
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The following is an outline of the themes presented by each of the students in their first self-characterization and the main statements of attributes and qualities that were subsequently developed into a construct.

Even though each of the self-characterizations was individual, common themes that emerged from them included:

- Excited about doing the course
- Working with the elderly
- Contributing to the community
- Looking forward to the experience of working in the field
- Enjoying the learning
- Being able to have job.

Two weeks after the first self-characterization and eight weeks into the course, the students reviewed their performance in the program. The following are typical examples:

Question1

In your own words please describe how you rate your overall performance in this program.

Rick: *"I feel that I am doing well, but I always butt-in in class conversation. There are some assignments that I will leave to the last minute".*

Elizabeth: *"I think I'm doing pretty well. I'm very happy and loving learning about brain and ageing. It is fascinating."*

Sally: *"Average I have a better understanding of the ageing process."*

Martin: *"Very good. I feel that I have performed with relative ease and enjoyment."*

Rose: *"I personally believe that I am coping very well. I'm finding all aspects of the course very interesting. I'm hearing things that will help me in employment and also on day to day basis."*

Nancy: *"The overall performance for me in this course
This is how I would rate myself:
Attendance 4/5 (missed a few days)
Participation in class 4/5
Assignments 5/5 (handed in all assignments)."*

Jack: *"I feel that I am learning a lot about personal care and that I am doing well in understanding the work. I am finding difficult doing homework because I am lacking motivation."*

Julie: *"I feel that I am doing OK and have certainly learnt a great deal since July. Sometimes I get a bit anxious about retaining all my new-found knowledge, but I tell myself the theory will be there and the practical work will reinforce it."*

The responses that were collected in this phase of the research indicate that students were fairly happy, in the program and satisfied with their experience.

8.4 PHASE 3: TOWARDS THE END OF THE PROGRAM

This phase occurred six weeks before the end of the program. During this phase, the students spent four weeks in the nursing home, working under the supervision and direction of their classroom teachers. It was their first exposure to work in a nursing home.

During this phase, the students appeared overwhelmed and tired. It was almost the end of the program, working in the nursing home was for the students physically and emotionally challenging. Some students had the energy to actively look for employment, but the general feeling was that all were hanging in there and doing their best to complete the program.

Their self-characterizations indicate the sense of completion as well as a sense of personal satisfaction. The statements forming the elicited pole of the constructs were on this occasion, task oriented.

8.5 PHASE 4: THREE MONTHS AFTER THE PROGRAM

In this phase, all students had successfully completed the program. Nine were now working in fields related to aged care, but of these, only three chose to work in a nursing home.

Ten students had not yet found employment: four were keen to find work in a nursing home, three were looking for alternative employment and three chose not to work at this time.

Even though at the beginning of the program students appeared keen to work in aged care. At the completion of the program some had become reluctant to work in the field. One student (Ted) chose to go back to his previous employment of truck driver, four stated that they disliked the nursing home environment and would not work there.

In this penultimate phase of data collection, students were given a questionnaire asking if the program had assisted them to achieve their aims:

(a) What were your aims when you joined the course?

(b) Did the course help you to achieve those aims?

All said “yes” with most stating how the course developed their confidence and self-esteem. These are some examples:

Margaret: *(a) My aims when I joined the course were to broaden my knowledge to learn more skills and to gain a formal qualification to work with the elderly.*

(b) Yes this course helped to achieve these aims. It helped me to build up my confidence.

Peter: *(a) To gain an understanding of Aged Care/support services. To understand how I would react in this environment: if I could do this work.*

(b) Yes the knowledge and self-understanding have provided the skill and attitudes I need to provide the support and care required.

Rebecca: *(a) To get an overview of the aged care industry*

To gain skills to work as personal carer.

(b) Absolutely. It provided an excellent foundation for operating in the field and understanding the context of the work.

Rose: *(a) To change my life's path to help others. To further my education*

(b) Yes it did.

Ted: *(a) To have an understanding of the ageing person and the challenges they face quality of life.*

(b) Most certainly.

No matter what their situations, the ideas presented in the third self-characterizations were positive. The themes of: having a job, enjoying learning and being pleased or satisfied with their experiences remained the same as on the previous occasions. The choice of statements in the elicited poles however was on this occasion, oriented towards the self and others, rather than being task focused as on the previous occasion.

8.6 PHASE 5: SIX MONTHS AFTER THE PROGRAM

When this phase was reached, all but four graduates were working. Some, like Jack and Ted, were working in a completely different field. From their feedback the graduates continued to be happy about the program and some felt that they had achieved their previous goals and now were moving in the direction of new goals. All felt that as they had progressed, their goals had also shifted.

For example, John and Rebecca moved on to become social workers Joseph and Elizabeth, hostel managers and Jane and Peter became Floor Supervisors in hostels. Erick, Martin, Helen and David went on to do nursing.

8.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter reiterated that students come to vocational programs with their goals and the aspirations to improve their status in life. They had ambitions and hopes, and with support and encouragement they were able to recognize their potential and move towards becoming “*the person they wanted to be*”.

CHAPTER NINE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

*As we become more conscious
And allow our choices to become more conscious
We will move in the direction
Of growth*

(Satir, 1991, p 62).

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter provides an overview of the purpose of this study, its intention and its relevance to vocational education. It provides recommendations for the implementation of an education approach that centres on humanistic principles within a CBT program.

9.2 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE STUDY

There were two epistemological assumptions guiding this study. The first assumption was based on the students' drive to move in the direction of their goals, aspirations and hopes. The second was based on the relationship between students' positive self-concept and the drive to become the person that they '*would like to be*'.

The Rogerian tenet that individuals strive to grow and better themselves, no matter the circumstances, has been a dominant factor in this study. Human beings, as all living things, grow better in a supportive environment. If the person feels supported, then they will grow easily and their potential will be able to emerge. On the other hand, if the person's growth is hindered then growth may be forced and restricted. The study adheres to conditions of congruence unconditional positive regard and empathy that facilitates growth and personal empowerment (Carl Rogers 1978, 1983). These conditions were maintained in the study and the assumption is that they were instrumental in creating an environment of acceptance and respect. It is my belief that the presence of these conditions alone would have enhanced the students' sense of self and enabled them to strive towards becoming the person they *wanted to be*. Teaching strategies served as tools providing the "concreteness" to the teaching. Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (1991) provided the instruments of self-characterizations and grid analysis as means for discussion and reflection on students' movements in the direction of the person they "*would like to be*".

9.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to advocate for adult learners, especially for those studying in basic entry programs such as Certificates at levels II, III and IV. In these VET programs, as in the program in this study, students are from a variety of backgrounds and educational orientations. Consequently, it is even more important that teaching be adapted to the diversity of learning needs.

In the study, I have discussed concepts that are pertinent to education and training in the 21st Century. However, none of the concepts I present are new or unknown. In fact, it is not my intention to present novel ideas or strategies on adult learning. The ideas are drawn from the writings of past and present psychotherapists and educators, all of whom have a common aim: the development of the person and the achievement of his/her potential. The enhancement of individual development and empowerment through vocational education is the core concept of this thesis. It is this concept that has guided the choice of learning strategies and the implementation of teaching strategies.

The question may well be asked why the focus is on individual development, especially when this concept is neither new nor original to education and to training. As Billett (2001) points out, personal development can occur in any teaching and learning situation. However, in the study, personal development is given a dimension that differs from the interpretation given by Billett and similar other vocational educators. Personal development, as used in the study, refers to the person's ability, confidence and motivation to make their own career choices, to determine their goals and to move towards becoming the people they would like to be. Such choices are intrinsically determined and internally governed by the individual.

9.4 THE NOTION OF PERSONAL CHOICE

At the time of undertaking this research, aged care workers were not perceived positively. There was a stereotyped belief that they were poorly educated, lacked academic skills and did not have the abilities to work in any other field. Unfortunately, such a stigma still exists, and though there are no formal reports, feedback from nurses and aged care workers indicates that there is even a greater need for carers who have empathy and compassion. The management of residential settings, the complexity of care and the emotional support required by the older person, require carers who have not only procedural skills, but also the ability to comfort and reassure the person who is sick, frail or confused.

In the VET environment the expectation of teachers and organizations is that at the successful completion of the program, students will work at the lower levels of the aged care industry. The common assumption is that these students possess poor personal skills and intellectual abilities, and that aged care work is the only option available to them.

I believe that, graduates of the aged care VET program should be able to use the skills acquired in the industry, or in other industries. Whatever the decision, it is based on the freedom to choose and belief in their abilities, and not on the restriction of being trapped in a particular type of work or at a particular level.

There were times when my beliefs seemed to contrast with the intention of a National Training Competency that had developed this program for the specific purpose of meeting the employment needs of the aged care industry. Students came to this program of their own will and all but one was not working in aged care. Consequently, there were no contracts or expectations that they would continue to work in the field. In addition, I was also employed by a Training Organization whose educational philosophy was in keeping with my beliefs, and who was open to students having the freedom of choice.

9.5 THE CHOICE OF DIRECTION IS UNIQUE

The students in the study moved in different ways and in different directions towards achieving their goals. There were students like Martin, Helen and Erick who came with the purpose of using the VET program as a stepping-stone to nursing. At the completion of the study, Martin was about to be seconded by his workplace to study Certificate IV in Nursing, and at the time of writing this thesis he was about to complete the Degree in Nursing. Helen was about to commence Certificate IV in Nursing during the writing of this study of the study, and Erick had already started Certificate IV in Nursing.

There were students such as Rose, Ann, Peter, Julie, Joseph, Elizabeth and Jackie who were in their thirties and forties. They all were very articulate and had excellent social skills. Prior to undertaking this program they had had steady office jobs. They had been clerks, accountants and managers. Jackie had worked for the same company for 31 years and Peter for 13 years. Now, they were doing the program for what seemed to be altruistic reasons: *“To be of service to the wider community with the benefits of further learning, understanding and with the confidence to provide care to others”* (Jackie). Most did not know what to expect; their intentions as presented in the application form were to give and learn and they all did just that. All did well in their placements and excelled in their studies. When they completed the VET program, three of these students moved very quickly to managerial or supervisory positions in the aged care sector. They seemed to have bypassed all the traditional stepping-stones of the organization and on the completion of this study, were very happy in their present positions. I believe that their attitude and their desire to achieve supported their choice of *“being the person that they wanted to be”*.

There were times such as at the beginning of this program, that I was concerned for these students. They were entering an occupation that was perceived as being at the bottom of a hierarchical system. However, in some way, they all managed to achieve their goals and to fulfill their yearning to help others.

In the group, there was also Jack and David, who were in the mid-twenties and who had left secondary school a few years before. Since then, they had been working at odd jobs, although both had completed Year 12. They joined the program to provide a service to others. At the end of the program, Jack applied for various aged care positions but was not successful. I saw him a year after the completion of the study. He was working as a security officer at an Art Gallery. He looked very smart in his uniform. He was excited because he had just been accepted to do Social Work at university. He had mentioned from time to time, wanting to do Social Work and now it felt that his dream had been realized.

On the other hand, David, after the workplace experience at the nursing home, decided that he wanted to become a nurse. Immediately after the program, he started working at the same nursing home and was making arrangements to do the Certificate IV in Nursing.

Joseph and Rebecca were in their late twenties. Rebecca had worked in a number of paid and volunteering jobs as a domestic, administration assistant and project worker for various hospitals. Joseph had worked as a kitchen hand, assistant cook and pavement artist. They had to do the program after successfully completing Certificate III in Community Work and, as part of the program, had been given some exposure to the aged care industry. They both joined the program to learn more about aged care so that they could work in the field. At the end of the program, Rebecca did continue to work in aged care, but at the same time was studying Social Work. Joseph was employed immediately after training by the hostel for which he had been a volunteer. Six months later, he was promoted to manager of that hostel.

Sally, Mary, Margaret and Nancy had all had left school early and had been unemployed for a number of years. They were looking for satisfying careers that would earn them a wage and enable them to continue to learn: *"I would like to be involved in a satisfying aged care opportunity. I'm planning to continue to extend my knowledge in the future to a further course in Certificate IV"* (Mary). At the completion of this study none had applied for a position. They discussed their intention of applying for a job but had not yet applied. The reasons they gave were that their commitment to their husbands and children made it difficult for them to hold a job. At first, I thought that they might be lacking in confidence, as they all presented as lacking confidence and working in the aged care industry might have been somewhat threatening to them. As a teacher, I tried to assist them to gain

confidence, during and immediately after the program, but after the third data collection, it was obvious that they did not want work in aged care. However, I believe that they left the program with a sense of satisfaction at having completed a course of study and with a set of skills and knowledge that they might use in other areas of their lives.

Ted differed from all the others. He had been a truck driver looking for a career change. During the program, he had worked hard and performed very well during the workplace experience. Despite his rugged exterior he had a gentle and caring nature. I thought that he could work well in a hostel setting particularly with the male residents, so I was surprised when, on completing the program, he said *“I am going back to driving trucks, this job is not for me..... thank you very much for all that you have done.”*

Three years after the completion of the study, on three separate occasions, I came across Joseph, on his way to a business meeting, Martin, hurrying to lectures and Jack, who after a brief conversation with me, had to go to attend to a customer enquiry. Even though they went past me in a hurry, it was good to see them busy, and apparently fulfilled in their different roles.

9.6 THEORETICAL EXPLANATION AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The instruments of self-characterization and grid analysis provided the tools for reflection and discussion of where students saw themselves, in relation to the person *“I want to be”*. Data from the repertory grid were submitted to Idiogrid Version 2.4 (Grice, 2008) principal components analysis that produced a graphic plot. From this graphic output, students could see the constellation of the nine elements and the elicited poles of the 10 constructs that make up the repertory grids. The graphic plot provided discussion of their graphic output. The findings showed that movement towards the *“person I would like to be”* differed from student to student. For some students, the movement occurred in large increments, at other times the shifts were small. Some students moved in a continuous linear sequence, whilst others had a back-and-forth pattern. What was characteristic for most students was that element (1) *me now* got closer to element (9) *the person I would like to be* and on the following occasion, the constellation of element (9) had moved further away, indicating that, as students were nearing their present goals, their future goals were changing. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) explain

“ ... as learners proceed towards meeting unmet needs, resolving unwanted conditions, or reaching desired goals, motives for learning tend to change in relation to any feelings and experiences of success/failure and satisfaction/dissatisfaction” (p. 397).

Not all students achieved what I thought were their personal goals. Four females discussed earlier in this chapter, chose not to look for work for family reasons. Similarly Ted, who had been a truck driver, decided that aged care was not what he wanted, and went back to truck driving. In the spirit of humanistic philosophy, these choices are appropriate and worthy in supporting the aims of this study.

9.7 RESEARCH CONTINGENCIES EMERGING FROM THE STUDY

The process of the study over a 12-month period was demanding and time consuming. It did require great commitment from the 19 students who participated. The writing of the self-characterizations and the ratings of the repertory grid for Occasions I took place in class and those for Occasion II took place during their clinical placement. Individual interviews for the elicitation constructs took place at lunchtime, or after class and required students to give up much of their personal time.

For Occasions III and IV, the graduates came to the training organization to write their self-characterizations. Afterwards, they all had to return individually to elicit their constructs, rate their grids and discuss their graphic output: these three exercises were done at the one sitting and took between 45 minutes to an hour each. Nevertheless, the study was successful in supporting the research question that students in Certificate III Aged Care Work have personal goals and aspirations. This finding contradicts the research carried out by Healy and Moskos (2005) that aged care workers are unmotivated to aim for positions of more authority and better status.

However, no certainties can be established, nor was it the intention of this study to provide conclusive results. Rather, the purpose was to enhance the understanding that students in VET join the programs with their own dreams, hopes and desires to become better people and that the right environment enables them to do just that.

Subjective experience is unique and difficult to replicate. However unlike a positivist method, a phenomenological approach validates human experiences that cannot be substantiated by empirical methods. Even though the study could be refined with, for example, the use of a pilot study, better wording of the self-characterizations, deeper exploration of the constructs, the study can be replicated.

9.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

We are living in a time when technology has taken strong hold in all aspects of our lives. We are also at a time when there is a vast amount of knowledge available to us. Somehow, along the way, we seem to have lost the sense of insight and wisdom. Everything that we do is often quick and

superficial. We learn information in a recipe-like fashion, without questioning its origin or its purpose. In writing this thesis, I drew from the works of Carl Rogers, Maslow, Kelly, Assagioli and Satir. To me, these writings are ageless as they evoke a meaning of who we are and this meaning is relevant now as it was at the time when it was written. Despite the rhetoric of the modern world, there is a yearning for those aspects of ourselves that make us unique and special. Such yearning is strongly felt amongst many of our teachers and health professionals.

Not long ago, I presented at a conference for health educators, much of the audience consisted of teachers of nursing, aged care work and disability work. The title of my presentation was “*Storytelling in the Classroom*”. My presentation was scheduled immediately after lunch. The presentations before and after mine, had to do with e-learning. Valuable tools for e-learning were presented with a number of them having a number of uses. The audience was so receptive to these technological methods, that I felt that they probably would not be interested in storytelling. During lunch, I thought very seriously about cancelling my presentation, but then I realized that the worst thing that could happen was that they might consider my strategy old fashioned. I decided to deliver. It was not far into the presentation when there were deep sighs and muttering sounds of “*Yes this true*”, “*Yes this right*” and when emotions and human experiences were mentioned, there was spontaneous applause. I was not prepared for this reaction. It was as if the lid was lifted from a boiling pot as the yearning for connection to our emotions was so powerful in that room.

I believe that in this age of technology it is possible, if not necessary for the value of the uniqueness of our humanness to be acknowledged. The aim of this study was to advocate for adult learners, so that they would be supported to get in touch with who they are and to become the people they want to be.

I do not suggest that teachers should all become Rogerians. What is important for the teachers is the development of those attitudes that are respectful and empowering. Dewey (1929) points out that the aims of education are to enable people to become good contributors to society. To be able to grow and to contribute, the person has to be given the opportunity to become what that they want to be, and trust that their choice of their paths will be for the good of society.

9.9 THE APPLICATION OF EDUCATION APPROACH WITHIN AN COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAM

The assumption of this thesis is that a humanistic education approach can coexist with CBT. The Australian Qualification Training Board specifies the number and the specific Units of Competency, the workplace experience and the assessments of competencies. It suggests but does not specify, the

length of the program in terms of nominal hours. It does not give any direction about the learning processes to be utilized.

Smith and Keating (2003) point out “So long as the learner achieves the listed competencies, it does not matter who taught him or her, how or when the training takes place, what resources are used or what the content of the material of the curriculum consists” (p.126). It is therefore left to the teachers and trainers to implement an approach that encompasses the development of the whole person and not just the acquisition of skills. There is a tendency among many teachers and educators to be focused on outcomes. In fact the expectation by training organizations is to focus solely on outcomes. Programs are made shorter, large chunks of material are delivered within a small time frame thus not allowing for the reflection and incubation required for deeper learning. Teachers and trainers are pressured to cover the material in a limited time. As pointed out in Chapter Three many of those involved in delivering education programs have no education qualifications but all have Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as the minimal qualification. They are trained to assess competencies and not to teach, or even less to educate. In most cases power-point presentations and e-learning are not considered tools to augment the teaching, rather they are seen to be the teaching.

Although such programs are designed to meet the needs of industries, no one is certain about what may happen in the decades to come, what advancements will influence the demands of industry and what skills will be required. It is therefore important to prepare workers to meet the challenges of the future, not by being automatons trained for a particular purpose, but to be critical thinkers, independent learners, flexible to change, and positive in their outlook. My belief is that these qualities can only be achieved through education.

It is necessary for future governments and organizations to stop using vocational programs as a moneymaker. The real investment should be in the attributes of graduates. It is the teachers and trainers who have the greatest power. As Anderson (1994) writes “Australian educators and training professionals must develop and apply a training philosophy focused on developing a workforce with education together with a more broadly based and flexible work skills” (p. 34).

In the study, I presented different teaching strategies that I have found helpful with many different groups I have taught. However, teaching strategies should not be seen as a recipe for all. Teachers, like their students, are individuals and, as such, they may excel in particular areas and not do so well in others. A teacher may not be good in storytelling, but may be a very skilled facilitator of group work. There are a variety of tools that we, as teachers, can use to suit our styles, as well as the learning needs of our students.

9.10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE AGED CARE INDUSTRY DERIVED FROM THE STUDY

9.10.1. Predicted Changes to the Workforce

We know for certain, that people will live longer lives and the number of older persons will increase. We can therefore predict that in the coming decades there will be a need to provide care to a greater number of older people. It is envisaged that government policies will continue to encourage older people to live at home for as long as possible but there will always be the need for carers to look after the sick and frail. Statistics are showing that in the years to come, the number of older persons will continue to grow and there will be even a greater need for aged care workers. Typically, aged care workers are women in their thirties and older who are returning to work or who have had a career change. The economic situation, affecting job reliability is an important factor in determining the type of worker that will join the industry. However, there are other factors need to be considered to ensure that the population in residential settings is well cared for.

9.10.2 Limitations of Existing Training

Firstly, there has been feedback from people working in the industry that workloads are increasing and the level of good care is declining, or is difficult to maintain. There are a number of work organizations delivering accelerated versions of Certificate III in Aged Care generally delivered over six months, are by some organizations delivered in two to six weeks.

Secondly, some organizations are not selective about the skills and attributes of the applicants. The content of Certificate III is becoming more and more complicated, requiring higher-order cognitive and academic skills. Students entering the program must have the basic writing, reading, numeracy, clear-thinking skills and the social skills that will enable them to cope with the program. Pathways programs are to be developed to help prospective students to develop those skills, prior to undertaking a Certificate III in Aged Care Work.

9.10.3 Training for the Future

People are now required to stay at school longer. In consequence, it is envisaged that, future, the majority of aged care workers are likely to have higher levels of academic skills. In their work, they may require more than the satisfaction of providing care to residents. They may want autonomy, more opportunity for learning and work advancement. Thus to attract and provide satisfaction for this new style of worker, pathways such as pathways to nursing and pathways to social work and management need to be established.

The preparation of aged care workers is important because it is in those hands that we place the most vulnerable people in our society. Aged care workers need to have the attributes and the skills to provide total care to those who are sick, confused and frail. For this reason, education, as well as training, is important for the preparation of this workforce. The teaching of skills alone will not provide the aged care worker with the attributes, abilities and skills to provide the degree of care required by the older generation. Education is concerned with growth and with growth comes self-understanding, wisdom and accountability.

*We are manifestations of life,
Pure in essence and containing
The most powerful ingredient
That exists in the world: the power to grow
(Satir, 1991, p. 29).*

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LIST OF APPENDICES IN NUMERICAL ORDER

Appendix i.....Program timetable

Appendix iiSummary of received data

Appendix iii..... Students' responses written on application for Certificate III
in Aged Carer Work

APPENDIX I

Certificate III Human Services Education (Aged Care Work)

July 2003						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23 CHCAC6 Provide services to aged people Vivienne	24 CHCAC6 Provide services to aged people	25	26
			CHCINF1A Process and provide information R. 313	CHCINF1A Process and provide information R. 313		
27	28 CHCAC6 Provide services to aged people Vivienne CHC5A Contribute to a service delivery strategy (Ageing process) R. 313	29 CHC COM 2A Comm Appropriately with clients and colleagues Tania CHC AC 12 provide Services to meet aged people's personal needs R. 313	30 CHC2A Assist with Aged people's personal needs R.313	31 CHC2A Assist with Aged people's personal needs R.313		

August 2003

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 First Aid	5 CHC COM 2A Comm Appropriately with clients and colleagues CHC AC 12 provide Services to meet aged people's personal needs R 313	6 CHC ORG 4A Follow org OHS policies R 313	7 CHCAC6 Provide services to aged people CHC2A Assist with Aged people's personal needs R.313	8	9
10	11 First Aid	12 CHC COM 2A Comm Appropriately with clients and colleagues CHC AC 12 provide Services to meet aged people's personal needs R 313	13 CHC ORG 4A Follow org OHS policies R. 313	14 CHC AC 3 A Orientation to Aged Care R.313	15	16
17	18 First Aid	19 CHC COM 2A Comm Appropriately with clients and colleagues CHC AC 12 provide Services to meet aged people's personal needs R 313	20 CHC AC4A Assist in the provision of an appropriate environment R 313	21 CHC AC 3 A Orientation to Aged Care R.313	22	23
24	25 First Aid	26 CHC AC 12 provide Services to meet aged people's personal needs CHC2A Assist with Aged people's personal needs R 313	27 CHC AC4A Assist in the provision of an appropriate environment Pauline R 313	28 CHC AC 3 A Orientation to Aged Care R.313	29	30

September 2003

Sunda	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Satur
	1 CHC AC6A Provide Services to aged people Meaningful activities R 313	2 CHC AC 12 provide Services to meet aged people's personal needs CHC2A Assist with Aged people's personal needs R.313	3 CHCAC 2A Assist with aged people's personal needs R.313 R 313	4 DIS 3A provide Services to people with disabilities CHCINF1A Process and provide information Computer studies	5	6
7	8 CHC AC6A Provide Services to aged people Sex and Sexuality R.313	9 CHC AC 12 provide Services to meet aged people's personal needs CHC2A Assist with Aged people's personal needs R.313	10 CHCAC 2A Assist with aged people's personal needs R.313	11 DIS3A provide Services to people with disabilities CHCINF1A Process and provide information Computer studies	12	13
14	15 Workplace Experience I ADASS	16 Workplace Experience I ADASS	17 Workplace Experience I ADASS	18 DIS3A provide Services to people with disabilities Vivienne CHCINF1A Process and provide information Computer studies	19	20
21	22 Holidays	23 Holidays	24 Holidays	25 Holidays	26	27
28	29 Holidays	30 Holidays				

October 2003

Sunda	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Frid	Saturd
			1 Holidays	2 Holidays	3	4
5	6 CHC AC6A Provide Services to aged people Death and Dying R. 313	7 CHC AC 12 provide Services to meet aged people's personal needs R 313	8 CHCAC 2A Assist with aged people's personal needs R.313	9 CHC2A Assist with Aged people's personal needs (Monitoring Medications) CHCINF1A Process and provide information studies	10	11
12	13 Workplace Experiences II Hostel	14 Workplace Experiences II Hostel	15 CHC AC5A Contribute to services R.313	16 CHC2A Assist with Aged people's personal needs (Monitoring Medications CHC DIS 3A provide Services to people with disabilities Vivienne R. 313	17	18
19	20 Workplace Experiences II Hostel	21 Workplace Experiences II Hostel	22 CHCCS0 Deliver Services to Clients R.313	23 CHC ORG Maintain an effective work environment R 313	24	25
26	27 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	28 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	29 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	30 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	31	

November 2003

Sun	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	4 Public Holiday CUP DAY (No school)	5 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	6 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	7	8
9	10 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	11 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	12 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	13 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	14	15
16	17 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	18 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	19 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	20 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	21	22
23	24 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	25 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	26 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	27 Workplace Experience III Nursing Home	28	29
30						

December 2003

Sunda	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 CHC ORG Maintain an effective work environment R 313	2 CHC DIS 3A provide Services to people with disabilities CHC5A Contribute to a service delivery strategy	3 CHCAC6 Provide services to aged people CELEBRATION	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

APPENDIX II

SUMMARY OF RECEIVED DATA 11 students completed all the requirements of the study Students whose research activities are discussed in length

Identity number	Students' assumed name	Self Char 1	Grid 1	Self Char 2	Grid 2	Self Char 3	Grid 3	Self Char 4	Grid 4
1	Rose	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Telephone conversation. Working in aged care. Unable to attend interview	
2	Sally	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Peter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Telephone conversation. Working in aged care. Unable to attend interview due to job commitments	
4	Jack	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Mary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Not working, looking after husband. Unable to attend interview because husband is ill	
6	Ted	✓	✓	✓	✓	Attended meeting but did not want to participate in data collection		Unable to be contacted	
7	Ann	✓	✓	✓	✓	Working, unable to attend		✓	✓
8	Erick	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Margaret	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Julie	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Rebecca	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Telephone conversation. Working and undertaking Degree in Social work.	
12	Helen	✓	✓	✓	✓	Working, unable to attend		✓	✓
13	David	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Joseph	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Elizabeth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	Jackie	✓	✓	Experienced personal tragedy. Unable to attend		✓	✓	Still greatly affected by personal tragedy. Data not collected	
17	Nancy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Jane	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
19	Martin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Eight weeks into the program		15 weeks into the program		Three months after the program		Six months after the program	

APPENDIX III

Students' responses written on their application for Certificate III in Aged Care Work

- Erick *"To use as a stepping stone for Division 2 nursing and possibly for Division 1/ I love dealing with people. I have wanted to be a nurse for 5 years, but did not get high enough marks to undertake University studies."*
- Elizabeth *"I am looking for a change of career, that I can use my experiences of life and also previous work that I have done. I have reached a stage in my life where I feel I want to give back and contribute to my community. My family is growing up and they do not need me as much as they use to, so I want to find my own area."*
- Martin *"I would like to work with the elderly, I believe that by working as an aged care workers will give a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction."*
- Sally *"I like working with the elderly."*
- Julie *"Seeking for a new career in a community related area rather than a commercial environment. Wanting to go for a qualification, with potential to build on it. Enjoy the people contact to offers. Security of employment after completing the course appears good."*
- Nancy *"I want to this course because I want to extend my learning and understanding of old people."*
- Rose *"I want to this course because I respect elderly and taking care of them is my choice. I have a few experiences with my grandmother. I also had experiences with the disabled when I worked as a volunteer at the Solomon Island Red Cross Centre."*
- Joseph *"Further development/training in health services and aged care"*
- Mary *"I would like to be involved in satisfying community aged care opportunity. I'm planning to continue and extend my knowledge in the future prior to undertaking further studies in Certificate IV."*
- Peter *"Wanting to re-skill in a more fulfilling career. [I have] a keen interest to support others in meeting their needs for assistance and in maintaining their dignity and quality of life. To develop the skills and competence to provide the level of care and support to others who are in need of assistance."*

- Jane *"I am working in an aged care hostel at the moment. The residents at the Centre have become dear to me. It has been suggested at the Centre that I get more qualifications as I can be a valued member of the staff."*
- Jack *"The reason why I would like to do this course is to serve another person and help others. By helping other people is the greatest thing that another person can do for someone. I have always wanted to serve people in need and feel that would be the greatest achievement in my life."*
- Margaret *"I would like to do this course so that I can learn about the elderly. I would like to find a job in aged care."*
- Ted *"Strong belief in quality care in the aged care field. I believe I would be a good contributor to their needs."*
- Helen *"I want to do this course because it will help me to go to the next level, which is Division 2 in Nursing, and I believe this course is going to help me get where I want to get."*
- Jane *"Reasons I like to do the course because I want to meet people and help older people when they need assistance and this course makes it easy to get a job, even if I move around Australia."*
- Jackie *"To be of service to the wider community with the benefits of further learning, understanding and confidence to provide care to others as required in the community, whether this be on a one to one or group environments."*
- Rebecca *"I recently completed a three week placement as part of Certificate Exploring Options at an aged care facility and have decided to pursue employment in this field. I believe the specific personal care competencies covered in this specialized stream will be of benefit."*