Exploring Tertiary Teachers' Pedagogical Experiences about Academic Diversity
A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Research at Western Sydney University.

By

Safa Chmait
Master of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), 2010
University of Technology, Sydney (UTS)
Bachelor of Adult Education, 2008
Western Sydney University (WSU)

Spring Semester, 2018
Western Sydney University
New South Wales, AU
The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Safa Chmait
31st October, 2018
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the many passionate tertiary educators, whose countless time, effort and consideration is spent assisting students to achieve their academic and professional goals.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisors Dr. Dorian Stoilescu and Dr. Brenda Dobia for their words of encouragement, support and motivation over the course of undertaking this academic endeavour. I would also like to thank my family and friends, who believed in me and provided me with the space and time to work on my research. This undertaking has been a personal journey during which I have been immersed in my area of study and during which I have experienced deep personal growth, as I completed this significant academic achievement. I look forward to many more.
ABSTRACT
Academic diversity has become increasingly common in higher education institutions. Although much research has focused on student experiences, there has been less focus on tertiary teachers’ pedagogical experiences with teaching academically diverse cohorts. This study utilised research interview methodology to examine the perceptions of three tertiary educators from The College, Western Sydney University, with an aim of attaining greater understanding of these educators’ pedagogical experiences in their academically diverse classrooms. An analysis of the interview data revealed that although the tertiary educators articulated their ideas using different terminology, their pedagogical concepts were aligned with one another, and seemed to be aligned with Transition Pedagogy Model of teaching, as well as incorporating elements of the Multiple Means of Representation approach to teaching. Teachers identified the ways in which they implemented their pedagogical approaches, and described the ways in which academically diverse cohorts enriched their classrooms, as well as providing challenge. Participants also provided recommendations to further support their academically diverse cohorts, from the teachers’ individual perspectives. This study provided an opportunity to garner insight into tertiary educators’ individual viewpoints as they relate to their academically diverse learner cohorts. It allowed for a close study of the three participants’ ideas and experiences relating to teaching academically diverse learners. The findings of this study provide an initial insight into tertiary teachers’ experiences, and allow for the consideration of the recommendations they put forth. This study is valuable to tertiary education stakeholders, particularly teachers and policy makers, as it identifies recommendations from the perspective of college teachers. It is clear that academically diverse cohorts are increasingly presenting as the norm in many Australian colleges, and it is recommended that further research replicate and expand upon this study, to generate greater understanding of tertiary educators’ pedagogical experiences about academic diversity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.2 THE GAP IN THE RELATED FIELD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 RESEARCHER BACKGROUND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 TRADITIONAL TEACHING THEORIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 NON-TRADITIONAL ADULT LEARNERS - OFTEN OVERLOOKED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 DEFINITION OF ACADEMICALLY DIVERSE LEARNERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 TOWARD INCLUSIVE TEACHING METHODS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 MULTIPLE MEANS OF REPRESENTATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3 TRANSITION PEDAGOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 COLLEGE TEACHER TRAINING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 METHODOLOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 MEASURES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 PROCEDURES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 FINDINGS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 STAFF INTERVIEW THEMES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 UNDERSTANDING ACADEMIC DIVERSITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2 DEFINING ACADEMICALLY DIVERSE LEARNERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3 COLLEGE TEACHERS’ PEDAGOGICAL PHILOSOPHIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.4 PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.5 IMPLEMENTING TRANSITION PEDAGOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 TEACHERS’ RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0 UNDERSTANDING PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXPLORING TERTIARY TEACHERS’ PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCES ABOUT ACADEMIC DIVERSITY

5.1 Teachers’ Pedagogical Approaches ........................................................................................................... 50
5.2 Support Systems to Assist ADLs .................................................................................................................. 51
5.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Study ......................................................................................................... 55
5.4 Recommendations & Future Research ......................................................................................................... 55
5.5 Future Research Implications ....................................................................................................................... 56
5.6 Implications of the Study ............................................................................................................................. 57
5.7 Conclusions .................................................................................................................................................. 60
REFERENCES ....................................................................................................................................................... 62
APPENDICES ...................................................................................................................................................... 65

Appendix A ....................................................................................................................................................... 65
Appendix B ....................................................................................................................................................... 66
Appendix C ....................................................................................................................................................... 67
Appendix D ....................................................................................................................................................... 68
Appendix E ....................................................................................................................................................... 70
1.0 Introduction

In recent years, a number of Australian universities, including Western Sydney University, have introduced specialised university preparatory colleges and implemented pathway programs to allow access to a diverse range of students, who may not have had access to university-level studies in the past. The implementation of these programs has since resulted in an increase in student diversity within Australian tertiary institutions (Lefroy, Wojcieszek, MacPherson & Lake, 2014), and diverse cohorts are now regarded as the norm in Australian higher education contexts (Trees, 2013). These diverse cohorts are regarded as ‘non-traditional’ tertiary students for several reasons. Students may be the first in their families to have undertaken tertiary study, may have come from non-English speaking backgrounds, may or may not have attained their higher school certificate (HSC) and may have very different life experiences from those of more ‘traditional’ students. Traditional students are typically students who have graduated from high school and entered tertiary education institutions based on the merit of their standardised achievements in the High School Certificate (HSC).

The aforementioned differences in student histories and backgrounds could potentially result in disparities in academic experiences and academic abilities. For the purposes of this study, students’ academic disparity, as well as other individual characteristics, will be referred to as ‘academic diversity’. The introduction of preparatory colleges in Australia has brought about changes that are in line with universities globally, which have experienced similar variations in their student cohorts. These changes are reflected in the recent literature, with relevant research acknowledging that classrooms may have students from many walks of life (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010), including international students, Indigenous students, students who speak English as a Second Language (ESL), students who are the first in their families to
have pursued a higher education (Brookfield, 2015) and students who have varying levels of ability. Brookfield (2015) reports that tertiary students continue to become more diverse each year, due in part to the implementation of open access policies in higher education. The implementation of open-access programs has resulted in a wide range of students attending university preparatory colleges, thus altering the overall demographic of a typical college classroom. This wide variation among students has been referred to as student ‘diversity’ (Brookfield, 2015; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010; Bower & Sature, 2011) and has brought about a requirement for rethinking the application of teaching methods and teaching approaches in order to better address learners’ needs.

Diversity may refer to a number of factors and apply to students in a multitude of different ways. According to Brookfield (2015, p. 97), diversity may broadly be defined as “differences of all kinds between students”. In order to meet the needs of diverse students, Armstrong (2009) claims that a ‘multiple intelligence’ approach may be appropriate. Multiple intelligence (MI) theory is a teaching model that makes use of a range of different teaching approaches, rather than being restricted to a limited number of traditional methods (Armstrong, 2009). Armstrong (2009) contrasts the multimodal ‘MI classroom’ with traditional classrooms. Traditional classrooms are described as being teacher-led, with teachers doing most of the talking; standing at the front of the room, and giving directions to learners (Armstrong, 2009). Traditional classrooms are described as being quite prescriptive, where teachers are autocratic and students have little creative input into their own learning. In contrast, the MI classroom is described as one which involves a variety of teaching strategies, with the teacher “continually shift[ing] her method of presentation from linguistic to spatial to musical” (Armstrong, 2009, p. 56) in order to meet the needs of a greater number of students, as deemed appropriate and necessary by the teacher. The MI theory does not reject traditional teaching techniques, however it aims to incorporate other teaching strategies in addition to traditional techniques.
EXPLORING TERTIARY TEACHERS’ PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCES ABOUT ACADEMIC DIVERSITY

(Armstrong, 2009) in an effort to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners. Similarly, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) describe the need for ‘differentiated education’ among students of all ages, from early childhood settings to high school contexts, in order to facilitate and implement a student-centred teaching approach. Differentiated instruction draws parallels with MI theory, in that the result may require making use of a variety of teaching approaches. However, differentiated instruction theory differs by emphasising the need for teacher reflection in attempting to meet the needs of individual students. Making use of both MI theory and a differentiated teaching methodology potentially ensures that students are exposed to a number of teaching styles, one or more of which is likely to appeal to individual students’ preferences. In addition to using a variety of teaching techniques, it has also been suggested that content be varied in order to appeal to a larger range of students and their diverse experiences (Baumgartner & Johnson-Bailey, 2008; Bower & Sature, 2011). These inclusive teaching methods are explored in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Providing teachers with specialised and ongoing training assists in catering to students’ unique needs (Byrd-Blake & Hundley, 2012). This training involves identifying student needs depending on the ranges of their academic and cultural backgrounds, designing customised, appropriate teacher development programs, and evaluating those programs to ensure they meet learners’ needs (Byrd-Blake & Hundley, 2012). By implementing appropriate teacher training, utilising a variety of teaching techniques and through ongoing critical reflection, the literature asserts that classroom teaching will be more likely to cater to a wider range of learning styles, thus accounting for learner diversity and establishing a more inclusive classroom which considers for the needs of varied learners.

1.1 Research Background

The increasing diversity amongst student groups in Australian preparatory colleges has presented tertiary educators with a non-traditional teaching context, in which students are,
along with other characteristics, academically ‘diverse’. For the purposes of this study, ‘academically diverse’ refers to the differences in students’ academic histories. Specifically, students may be mature-aged, with little prior tertiary experience. They may be high school leavers, students who have previously commenced tertiary studies without completing them, or international students, with varying levels of English competency.

The assortment of students presenting at preparatory colleges at the present time, is increasingly variable and becoming more so each year (Brookfield, 2015). Additionally, teacher training tends to focus heavily on cultural and social diversity, teachers’ professional reflections, as they relate to managing academically diverse tertiary students, and the potential impact this classroom management has on their teaching pedagogy. This study aims to explore teachers’ reflections and their thoughts regarding how catering to academically diverse learners is viewed in their classroom delivery. It will do this in an attempt to investigate the experiences tertiary teachers have with academically diverse student cohorts, and to better understand their views of these students.

Tertiary education is a highly regarded area, both in Australia and in the wider global community. In recent years, governments around the world have sought to increase their numbers of university graduates (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler & Bereded-Samuel, 2010) and improve higher education standards, in a quest for global growth (Pleschova & Simon, 2013), more desirable reputations and rankings (Hazlkorn, 2011) and economic advantage (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008). In Australia, an evaluation of higher learning (Bradley et al., 2008) culminated in a number of recommendations being made to improve higher education outcomes. These outcomes included increasing the number of undergraduates from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds by 2020. Specifically, the report suggested that low SES undergraduates should make up 20 per cent of all undergraduates by 2020. Additionally, the report recommends that by 2025, 40 per cent of 25 – 34 year old Australians will have
completed a university degree of Bachelor’s level or above.

As a result, the Australian government has put forth a number of initiatives, including increased funding allocations for higher education institutions (Department of Education & Training [DET], 2015), to improve higher education outcomes and meet their prospective goals. Specifically, the implementation of a ‘Structural Adjustment Fund’ has led to the provision of in excess of $AUD377 million to support Australian universities, as they strive to meet increasing demands and improve quality standards (DET, 2015). Western Sydney University (formerly the University of Western Sydney) has received almost $AUD30 million in government funding to meet these goals. Additionally, a growing number of Australian universities have developed pathway programs to support a diverse range of students who wish to study at a tertiary level. Most prominently, many universities have established entry-level preparatory colleges, offering foundation level certificates as well as diplomas and extended diplomas, that then provide the opportunity for further study at university.

Many studies have been conducted to explore students’ experiences while taking part in the tertiary pathway model (Mills, 2006; Bonner, Marbly & Howard-Hamilton, 2011; Nelson, Quinn, Marrington & Clarke, 2012); however, much is yet to be discovered regarding teachers’ attitudes towards teaching within an academic pathways context. Specifically, academic pathways teachers are presented with students who have a multitude of different academic and life experiences. With the current pathways models, many universities accept students into the pathways program, with an open-entry policy; thus allowing access for students of varying academic backgrounds.

Having reviewed the relevant literature, there appears to be a number of different pedagogical approaches aimed at teachers of diverse groups. Although the pedagogical approaches espouse many similar attributes, they do differ in some ways. These differences in pedagogical approach may be due to the differences in teaching context, including whether the
approach is aimed at college teachers specifically, or higher educators in general, including high school teachers, which may possibly contribute to the different emphasis that is presented by each theorist. Trees (2013), commenting on teaching in a college context, suggests that a variety of teaching strategies may be incorporated to meet the needs of diverse student cohorts, including teachers practising regular self-reflection, a willingness to try new techniques and an ability and willingness to alter teaching approaches, to facilitate student collaboration. Brookfield (2015) recommends that ‘team teaching’ is one way to cater to students’ varying needs. However, there are potential implications involved with team teaching. Teachers may resent the extra work involved, autocratic teachers may reject this style of teaching, as it involves close collaboration with colleagues and administrators may not be enthusiastic, due to the extra costs involved in implementation. Studies have demonstrated that managers and supervisors play integral roles in influencing the success of altered, or ‘differentiated’ curricula (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006). Additionally, Armstrong (2015) identifies a number of pedagogical practices to be implemented in inclusive contexts. These include understanding and recognising students’ uniqueness, appreciating students’ cultural diversity and making a determination to promote inclusive values within the teaching environment.

In contrast, some scholars disagree with differentiating curriculum and classroom delivery. Although Athanases (2012) acknowledges that diverse learners are likely to have differing levels of academic preparedness, he also suggests that measures used to mitigate students’ academic disparity, including placing a greater emphasis on cultural and social wellbeing than on academic outcomes, may ultimately result in a lack of academic ‘rigour’ (Athanases 2012). Furthermore, Athanases (2012) notes that there may be ostensible disadvantages when it comes to modifying the curriculum, including the loss of creativity and less emphasis on core-content. Thus, an approach whereby students are both challenged yet supported is proposed, such that students are comfortable completing academic tasks, while
simultaneously maintaining the lesson’s core content, which contributes to learning outcomes. In order for this to occur, Athanases (2012) advises that lessons should be scaffolded and appropriately modelled to provide students with the support necessary to work confidently within a structured context. A further challenge, however, is incorporating culturally pertinent pedagogy within the framework of scaffolding and altered curricula (Athanases, Wahleithner & Bennet, 2012). Furthermore, the implementation of scaffolding and modelling is viewed as a means to an end; it is expected that with ongoing teacher support, students will ultimately gain the knowledge and the skills necessary to move forward academically.

It is apparent that not all scholars agree regarding differentiating curricula and modifying lesson delivery. Although some experts maintain that differentiating the curriculum and providing alternate methods of classroom delivery are positive steps toward catering to academically diverse students’ unique needs, it is also clear that there is no particular theoretical consensus on this issue. The lack of consensus may be seen as problematic, as it creates confusion, rather than clarity. Clearly, it is essential to investigate the issue in greater detail, in order to glean further insight into this dilemma, so that curriculum designers may be better informed when planning curricula.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although it is recommended that curricula be modified to meet learners’ needs (Bower & Suture, 2011), past literature indicates that adult education programs tend to present a greater emphasis on teaching content than on honing teaching skills (Carter, 1983). More recent literature, however, reveals that a number of teaching strategies have been proposed to specifically address the needs of diverse student groups (Brookfield, 2015; Trees, 2013; Armstrong, 2015). Despite the close focus on training teachers to meet diverse learners’ needs, however, a great inconsistency in teacher training, and consequently in teachers’ pedagogical approaches, has been noted in past literature (Gay, 2005) and evidently, continues to exist.
1.3 Purpose Statement

This study seeks to understand tertiary educators’ understandings and experiences when it comes to teaching academically diverse learners (ADLs). Utilising qualitative research methods, it will explore the experiences of three teachers in order to gain an understanding of how they support the needs of their ADLs and how they perceive and respond to any challenges they encounter.

1.3.1 Research Questions

The following questions served as the basis to shape this paper:

1) How do instructors define their ADLs?
2) What are some of the challenges teachers associate with ADLs?
3) What strategies do tertiary teachers utilise to address the needs of their ADLs?
   3.1) What support systems are in place to assist ADLs?
   3.2) Are any additional supports recommended to assist ADLs?

1.3.2 The Gap in the Related Field

Although much research has been conducted on the topic of academic diversity for primary-aged and high school students, there remains a lack of relevant research pertaining to teaching academically diverse college students. It appears that although there exists studies on academic diversity published on the topic within the Australian context, there remains a need to explore teachers’ understanding and experiences with teaching academically diverse college students. It is intended that this study will serve to initiate some discussion regarding academic diversity in Australian colleges, particularly in The College, Western Sydney University.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study explores tertiary educators’ understandings and experiences regarding teaching academically diverse learners (ADLs) at The College, Western Sydney University.
This will add insight into the different dynamics involved in addressing the needs of ADLs. Specifically, the study will provide a snapshot of tertiary educators’ perceptions, beliefs and experiences related to teaching academically diverse cohorts. It will serve as an initial step in attempting to better understand tertiary educators’ perceptions relating to teaching ADLs.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

As this is an initial study, designed to garner tertiary educators’ insights, it is limited in that the interviews held have been restricted to solely three participants. Restricting the study to three participants allows for an in-depth understanding of participants’ reflections and presents a means by which to identify relevant ideas that arise. The study is also limited in terms of data collection, as the researcher is limited to participants’ self-reflections and self-perceptions. Thus, the data relies solely on participants’ contributions and is dependent on the participants’ self-perceptions and self-reflections, as well as the researcher’s understanding and interpretation of those reflections.

1.7 Researcher Background

The researcher is a tertiary educator, who has experienced academic diversity in various college classrooms over many years. With a background in Adult Education and TESOL, the researcher is interested in obtaining first-hand accounts of teachers’ experiences to better understand how academic diversity exists in tertiary institutions, and to gain insight into college teachers’ experiences with academic diversity.

As a tertiary educator, it has become apparent to the researcher that the tertiary education landscape has experienced rapid change over recent years, with students who were once required to complete some formal qualifications before attending college quite suddenly being provided opportunities to enrol in college courses, despite an array of factors which may have made enrolling difficult or impossible in previous years. This phenomenon led to professional self-reflection and a keen willingness to understand other teachers’ experiences.
As such, the present study was designed and implemented to better understand the experiences of other tertiary educators in relation to teaching students from academically diverse cohorts.

1.8 Definitions of Terms

This paper makes use of a number of technical words, which are common in the discourse of communities associated with the diverse aspects of teaching and learning. The following definitions are jargon relevant to this study:

- Tertiary educator: Adult educator in a tertiary teaching context, specifically at a tertiary college.
- Academically diverse learner: A learner who has not traditionally been provided the opportunity to study at a tertiary level. This includes students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disabilities, students who have not completed their secondary studies and mature age students.
- Traditional teaching: The historically predominant didactic, prescriptive teaching style.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the topic of this research, which is exploring tertiary teachers’ pedagogical experiences about academic diversity. It discussed the background to the research issue and defined the research problem, specifically, the overarching question of how college instructors view and work with their ADLs. It proposed several research questions, and summarised the significance of the study and its limitations. It also described this researcher’s academic and teaching background. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature relevant to teaching academically diverse learners.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Review of the Literature

This chapter outlines the literature related to the field of study; teaching as it relates to diverse learners in the context of college education. It presents the context in which this study is situated and outlines the key ideas that have shaped the understanding of academic diversity within educational institutions, particularly in adult education, and specifically in colleges. The research questions listed in section 1.3.1 helped guide the selection of sources used to form the literature review. The chapter begins with an overview of traditional teaching, before exploring the strategies which have been developed to cater to academically diverse learners (ADLs). Next, an examination of non-traditional adult learners is presented, followed by definitions for ADLs. Following this, a number of inclusive teaching methods are explored and finally, an overview of the importance of professional development is presented.

2.1 Traditional Teaching Theories

In order to understand the teaching landscape that is now quite common in adult teaching environments, it is essential to gain an understanding of initial teaching contexts. When attempting to gain an understanding of the ‘traditional learner’, many references can be found in the literature. ‘Traditional’ students are those who typically study full time, and for many years these traditional students commonly lived on campus, although this is now the exception (Choy, 2002). Higher education environments have been geared to deliver to these students, regarding them as the norm. Students are typically expected to study for long hours and to attend classes early in the morning and oftentimes all day, or late into the day. Thus, of all the student types, traditional students continue to receive the overwhelming attention from their colleges and universities and their facilities are designed for such students (Chen, 2017).

2.2 Non-traditional Adult Learners - Often Overlooked

The ongoing trend in student diversity has been acknowledged for over two decades,
with Tomlinson, Callahan and Tomchin (1997) recognising that inclusive classrooms have become the norm since as long ago as 1997. Non-traditional adult learners are defined as students who may have some or all of the following characteristics. They work full time, are financially limited, have children or other dependants, are single parents or have a non-traditional educational background; for example, they may have enrolled in higher education at a later stage than is typical or did not obtain a formal school qualification (Horn, 1996, cited in Chen, 2017). By taking on this definition, it may be argued that the majority of undergraduate university students may be considered to be traditional adult learners in tertiary education settings. Additionally, Australia’s population of international students places it in the top six countries who host the most international students, as a percentage of their total number of tertiary students (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2014). Despite this, it has been suggested that ‘non-traditional’ adult learners are typically overlooked in the wider discourse and literature, where they remain ‘invisible’ and ‘neglected’ (Chen, 2017). However, non-traditional adult learners are now a widely recognised cohort in higher education, as they make up large proportions of tertiary students.

Traditionally, there has been an emphasis on learner-readiness, and whether students meet the requirements of attending higher education institutions. This notion has recently faced a paradigm shift, whereby many scholars assess the readiness of the institution to meet the needs of the learner, rather than the learner’s ability to conform to the institution’s expectations. It has been argued that, traditionally, students were viewed as “charity cases to be rescued from ignorance” (Northedge, 2003, p.17). This takes a negative view of the diversity of students, perceiving them as flawed or otherwise ‘weak’ (Northedge, 2003). This in turn risks placing the blame on the students if they do not fit into the educational setting, rather than recognising that the academic culture could be shifted to accommodate all students. Northedge (2003) proposes that colleges undertake a ‘student-readiness’ approach
to viewing their institutions, rather than implementing the more common ‘college-readiness’ assessment of students. In practical terms, this means that rather than assessing students’ readiness for college, colleges should assess their ability and readiness toward accepting diverse student cohorts. Colleges undertaking a ‘student-readiness’ approach will have the opportunity to review their policies that may otherwise hinder some students’ entry and likelihood of success. This review process may also bring to light suggestions to alter any practices that could potentially place particular student cohorts at a disadvantage. These policies, whilst not the primary focus of this study, do intersect somewhat with teachers’ pedagogical experiences, as colleges which provide specific policies to cater to ADLs, are likely to also have implemented curriculum designs relevant to catering to diverse student cohorts.

2.2.1 Definition of Academically Diverse Learners

Defining diversity is complex as the term has different implications depending on the context in which it is applied. According to Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey (2008), discussions regarding student diversity are often intertwined with discussions relating to multiculturalism. Thomas (1991) employs a definition of diversity that acknowledges four types of diversity. These include personality diversities, which relate to a person’s attitude, demeanour and personal style; internal dimensions, which relate to a person’s inherent characteristics, over which they have no control, for example, a person’s gender, ethnicity and age; external dimensions, which encompass the context and environment to which a person has been exposed, for example schooling or work, and organisational dimensions, which refer to a person’s status in a particular organisation, for example, their ranking at work, or their status as a student or employee.

When applied to the educational context, it is apparent that defining diversity presents a challenge. Thus, considering all these factors, it is a challenge to define academically
diverse learners (ADLs), as they do not exhibit one set of characteristics, or indeed, always resemble one another. ADLs are with their own sets of academic advantages and challenges, which affect the ways in which they interact with their learning environments. McInnis, James and McNaught (1995) define academic diversity as encompassing factors relating to students’ age, gender, home location and context, ethnic background and socio-economic situation. Additionally, they also identify ‘less visible’ diversities relating to students’ perceptions relating to their learning as well as the makeup of their families and their academic histories. In an attempt to provide a thorough description of ADLs, their attributes will be outlined in the following table (adapted from Chandler, Zaloudek, & Carlson, 2017), however it is important to note that each learner will have his or her own specific combination of these characteristics. The different attributes are detailed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ADLs enter courses with differing academic experiences, histories and preferences.</td>
<td>• They enter courses with their own academic experiences, strengths and difficulties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personality differences will affect students’ preferred learning styles - extroverts will likely benefit and flourish from learning activities involving talking, physical involvement and discussion. Introverts will likely prefer quiet time during which they can quietly reflect on the learning material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ADLs may be diagnosed with medical conditions.</td>
<td>• Their enthusiasm or reluctance regarding the subject matter will affect the ways in which they interact with the learning activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • ADLs may face other issues that limit their academic abilities. | • Potential medical conditions are widely varied, and they include:  
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)  
- learning disabilities or mental disorders  
- sensory disabilities reducing their ability to see or hear. |
| • These issues include:  
- ethnic background  
- gender  
- socioeconomic background  
- first generation status – students who are the first in their family to undertake a tertiary qualification  
- life circumstances - medical treatment, full time jobs, caring for others, struggling with poverty, recovering from substance abuse, dealing with loss of a loved one. |

### 2.3 Toward Inclusive Teaching Methods

Although it is widely accepted that adult learners are a diverse group, it remains that some tertiary instructors believe that traditional teaching strategies are sufficient to satisfy the needs of their learners (Chandler, Zaloudek & Carlson, 2017) and the extent to which tertiary
institutions cater for academically diverse cohorts is inconsistent. In order to mitigate these potential inconsistencies, it is up to educators and policymakers to address the needs of varied learners, in order to provide genuine opportunities for all students to develop academically. In order to do this, it is essential to aim towards designing teaching strategies to maximise success among academically diverse learners. In the quest to cater to these academically diverse learners, a number of different teaching paradigms have been put forth. These include utilising the ‘multiple means of representation’ model and implementing the ‘universal design for learning’ strategy. Each of these teaching theories aims to cater to a diverse population of learners, however each strategy has its own characteristics. It is likely that the implementation of either of these theories would be more advantageous than the absence of a diverse teaching framework, however it is also important to note that these diverse teaching theories are not yet in place in the majority of adult learning institutions.

2.3.1 Universal Design for Learning

‘Universal design’ is a phrase first coined by Ronald Mace in the 1970s, and it was used in the context of creating accessible environments which address the needs of all users (Chandler et al., 2017). This phrase has been adapted for use in many different contexts, including educational contexts, where it is referred to as ‘universal design for learning’ (UDL) (Chandler et al., 2017). UDL environments focus on creating an educational environment that renders learning readily available to a vast population of users. It focuses on increasing learning outcomes, without compromising on course requirements or expectations. This is achieved by creating courses which are flexible, adjustable, customisable to suit learners’ needs, and allow for student input. These courses provide students with the opportunity to have an input into their own learning experiences. UDL suggests that a range of options be provided to students, in order to address their different needs when it comes to student perception, language and expression, and comprehension or understanding. Understanding students’ different
experiences when it comes to perception is critical, according to Chandler et al. (2017), as students will respond to stimuli in different ways, depending on their own academic, personal and medical experiences.

UDL also recognises the necessity for teachers to represent learning material, including actions and expressions, in a number of different ways. This is to acknowledge that blind students, for example, will interact with texts differently from other students. Students may have physical limitations (for example, they may be in a wheelchair), which in turn affects their learning. Students may have barriers which limit their abilities to communicate, and students may vary in their abilities to articulate their understanding of the learning material. For example, students may articulate themselves more freely in spoken discussions, yet struggle with writing, or vice versa.

Consequently, it is suggested that instructors should seek to consider whether information may be represented in a variety of different ways. This includes providing students with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities in more than one way. Allowing students to reach core outcomes and objectives via a range of varied, carefully designed classroom activities could prove beneficial for students who express themselves more confidently and articulately in a particular way. Providing varied classroom activities involves designing lessons and activities which allow for a range of expression. Although all students are required to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcome, students may be provided with a choice of how they would like to express their learning. This may include some students demonstrating their achievements in written form, whilst others demonstrating their abilities through an oral presentation, artwork portfolio and reflection, or via other means. Allowing for alternative lessons is not geared towards making the course easier or less rigorous. Rather it is aimed at simply changing the mode, but not the difficulty or otherwise of the course, lessons or assessments. This inclusion of variation is not aimed toward reducing the expectations of
students. For example, limitations on this idea, where it may not be wholly suitable, may include circumstances where the mode of representation is a part of the core outcomes. For example, a skills-based course such as a writing course will require explicit written expression, and in circumstances such as these, the learning mode may be limited, and therefore change would be quite unsuitable. However, other outcomes, whether within the same course or within other courses, may require the student to demonstrate particular knowledge and understanding rather than set skills, and for these activities, it is possible to allow for students to potentially display their understanding and knowledge in more than one possible way.

It is thus suggested that courses utilising the UDL framework provide alternative tasks to address students’ physical, mental and emotional limitations. In terms of catering to physical limitations, teachers may make use of specialised technologies to suit students’ varied abilities. This may include providing students with electronic material, including electronic workbooks and textbooks, which allow students to adjust the brightness, size and colour of the text, as well as to take electronic notes. Additionally, audio or video representations of the text may be provided. Furthermore, adjustments may be made for students’ individual mental and emotional limitations. This could be implemented through varied assessment procedures. For example, students with chronic anxiety may be offered alternative means of presenting assessment tasks which involve speaking in front of others. Specifically, these students’ altered assessments may provide that the student should present to the teacher on an individual basis, or be allowed to sit down during the task. Providing these alternative measures allows students to take control of their learning and better interact with the lesson material (Chandler et al., 2017).

2.3.2 Multiple Means of Representation

Multiple means of representation (MMR) relates to the processes which teachers employ in order to plan and deliver learning tasks that are appropriate to their student cohort.
This involves instructors recognising that students learn in a variety of different ways and is a suitable strategy to implement within a UDL framework (Chandler et al., 2017). The MMR paradigm deliberately addresses student diversity in order to understand the ways in which content is understood and recognised, as well as the level at which it is comprehended. This information is used to allow educators to present their lessons in more than one way. For example, if a student is visually impaired, they will benefit very little from solely visual representations of learning in the classroom. However, these students will be more likely to benefit from and actively engage with the content and learning material if the lesson is presented in a number of different ways, which may appeal to different learners, including using multimedia and visual aids, as well as supplementary material to provide learners with additional information. For example, according to Chandler et al. (2017), some MMR strategies that could be used in order to cater to diverse students include: providing audio representations of set readings; annotating videos and PowerPoint lectures in the notes section, with appropriate explanations for those who may be hard of hearing or sight; supplementing traditional set readings with other forms of representation including graphs, diagrams, videos and illustrations; and providing multimodal guides to learning, particularly when it comes to multimodal guides to learning with technical skills, for example, with referencing or using online technologies.

Making use of MMR strategies does not equate to reducing student expectations or reducing the standards at which students are expected to perform. It is a way of empowering students with the resources necessary to attain the level of expectations required to meet their learning outcomes. By using MMR, instructors are able to provide learning materials of various formats, thus ensuring that students’ learning is reinforced through the use of multimedia and multimodal activities. Students are then able to hone the skills that are more challenging. For example, it may prove beneficial to introduce concepts with a video with core ideas, which can
then be referred to and drawn upon in later activities. This prior knowledge will then support the ongoing learning of students who may have had difficulty or encountered barriers in understanding or accessing a written text as an initial resource.

It is usually the case that these multimodal activities are made available online for students to access. Consequently, if students have already attained the rudimentary level of learning, they are able to skip the introductory level learning material and progress to the new, more challenging activities that are provided as part of the course progression.

2.3.3 Transition Pedagogy

For many years now, researchers in higher education have identified the significance of tertiary students’ first year in higher education and have recognised the pivotal role this first year plays on influencing first year students’ subsequent academic experiences. Research suggests that this first year is crucial when it comes to non-traditional tertiary learners, as these students are less likely to be familiar with the expectations that are embedded with the undertaking of a tertiary qualification (Lefroy et al., 2014). The need for greater support for these non-traditional learners has been identified and recognised for many years, as it has been acknowledged that many students require more support than has been traditionally offered in higher education settings (Bradley et al., 2008; McInnis et al., 1995).

Additionally, it has been noted that first year non-traditional students are at risk of discontinuing their studies within their first year of tertiary study (Brinkworth, McCann, Matthews & Nordstrom in Lefroy et al., 2014) and this presents a barrier to students achieving their goal of obtaining their desired qualification. In order to mitigate the issue of unclear expectations and the resulting student withdrawal from study, a Transition Pedagogy has been adopted by a number of higher education institutions. The Transition Pedagogy is geared toward ensuring students transition from their initial tertiary studies or pre-enrolment and continue beyond their first year of tertiary study (Lefroy et al., 2014). Thus, one of the
main objectives of Transition Pedagogy is to maintain high retention rates in higher education institutions. According to Tinto (cited in Burnett & Larmar, 2011), four requirements necessary for high-quality student retention are expectations, support, feedback and participation. The Transition Pedagogy framework incorporates these student retention requirements as it provides support services to enhance first-year students’ academic experiences. The Transition Pedagogy elements take a number of different forms to achieve the goal of student engagement and retention, however they are mainly characterised by extended orientation programmes, the appointment of a student advisor, frequently referred to as a ‘First Year Advisor’, and a focus on building students’ sense of comfort and belonging.

Extended orientation programmes may take a number of different forms, however they tend to focus on providing first year students with information relating to the first year of study and first year expectations, with a focus on the first teaching session and how it will be structured. These enhanced orientation programmes typically include provisions for student input and engagement, with activities to encourage participation and communication, including icebreaker activities (Gill et al., 2011). Proponents of the Transition Pedagogy recognise that student participation increases learners’ likelihood of forming friendships with other students, and developing a sense of belonging within the higher education context. Additionally, students are often acquainted with information relating to the different support systems available to them, with emphasis on the First Year Advisor, and their role in providing students with individual attention.

2.4 College Teacher Training

Educators at the primary school and high school level are highly regulated in Australia, with specific qualifications and ongoing training required for each educator, however the regulations seem to be less specific with tertiary educators. In fact, according to Bradley et al. (2008), obtaining and maintaining a highly effective faculty of academics is one of the largest
priorities for the higher education sector in Australia. This is particularly important considering that Australian higher education institutions have a high staff turnover, with Crimmins, Oprescy & Nash (2017, p. 145) claiming that Australian tertiary institutions face “an impending academic staffing crisis” as many academic staff will retire in the coming years or purportedly leave the industry, whether in pursuit of other endeavours, or as a result of geographical relocation. This issue of high staff turnover is exacerbated by the fact that academics are increasingly employed on a temporary basis (Crimmins, Oprescu & Nash, 2017).

Studies suggest that there will be a turnover of approximately 50 per cent of academic staff in Australia by 2022 (Crimmins et al., 2017) due to retirement, relocation or a change of profession, which puts into perspective the urgency surrounding the recruitment and retention of appropriate academic staff. Indeed, it appears that 80 per cent of first year university classes are taught by casual (or sessional) academics (Percy et al., 2008). It is imperative to gain some understanding of casual academics’ professional development experiences to understand how this professional development, or lack thereof, affects and influences their teaching experiences in their classrooms.

The issue of college teacher training and the casualisation of academic staff, brings into question the extent to which casual academics are equipped with the skills and training required to implement modern teaching theories, including the UDL and MMR methods of catering to diverse post-secondary learners. Specifically, it raises the question of whether and how sessional academics are trained, and to what extent this training touches upon issues of academic diversity and teaching students who are academically diverse. Evidence demonstrates that many sessional academics feel that they are not provided with equal opportunities for professional development, when compared with tenured staff (Ryan & Bhattacharyya, 2012).

Additionally, it is apparent that many sessional academics feel that they are not
adequately equipped to navigate various technological resources, including e-learning platforms and mobile technologies (Crimmins et al., 2017). In turn, staff members’ apparent lack of training when it comes to relevant technological resources poses a number of implications for catering to diverse students’ needs. Specifically, it calls into question whether academic staff have the training and professional skills required to present their lessons in a multi-modal fashion, where they are able to utilise a range of teaching resources to better meet their learners’ needs.

It is clear that more structured and specialised training services could benefit novice and experienced teachers alike, with a focus on the use of technological resources in the classroom setting (Crimmins et al., 2017). Undertaking this endeavour would ensure that all tertiary educators have the skills and knowledge necessary to best tailor their lessons to their particular academically diverse cohorts.

2.5 Chapter Summary
This chapter examined the literature pertaining to teaching academically diverse learners in the context of college education. It outlined traditional teaching theories and provided a definition for ‘traditional’ learners as well as non-traditional, academically diverse learners. It identified traditional learners as those who commonly undertake full-time studies and may or may not live on campus. Additionally, it identified non-traditional, academically diverse students as having a number of different characteristics, including having non-linear academic experiences and histories, having diagnosed medical conditions, and having other issues that restrict their academic capacities, including demographics and particular life circumstances. Following this, an examination of inclusive teaching methods was identified, with particular focus on the UDL and MMR learning frameworks. Following this, focus was placed on the Transition Pedagogy and its implementation in higher education settings. Finally, this chapter identified pressing factors related to Australian tertiary educators’ access to and opportunity to undertake
professional development. It touched upon the issue of higher education institutions’ high staff turnover, and high rates of casualisation of academic staff, and how this casualisation may affect the potential professional development that is offered to casual academics. It provided evidence that casual academics perceive that they have limited access to professional development and that many academic staff members feel that they would benefit from additional training when it comes to making use of technological resources in the classroom. Finally, the chapter touched upon the potential implications apparent as a result of teachers expressing their lack of proficiency with technological resources in the classroom, particularly the extent to which this could limit teachers’ ability to cater to their academically diverse learner cohorts. Chapter 3 details the qualitative research methodology that was used to plan this study, including data collection and detailing the research design, measures and procedures that were used.
CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Methodology

This chapter details the methodology which was used in the data collection. It details the research design, measures and procedures that were used, and lists the resources that were required for the research.

3.1 Research Design

This study was undertaken by implementing a qualitative interview approach. Many scholars have observed that interview research is an important research tool. Interview research has become increasingly common in recent decades (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001) as interviews are seen to be research tools which provide data that has its foundations in conversation (Warren, 2001), and allow access to thoughts and perceptions that are otherwise inaccessible (Tierney & Dilley, 2001; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Additionally, it is well documented that research interviews have had a significant role in educational research over the last hundred years (Tierney & Dilley, 2001). Research interviews are perceived to be avenues through which to better appreciate participants’ viewpoints and understandings.

Tierney & Dilley (2001) identify that educational research interviews may be conducted for a number of reasons, one of which is to obtain greater understanding of the social contexts of teaching and learning. In this case, the term ‘context’ may refer to the exploration of participants’ “contextual experience, actions and relationships” (Tierney & Dilley, 2001, p.456), and the interview will likely have the ultimate goal of striving to appreciate and comprehend the thoughts and ideas of a respondent from their personal viewpoint. Historically, interview research focused on studying the perceptions of those who are ‘in the know’ (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001), and this seems to prevail in educational research, as teachers, administrators and other professional members of staff continue to be the most interviewed individuals in educational research settings (Tierney & Dilley, 2001).
Despite the professional members of staff prevailing as the most interviewed in educational settings, it is apparent that the focus of these interviews has undergone a significant shift over the years. Specifically, rather than assuming that these academic and professional members of staff will hold absolute and unequivocal responses to particular queries, the interviewing of educational staff members is now regarded as a technique used to understand respondents’ “interpretations of reality” (Tierney & Dilley, 2001, p. 463). Utilising the interview research method to understand the viewpoints of educators provides an opportunity for the researcher to interact with the participants and gain a better understanding of the participants’ varying perspectives.

For the purposes of this study, three teachers from The College, Western Sydney University (TCWSU), were interviewed, in a semi-structured, one-hour interview. The interviews took place towards the end of the first term at TCWSU, during May, 2018. The interviews took place over the course of one week, with one interview conducted per participant. A qualitative research interview approach was selected to address this study’s aims of understanding tertiary teachers’ pedagogical approaches, from their individual perspectives, via the understanding of their own words. The interviews were conducted toward the conclusion of the first term, in order to allow time for teachers to reflect on their teaching strategies both within the first term, as well as in previous teaching sessions. This timing was preferable to earlier in the teaching term, when teachers would likely have been preoccupied settling in with new classes and getting to know their student cohort. Each of the participants was interviewed for between forty minutes and one hour. Although participants were informed that the interviews would likely take approximately one hour to complete, the length of the actual interviews was organic, based on the flow of ideas and thoughts from the interviewees, with no set predetermined time in place.

Each of the participants was interviewed face-to-face, thereby presenting the
opportunity for both parties to “explore the participant’s experience, place it in context, and reflect on its meaning” (Seidman, 2013, p.20). Therefore, it was determined that these interviews would both provide the opportunity for teachers to take time to reflect on their teaching practices, as well as for the researcher to ascertain meaning in context, as the interviews progressed. As the researcher and the participants are work colleagues, it was anticipated that the working relationship would provide a positive and informal basis for the interviews. It is important to note, however, that the researcher did not have a close working relationship with any potential participants, as the participant pool included a number of campuses, including those other than the researcher’s home campus. The researcher was conscious of the potential complications of working with colleagues, and as such made particular effort to reassure participants that their responses were confidential and would remain so. The researcher was also careful to remain objective and professionally detached in interviewing those colleagues and analysing their responses.

Relevant literature stipulates that “[q]ualitative interviewing is a kind of guided conversation in which the researcher carefully listens so as to hear the meaning” (Rubin & Rubin, cited in Warren, 2001, p.86). Although this appears to be a straightforward concept, it has been established that ‘listening’ involves not only the act of hearing the words the participant is relaying, but carefully considering the ideas that are represented, by undertaking the seven steps of “thematizing [sic], designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing [sic], verifying and reporting” (Warren, 2001, p.87). Following these seven steps involves careful consideration of the interview process, with focus on understanding the participants’ recollections and encounters in their own words, and from their individual perspectives. Consequently, allocating ample time for each interview presented the interviewer with the opportunity to focus on specific aspects of the interview questions relating to teaching and allowed time for teachers to reflect on the central themes that were discussed, with the
provision of sufficient time for critical self-reflection that is necessary when analysing one’s own teaching methods. This afforded the researcher with ample time to determine participants’ ideas relating to key ideas, in a controlled setting.

3.2 Measures

Participants were invited to elect to participate in the study. Initially, the project was approved by the Associate Director of The College, before ethics approval was sought and obtained. Following the ethics approval, a college administrator was contacted in order to approach and recruit possible participants for this study, on behalf of the researcher. This manner of recruitment was selected in order to limit initial contact between the researcher and the participant pool, thus ensuring that participants were able to volunteer their participation, without any expectation or feelings of obligation that may arise if the researcher contacted the participants directly. Thus, the administrator contacted a large number of college teachers from different campuses and informed them of the opportunity for possible participation in this research project. The study participation form and the consent form were provided to the administrator to fully disclose all research details. The researcher’s email excerpt which was sent by the administrator to potential participants is included in Appendix B. The consent form is presented in Appendix C and the participant information sheet is in Appendix D.

This recruitment process allowed teachers to elect to participate in the study, which was preferable to having to approach them directly. Allowing participants to elect to participate ensured that no pressure was applied by the researcher on the particular subject, and that the participants willingly took part in the research study.

3.3 Procedures

Face to face interviewing was the chosen method of data collection. This interview style was selected as it allowed the researcher to obtain privileged insight into the subjects’ experiences, during which the interviewees were able to describe their ‘lived everyday world’
(Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) using ‘everyday’ language with which they were comfortable. Conducting interviews also allowed the researcher to determine implicit meanings by reiterating messages and confirming them with the respondent and prompting the participant to volunteer specific information. The interviews were based on a qualitative research interview approach, as the interview approach focuses on making meaning from personal experiences (Phillips-Pula, Strunk & Pickler, 2011). The research interview is characterised by having a specific focus on the ever-changing nature of experience (Foddy, 1993; Brinkman & Kvale, 2015), acknowledging that ‘understanding’ is a subjective concept, emphasising the importance of ‘lived experience’ as pivotal to understanding, and considering context when determining the ‘meaning’ of an experience (Seidman, 2013).

The interviews were semi-structured, with a duration of between 40 minutes and one hour, which allowed for the eliciting of specific data during each session. Typically, research interviews are designed in order to obtain an understanding of participants’ viewpoints, and they place a particular emphasis on allowing the ‘phenomena’ to arise through the participants’ own words (Moustakas, 1994).

Initially, the interviewer asked questions to establish the context of the interviewee’s initial teaching experiences, followed by prompts asking the participant to describe their college teaching experiences and how these experiences related to the current context in which they work i.e., with academically diverse learners. Finally, participants were provided with the opportunity to reflect on the meanings that were drawn from their experiences (Bevan, 2014; Seidman, 2013). Specifically, the interview first focused on participants’ professional backgrounds, in order to determine their teaching experiences thus far. The interview then focused on how the participant’s life experiences had influenced their attitude to their current teaching approach, as implemented at TCWSU, and finally, it allowed for reflection upon these experiences and upon the extent to which these experiences related to their current teaching
pedagogies.

A thematic review was conducted to identify the various teaching strategies that the three teachers believed they were employing in their diverse classrooms. Teachers’ thoughts and reflections were examined to determine their understandings regarding catering to an academically diverse cohort and their own teaching pedagogies. Interviews were recorded using audio recording software, and then transcribed. Consequently, the transcribed text along with the sound recording made up the materials to be analysed. The transcription allowed for an accurate portrayal of participants’ words, which resulted in a more precise and reliable representation and analysis of data. Pseudonyms were utilised in order to protect participants’ identities. As such, the study participants were assured confidentiality, with their true identities concealed from all but the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all participants were given access to the final report.

The data was collated using an inductive thematic approach, during which the researcher made efforts to include all potentially relevant data, in order to obtain a clear representation of the participants’ experiences. This involved the careful selection of pertinent excerpts from the transcripts. These excerpts were then organised according to specific classifications, resulting in the identification of relevant themes. It is important to note that these themes were not identified or selected before the data collation process began, in order to allow for a fair representation of the data, with minimal confirmation bias (Seidman, 2013). As such, the researcher analysed the transcript data to determine whether any commonalities or connections existed among the participants’ responses, before classifying them according to a more general topic or theme. Thus, a thematic approach was employed for the data collation process. The data was stored securely online, on a research archive, ‘ResearchDirect’, for potential future use, as per the ethics approval.

It is essential to consider the ease with which certain excerpts may be accessed, after
collation. To address this matter, each excerpt passage was clearly marked in such a way as to enable the researcher to refer to the original source material. The following procedure was followed as suggested by Seidman (2013). Following each excerpt, a number of symbols were utilised: the subject’s initials, a Roman numeral to indicate the interview from which the quote originated, and an Arabic numeral to indicate the page number from the original transcript. By following this specific procedure, all data was cross-referenced. This resulted in a high degree of reliability and transparency.

Excerpts were grouped together in their corresponding categories and saved as word-processed digital documents. Excerpts that may have belonged to more than one category were duplicated and analysed accordingly. Following this, the documents were reviewed to ensure consistency and accuracy. Any excerpts that seemed to be unsuitable were removed from the word-processed file, and if appropriate, repositioned in a more suitable category. Additionally, themes that seemed to be ‘contradictory’ or atypical were noted and studied for their potential relevance (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). All relevant files, including scanned copies of participant consent forms, word-processed files and audio recordings were backed up on research online software (ResearchDirect), in order to ensure security and duplication in the event that original soft copies might be inadvertently destroyed or become inaccessible.

The data collation process served as one of the initial stages of data interpretation and analysis (Seidman, 2013). The data analysis procedure included reviewing the data to deduce commonalities among the participants’ professional experiences, as evident in their transcribed responses. This data collation process involved identifying respondents’ responses to particular queries and comparing these responses in order to determine whether the responses were similar or dissimilar, and to identify common themes, if present. Upon reviewing the notes, a list of relevant themes was established, which was then utilised to group participants’ responses and gain insight into their perceptions relating to specific themes. As suggested by Seidman
(2013), the researcher used the data to reflect on a number of questions, namely:

1) How are the participants’ experiences represented by the data similar or different from each other?

2) What is the reason for any potential disparity in the participants’ responses?

3) What, if any, discoveries have been unearthed that were not initially anticipated?

4) What, if any, previous expectations have been confirmed?

To what degree is the data consistent with the relevant literature?

Finally, the analysis of the research led to the researcher employing critical self-reflection to determine the overall meanings that may be drawn from the study, before providing recommendations for further research. The research analysis allowed the researcher to both review respondents’ responses, including their similarities and differences, and also to self-reflect regarding her own perceptions relating to teaching academically diverse cohorts. It allowed the researcher to gain a richer understanding of others’ lived experiences, and the strategies and pedagogies that other professionals employ during their lessons. Additionally, the data review process afforded the researcher with the opportunity to reflect on the policies and procedures that are implemented at The College, and the extent to which different educators understand and interpret different aspects of these policies in varying or similar ways, and the extent to which participants may emphasise one aspect of a policy in lieu of another. Specifically, the researcher was able to determine that the research participants generally had responses that were similar in terms of the ideas they mentioned, and although some details did differ, teachers generally had a largely unified understanding and interpretation of many of the key ideas.

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology utilised by the researcher in conducting the research. It identified qualitative interview research as the research approach used in this study,
and identified the key characteristics of interview research, including its prevailing use in educational contexts. This chapter emphasised the powerful nature of the research interview as providing insight into thoughts and perceptions that may otherwise be unarticulated, and that interviews are frequently utilised in order to attain greater understanding of educational social contexts. Additionally, this chapter identified the shift in interview goals over the years, as the aims shifted from obtaining absolute answers and responses from those perceived to be all-knowing, to understanding participants’ viewpoints and experiences from their own perspectives. It outlined the theory upon which the interviews were based, and the process of obtaining approval for the research to be approved and then implemented. Finally, this chapter allowed for self-reflection, with the researcher considering personal experiences relating to teaching students from academically diverse cohorts. Chapter four details the findings of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Findings

This chapter details the findings resulting from the qualitative analysis of interview data, collected from college faculty, which focused on college teachers’ teaching experiences with academically diverse learners. To garner insight into teachers’ varied experiences, semi-structured interviews were conducted and these formed the basis upon which the data collection procedure focused. Information elicited through the interview method provided a basis for the identification of key themes that emerged. Three staff members, who teach or have taught in the Academic Pathways Program (APP) were interviewed on an individual basis. The pseudonyms assigned to each of these research participants, along with an overview of their teaching backgrounds and histories, is detailed in the following paragraph.

The first participant, Max, is an instructor who currently teaches or has taught in the Academic Pathways program at The College, Western Sydney University. This participant has extensive teaching experience in a wide variety of contexts, including teaching at various primary schools, high schools and tertiary institutions. The second participant, Sidra, currently teaches or has taught in the Academic Pathways Program at The College, Western Sydney University. Sidra’s teaching experience is limited to the tertiary level, and she has taught in a limited number of tertiary institutions. The third participant is Sam. Sam is a former English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) teacher who currently teaches or has taught at The College, Western Sydney University. Sam is experienced with working with international students and teaching at The College is her first venture beyond the ESOL teaching environment.

All staff interviews were transcribed verbatim, and direct quotes have been included in this chapter to represent the perspectives as provided by the interview participants.

4.1 Staff Interview Themes
Semi structured interviews were conducted using the Outline of Interview Questions as a guide (see Appendix A). The questions provided a means for understanding faculty members’ pedagogical experiences with academically diverse learners. The questions asked the staff members to consider their teaching experiences, with regard to the following broad areas: (1) definition of ‘diverse learner’, (2) teaching history and experience, (3) teaching experience at The College, (4) views regarding ADLs, (5) professional self-reflection, and (6) suggestions and/or recommendations. Appendix E contains a table displaying a listing of inductive broad categories and a tabulation of interviewee responses in relation to the interview questions which were the foundation for this study.

4.1.1 Understanding Academic Diversity

Participants were prompted to provide their own definition of academically diverse learners. Each of the participants conceded that their classes were made up of academically diverse learners, with all participants recognising that students at The College have various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, and may speak languages other than English, with English being their less dominant language. They also acknowledged that diversity connotes openness and also that ability is a factor to consider when thinking about diverse learners. Additionally, teachers referred to students’ academic histories and skills, in order to recognise this form of academic diversity among their students. The participants, therefore, expressed insight into the understanding of diversity, which transcended the tangible differences and displayed evidence of a more sophisticated understanding of academically diverse learners. They mentioned factors including age, academic strengths and limitations, potential disadvantages that students might face, and students’ preference of learning styles.

Thematically, teachers mentioned the following characteristics of academically diverse learners: (a) student demographics, (b) lingual abilities, (c) ability and disability and (d) students’ unique learning styles. Teachers expressed their eagerness to meet the needs of
their academically diverse learners, and reported different strategies that they utilised in their teaching. Although there were a number of differing definitions for academic diversity, teachers recognised that it is important to identify and discuss academic diversity. They also agreed that it is important to address these learners’ unique needs both as a whole, as well as on an individual basis.

Although most of the research participants’ definition of academic diversity overlapped in regard to some characteristics, it was apparent that each staff member had their own understanding of what constitutes an academically diverse learner. Variations in teaching experience, professional development and personal differences may have shaped the difference in defining ADLs among the participants. Despite this, all research participants provided similar feedback, including acknowledging that academic diversity is not always tangible, and can be difficult to recognise at times. This finding is in line with Brookfield’s (2015, p.97) definition of diversity, that it is the “differences of all kinds between students”.

4.1.2 Defining Academically Diverse Learners

The faculty participants each relayed their own understanding of the term ‘academically diverse learner’. They mainly emphasised demographic characteristics, citing minority groups and cultural differences. Max stated “[They] [c]an come from any culture, any background … any status … any educational background … diversity means it’s open.” Sidra echoed this perspective, with the statement “Backgrounds, cultures, ability is probably the key thing though … [a] diverse learner.” However Sidra added the concept of ability, as an added form of diversity. Additionally, Sam contributed the following similar remarks: “I think about firstly their background in terms of what their ethnicity is, what their nationalities are, that’s one thing and their skills and learning; so it might be reading and writing, speaking or listening in that sense”.

Although the participants generally agreed with one another regarding what
constitutes an academically diverse learner, each staff member also has their own understanding of the term. The staff members made references to ethnicity, culture and [ethnic] background at the outset, demonstrating that student demographics, ethnic background and other visible diversities seem to be at the forefront when these teachers consider academic diversity. It is also evident that ability and disability is a factor that has been considered by these participants when it comes to academic diversity. A very similar sentiment is expressed by Sam, when it is mentioned that academic diversity also includes students’ “skills and learning [level]”. It seems that the research participants’ understanding of academic diversity was quite broad, and this shaped their responses throughout the duration of the interview.

The participants’ similar yet varied responses in regard to identifying and characterising academically diverse learners, echoes the literature on the topic, which although identifies a number of common characteristics of academically diverse students, with many overlapping specifications, is also varied at times. For example, Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey (2008) assert that it is often difficult to separate discussions of student diversity from discussions of multiculturalism. Additionally, it has been established that academically diverse cohorts present their own sets of characteristics, including potential academic advantages, as well as challenges. Chandler et al. (2017) confirm that ADLs have their own defining characteristics, and that students within academically diverse cohorts will not always share all of the same attributes. Students’ individual academically diverse attributes are due to the fact that ADLs are distinct individuals and do not necessarily present the same set of characteristics or look like one another. It has been established that ADLs are varied and that their main common characteristic is that they enter their courses with their own specific personal and academic experiences and histories (Chandler et al., 2017).

Teachers’ understanding of their academically diverse student cohorts and their
myriad of potential characteristics seems to be emerging, however upon reviewing the interview data, it is evident that no one definition has been employed by the teaching institution of this study’s participants to specify their academically diverse cohorts, and this cohort’s specific characteristics. Although determining a set definition for their diverse learners may present some challenges, it would ultimately present a means by which to more adequately support these college students and meet their collective needs. Difficulties with setting a definition may include potential for stereotyping students, setting up inaccurate assumptions and equipping staff members with an inadvertent bias toward students. Advantages, however, include allowing college staff to more specifically understand students’ needs and allowing for specific programming and planning which would take these students’ needs into account. Specifically, any difficulties faced by The College’s blend of academically diverse learners could be accounted for and specific support mechanisms could be utilised to better address the needs of all college students. This could be implemented with the introduction of new policies, however, as The College already utilises Transition Pedagogy in shaping curricula and support services for students, it may be more appropriate and feasible to consider students’ needs in terms of adjusting existing policies and procedures.

4.1.3 College teachers’ pedagogical philosophies

All three participants expressed similar pedagogical philosophies, espousing courses that are student-focused, with an emphasis on displaying cultural awareness, dignity and respect. There is particular mention of the attention that is afforded to students who require additional assistance when compared with the majority of the class. In saying this though, it is apparent that all participants conceded that the majority of their student cohort is made up of non-traditional students. The varied student clientele is revealed by Max’s remarks: “[A]nyone can come here. That means you get all sorts of people from varied cultural
backgrounds, from varied religious backgrounds, and mature age students mixing with kids that have just left school”. He expressed the emphasis on student-centred learning by explaining “I tend to want to teach on an individual basis” and “I’ve got 18 [students] at the moment, and that’s enough to give them individual attention”.

Additionally, participants expressed their teaching philosophies by explaining how they differentiate the learning material, depending on students’ needs. Sidra stated that “I teach at that [high distinction] level but I also break [the concepts] down so it’s absolutely clear to the students that are just [thinking] I’m not getting this”. This signifies this teacher’s variation of teaching style, to suit different learners’ needs. Sam expressed the importance of showing interest in students as a whole, rather than simply valuing their academics at the cost of their overall self-esteem. This is expressed in the words: “[I] try and pick up on their [conversation], show an interest [in] what they’re talking about”. This approach is in line with research that suggests that students are likely to retain information from lessons during which they perceive their teachers as warm, positive and accepting (Wolfe, 2006). Collectively, the staff members expressed the importance and value of ensuring they tailor their teaching style to fit particular student needs, thereby favouring a somewhat student-centred approach to implementing classroom activities. Learner centred teaching pedagogies may be characterised by identifying a number of specific attributes, some of which seem applicable when reviewing this study’s participant responses when asked to reflect on their teaching pedagogies. Student centred teaching styles provide an opportunity for students to take control of their learning and this style of teaching frames the educators’ role more as a facilitator than as an absolute director (Weimer, cited in Barraket, 2005). It seems that participants valued student focused learning styles, with an emphasis on providing students with individual support, thereby allowing for greater student engagement.

4.1.4 Professional reflection
The study participants were each given an opportunity to reflect on their teaching styles, with particular attention spent on identifying the challenges associated with teaching ADLs and considering the different strategies that are utilised to support ADLs in the college. A number of challenges were reported by participants. Max stated “Well, I had one schizophrenic lady in the class. She just said to me one day, because I didn't do something in a special consideration form … she yelled at me and just said, can't you read, I gave you the form, I can kill, I can kill if I get stressed, I'm a schizophrenic. In front of the class…I thought oh my god”. Sidra echoed these sentiments, by stating “Some of them are just bloody hard to teach. Some of them are just unresponsive and it depends on the time of day. At 9:00am in the morning they're not awake. At 4:00pm in the afternoon they are dead asleep”. Sam addressed the academic challenges, by saying “[T]hey don’t perform very well. They don’t have that comprehension and that level of understanding as my traditional - or the mainstream students do” and “I can see that they struggle. They do struggle with some of the writing tasks”.

It is clear that teachers face a number of different challenges when teaching ADLs. These challenges range from dealing with students who are potentially disabled, or who suffer from any potential illness, including mental illness, to dealing with fluctuating energy levels and managing students’ varied academic abilities in the classroom.

4.1.5 Implementing Transition Pedagogy

The research interview participants were asked to reflect on the support services that are available to students at The College. Teachers described their personal pedagogical approaches to help students cope with the pressures of academic study on their physical and mental wellbeing. They also identified the myriad college support systems available to students.

Among the personal pedagogical approaches utilised by the study participants, it was
clear that teachers employed their own interpretations of Transition Pedagogy, by supporting their first year academically diverse learners both in large groups, as a whole class, as well as on an individual level. Max relayed the different breathing techniques he uses in class to help students feel less anxious and nervous, and focus on the tasks at hand. Additionally, Max noted the extent to which he supported students, by reminding them to take care with their personal health, especially sleep. This support was implemented by providing students with positive affirmations to help them feel empowered, as well as providing students with tips to achieve a better nights’ sleep. The implementation of these strategies, which were incorporated during lesson time, for only a few minutes during each lesson, seemed to result in students benefiting from the breathing exercises, according to Max. This incorporation of extraneous exercises, which Max referred to as implementing a ‘holistic’ approach, is in line with the Transition Pedagogy model, which places emphasis on creating a sense of belonging among students (Raw, Tonkin, Peterson & Jones, 2015). Although the Transition Pedagogy approach identifies the importance of creating a sense of belonging among students, it is flexible in that this sense of belonging may be achieved in a number of different ways. Indeed, the sense of belonging is implemented slightly differently by each of the respondents, at the classroom level. Sidra, for example, seeks to meet her learners’ needs by anticipating students’ needs, especially as students’ energy levels tend to wane after midday. Sidra addresses this issue by providing students with sugar lollies, to boost morale and increase students’ energy and resulting focus and attention. The third participant fostered the sense of belonging by providing students with individual attention and developing a meaningful relationship with her students. Although the implementation differed from one participant to the next, it is clear that all three participants fostered a sense of belonging to some extent, in their classrooms, which is in line with the Transition Pedagogy model of teaching.

Furthermore, the study participants identified the institution implemented student
EXPLORING TERTIARY TEACHERS’ PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCES ABOUT ACADEMIC DIVERSITY

support systems, which were also in line with the Transition Pedagogy model. A prominent feature that was articulated by all three respondents is the inclusion of the Study Lounge (also referred to as the Learning Centre), which is a designated classroom which has been stylised and marketed to students as a study area, available to all students for either quiet study or to interact with a college teacher, who is available to provide students with immediate feedback and study support on both assessed tasks as well as non-assessment college activities. The inclusion of the Study Lounge allows for immediate student feedback, and this is significant as quality, timely feedback has been identified as an important component of Transition Pedagogy (Raw et al., 2015). Raw et al. (2015) observed that students felt frustrated when their ongoing feedback would be contradicted by their assessment results or performance reviews. The inclusion of the Study Lounge allows for ongoing feedback by college teachers, and allows students to action any changes necessary to successfully complete a task. It allows for a safe and comfortable designated environment, in which students are encouraged to ask questions and to make clarifications. In addition, it seems that the inclusion of the Study Lounge serves to also foster student feelings of belonging at an institution wide level.

The Study Lounge service is augmented with the provision of an online study advice service, Studiosity, which allows students to receive study support after business hours. The provision of the Studiosity programme, the subscription for which is paid for by The College for each student, ensures that students are never alone and isolated when it comes to accessing study support. This is an important consideration, as research has demonstrated that students who feel isolated and lonely during their first year of tertiary study, among other factors, are likely to discontinue their studies.

Similarly, participants described the allocation of a First Year Experience Coordinator (FYEC) for each student, as an important student support mechanism. The implementation of FYECs is directly in line with the recommendations of the Transition Pedagogy model of
teaching, as it provides students with individualised support for both academic as well as personal matters. Students’ FYECs are available for them to meet with and discuss any matters that may be impacting their studies, whether they are personal matters or academic in nature, thereby strengthening students’ sense of belonging and support within The College.

4.2 Teachers’ Recommendations

The staff members were each prompted to consider whether any recommendations could be made regarding supporting ADLs in the college, and in the classroom. A number of recommendations emerged, which may be categorised as recommendations for students’ personal support, recommendations for students’ careers and aptitude support, recommendations for additional teacher training, recommendations for policy and administrative change, and recommendations for further in-class lesson planning.

Specifically, when it comes to personal support, Max suggested that “[Students should be taught] how to cope with - how to remember things, how to study, how to organise [their] study”. The dilemma of students being forgetful, tired or disorganised is relayed by Sidra when she says “At 4:00pm in the afternoon they are dead asleep”. This signifies the common observation among teachers that particular strategies are required to keep students focused and alert. Max’s suggestion is an action-based one, targeted at addressing the root cause of lack of attention and focus.

Additionally, Max stated “I think the gap between the real world and the education needs to be bridged’, thus alluding to the need for more college input when it comes to students’ future careers and aptitude, to ensure that they are enrolled in a course that suits them. Specifically, Max suggested that professionals from different disciplines could be invited to The College to speak with students and provide insight into the daily tasks required in a particular job. This suggestion is quite unique among the participants, and this comes as no surprise as Max is the most experienced teacher out of the three, and has drawn on his
EXPLORING TERTIARY TEACHERS’ PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCES ABOUT ACADEMIC DIVERSITY

previous experiences to make this suggestion.

Furthermore, Max suggested that additional training be provided to college teachers, in order to provide additional “cultural diversity awareness consciousness”. This is a direct suggestion intended to help teachers better understand their cohorts and ADLs.

Sidra was quite vocal regarding recommendations for policy and administrative change. Although she did not recall any specific policies for ADLs, she did concede that Academic Integration Plans (AIPs) were instrumental to varying degrees, with the potential to benefit students, however with poor execution. Thus, she suggested that there should be more follow-up when it comes to AIPs, so that none slip through and are unnoticed by the class instructor. Additionally, Sidra recommended that in terms of policy change, it should be College policy that more time is provided for students to review feedback before undertaking a follow-on task. The dilemma is expressed in the words: “There's an assessment in one of the units I'm teaching at the moment where the students have an essay plan that was submitted, say, two weeks ago. Part of that essay plan is going to be allowed to be used in an assessment two weeks later to actually write an in-class assessment. That has not been marked. Hasn't been marked and hasn't been given feedback on so the students know hey, is this work I did two weeks good enough to actually use for this in-class assessment? “This, in Sidra’s words, would “Have the bureaucracy form around the students not the students form around the bureaucracy”. Sidra’s expression may be interpreted as her desire for students’ needs to be placed ahead of administrative needs. Finally, when it comes to recommendations for further in-class lesson planning, Sam remarked that students would benefit from more interactive lessons, rather than simply working from a workbook.

Overall, from participant responses, it was clear that a number of suggestions were apparent, and that these suggestions were raised in order to address specific areas of improvement, from the teachers’ perspective. Recommendations for students’ personal
EXPLORING TERTIARY TEACHERS’ PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCES ABOUT ACADEMIC DIVERSITY

support included making provisions in the curriculum to include activities to encourage students to take greater personal care, particularly in regard to students’ levels of energy and alertness. Tertiary students’ lack of consistency in applying themselves to academic tasks has been documented (McInnis et al., 1995) and scholars have sought to suggest processes by which to overcome this issue. According to Tinto (2012), students who are engaged with their instructor and peers in the classroom are more likely to be present, participate in learning activities, and achieve academic success. This student engagement could be interpreted in a number of ways, and participating in class-wide affirmations of success and conscious discussion relating to effective routine making, including sleeping tips, could be seen as a means by which to engage students as well as equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain alertness, focus and energy in the classroom.

Furthermore, suggestions for students’ careers and aptitude support included creating stronger links between students’ perceptions of their future careers, and the reality of what students’ prospective careers entail. It has been acknowledged that students are motivated to study when the subject matter piques their interest (McInnis et al., 1995) and is relevant to their career development goals. Although students may have positive intentions when enrolling, Max identified that students frequently lose sight of the reality of their future careers and are sometimes enrolled in courses that do not align with their prospective careers, potentially resulting in a lack of motivation and engagement. Whilst McInnis et al. (1995) suggest that the challenge for academics is to create a stronger interest in their subject matter, it remains concerning that students may be inadvertently enrolled in courses that do not align with their future aspirations, whether that is due to students changing their minds about their career goals, or if students are unaware of their academic and career progression, based on their enrolment. To combat this, it has been mentioned that The College has implemented First Year Experience Coordinators, whose job it is to advise students on their academic
progression. It remains however, a feasible suggestion by Max to introduce more direct insight into the expectations students may encounter in their potential future careers.

Additionally, the study participants made recommendations for teachers’ professional development, with Max commenting specifically on additional training to aid teachers in understanding their students’ cultural distinctions. According to Goldingay et al. (2014), courses which set out to be socially inclusive must ensure that approaches to student learning are considered from a variety of perspectives, including understanding students’ varying cultural perspectives to better cater to their needs. This is seen as a way in which to both foster a positive learning environment for all students, where their cultural needs are considered and taken into account, and a positive reinforcement of student belonging, likely resulting in higher rates of student retention. Although participants reported students having diverse multicultural backgrounds, and having experience teaching these diverse cohorts, it remains that being in frequent contact with those of diverse backgrounds is not sufficient when it comes to developing ‘cultural competence’ (Otten, 2003). Specifically, this cultural competence may be achieved by setting specific goals for intercultural training (Brislin & Yoshida, cited in Otten, 2003), namely: helping individuals understand their own culture, as well as that of others; developing an understanding of foreign cultures; and developing communication skills necessary to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds. This involves working with culturally diverse students to help students cope with stressors that may be detrimental to their emotional, mental and physical wellbeing; develop a working relationship with individuals of different cultural background and support students in their cross-cultural experiences, as appropriate. Although the study’s participants conceded that cultural training is provided to some extent, it remains that one participant, Max, suggested more overt cultural training to better equip teachers as they encounter culturally diverse student cohorts.
Furthermore, recommendations for policy and administrative change were also suggested by Sidra, whose main objective was articulating the need for more consideration when it comes to providing students with timely assessment feedback. As has been noted by Tinto (2014), students are more likely to be successful when they receive meaningful feedback that can be actively applied to their learning, to adjust their performance in future assessment tasks. Although Sidra acknowledged that feedback provided to students is of high quality and meaningful, the recommendation was specifically related to ensuring that the feedback is timely, in order for students to reflect before submitting subsequent assessment tasks. Although The College students are provided with a Study Lounge and Studiosity for on-demand feedback, the timeliness of teacher feedback to students may be an area for consideration, as meaningful, quality feedback is likely to be most relevant and meaningful when it is presented to students in a timely manner, with enough time and opportunity to reflect and adjust their performance accordingly.

Finally, recommendations for in-class lesson planning were suggested by Sam, who suggested the incorporation of more interactive lessons, in lieu of strictly working from a workbook. Such sentiments may be attributed to Sam’s articulated desire to create more student engagement, which is in line with relevant academic literature that suggests students who are engaged in activities with their peers as well as instructors, are likely to experience academic success (Tinto, 2014). This is not to say that the workbook is without merit; Sam clearly expressed that the workbook is beneficial and crucial to students’ understanding of core unit principles, however, her suggestion has been interpreted as seeking to enrich classroom activities through the provision of more engaging activities.

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the findings resulting from the qualitative analysis of the three interviews conducted with three college teachers. The chapter detailed the attributes of the
study participants, namely Max, an experienced teacher who has worked in many different teaching contexts and taught students of varying academic levels; Sidra, whose teaching experience so far is limited to teaching at tertiary institutions, and Sam, who has previously taught ESOL courses to international students, as well as students who have English as an additional language. This chapter detailed the interview themes that emerged upon data transcription and analysis. The themes are understanding academic diversity, defining academically diverse learners, college teachers’ pedagogical philosophies, professional reflection, implementing Transition Pedagogy and teacher’s recommendations. Participants’ recommendations included making provisions to impart knowledge to students regarding personal care, in order to improve students’ energy and focus, as well as decrease anxiety levels; creating a more explicit link between courses and prospective career opportunities for students; providing more overt cultural training and professional development for teachers; ensuring that feedback is timely in order to preserve its meaningful nature, and incorporating more interactive lessons within units to foster greater student engagement. Chapter five focuses on understanding pedagogical perspectives.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Understanding Pedagogical Perspectives

This thesis provided an insight into the pedagogical experiences of tertiary educators at TCWSU in terms of academic diversity. The designated aims of this study was to better understand teachers’ experiences when it comes to teaching students of academically diverse backgrounds. The perspectives of college staff members served as the primary focus, in order to better understand the questions that shaped this study, which were:

1) How do instructors define their ADLs?

2) What are some of the challenges teachers associate with ADLs?

3) What strategies do tertiary teachers utilise to address the needs of their ADLs?
   3.1) What support systems are in place to assist ADLs?
   3.2) Are any additional supports recommended to assist ADLs?

This chapter provides a description of the implications and recommendations that were apparent from the insights garnered by the researcher and the perceptions of the study participants. The findings that were elicited from the teacher interviews served as the resources upon which this chapter is based.

The participants interview questions were often based on comparing their current teaching experiences with previous teaching experiences, in order to understand staff members’ experiences in their current teaching context, and if and how it differs from previous teaching experiences. Teachers expressed that academically diverse learning environments included students of varying characteristics, with variations in age, background, academic ability and physical and mental health.

5.1 Teachers’ Pedagogical Approaches

Although the research participants expressed their pedagogical styles in different terms, it was apparent that each of the participants placed emphasis on catering to students
both as a whole class cohort, as well as on an individual basis. All three teachers expressed ways in which they catered to individual students at times when they perceived students needed additional assistance, with additional explanations as they deemed necessary, differentiating lessons so that both the high achievers as well as those who are struggling are kept engaged, and providing students with discreet personal attention to both help them and not draw unwanted attention to them. Teachers expressed their desire to create engaging lessons, where all students have the opportunity to participate, which is a significant aspect of the Transition Pedagogy Model. Additionally, all teachers expressed their willingness to deliver lessons using more than one method or strategy, thereby aligning their pedagogical styles closely with the multiple means of representation (MMR) model of teaching. This included representing the information using videos, books, physical movement and through digital technology. However, whilst teachers acknowledged their willingness toward implementing this model of teaching, they also recognised that their course curricula limited their ability to utilise MMR strategies all the time. They also recognised that students would not always respond with alternative teaching methods, with one participant remarking that students would get bored with interactive activities. These findings demonstrate that although teachers are theoretically aligned with the concept of MMR, they remain heavily reliant on traditional methods of teaching, with the prescribed student workbook (in its various iterations, including print and digital version) being the main teaching resource. Although the reasons for this are not immediately apparent, it is possible that tertiary educators perceived that their students were disinterested in multi-modal teaching methods and abandoned them; that they do not feel there is enough time to spend on multi-modal teaching activities, as the workbook is the main teaching resource, or teachers may be less comfortable with implementing alternative teaching methods.

5.2 Support Systems to Assist ADLs
Study participants’ responses varied widely when it came to recognising and describing the support systems available to assist academically diverse learners. When it came to personal support provided by teachers, one teacher described the techniques he would use in class to support nervous or anxious students, by explaining how he would teach them breathing exercises, practise positive affirmations, and provide tips for better sleeping. Another participant explained how she would provide students with rewards in the form of sweets to both gain students’ attention and increase their focus during the afternoons, when students would frequently be tired and unfocused. Additionally, the third participant reported that she would gain close rapport with students by interacting with them on a personal level, and increase her personal connection with them. Of note, this participant made particular mention of ensuring that any additional assistance she provided was discreet so as not to draw undesired attention to the student who required additional support. All teachers reported paying individual attention to students where possible, to develop meaningful relationships, where students would feel comfortable expressing their feelings and asking for assistance.

When it comes to describing the institutional level support systems in place for ADLs, respondents had similar descriptions. They described the Study Lounge (also referred to as the Learning Centre), as a designated room for students to seek academic support, or to engage in quiet reading and study. They remarked that students could visit this designated study area to both do private study or receive study support from a college teacher. Participants also mentioned students’ First Year Experience Coordinators (FYECs) as an important student support for ADLs. They stated that FYECs are an important resource, and help students with navigating course progression, dealing with personal issues that may arise, and obtaining personalised advice when it comes to managing personal and academic commitments. Additionally, participants identified the YourTutor (also referred to as Studiosity) service as an additional support for ADLs. This service serves as an after-hours
academic support, whereby students are able to submit their draft assessment tasks and receive feedback either instantly, via online chat, or within 24-48 hours, via email. Participants remarked that although these support systems were in place, there existed barriers to access these supports including lack of knowledge of the support system, student reluctance to seek support, a difficult to navigate website (in the case of Studiosity), and issues of timeliness (in the case of Studiosity responding to students’ requests). These support mechanisms at the college-wide level, align with the Transition Pedagogy Model of teaching.

Finally, participants identified a number of suggestions to enhance the supports available to students. It was suggested that students’ learning be more closely linked with their real-world expectations and career path. Specifically, one participant remarked that it would be quite beneficial for students to meet professionals from their area of study, so as to get a feel of the daily activities of the profession, and to gain a better understanding of whether the course they were undertaking would be the best fit for them. This could be in the form of an incursion, with a visit from a professional in the field scheduled for students, where they could meet this professional, listen to an encouraging talk from them, and have the opportunity to ask relevant questions. Additionally, it was suggested that breathing exercises and healthy sleep and study habits be taught explicitly alongside course content. One teacher stated that he taught students positive affirmations, breathing exercises and healthy sleep habits, and that it would be beneficial if all students were taught these skills during their regular lessons. Finally, one teacher suggested that the lessons should have more interactive components, with the use of different learning mediums, in order to generate more interest during lessons. This is in line with both the Transition Pedagogy Model and the MMR teaching methodology, where a number of different teaching methods are utilised in order to cater to students’ varied learning styles.

Other suggested supports were concerned with the administration and management
side of teaching. Specifically, one participant suggested that there would be significant benefit to students if more time was allowed for students to receive and digest feedback from assessments, before undertaking subsequent assessment tasks. A specific example that was cited was that a preparatory assessment task, which was designed to lead in to a second assessment task, was not graded in time for students to receive meaningful feedback, which would otherwise assist in the completion of the second task. This seemed to defeat the original purpose, as students could not draw upon the comments and marking from the first task, to aid them in the completion of the second task. Thus, it was suggested that students have more time to review feedback before they are expected to complete subsequent tasks. Furthermore, it was suggested that in order for supports such as the Study Lounge to be successful, it was imperative that adequate numbers of teachers be present and available to assist students. It was reported that during peak times (when assessments were due and during exam weeks), having one teacher per subject area was inadequate, as many students would turn up and either receive very little time with the teacher, or otherwise not be seen at all, due to time limitations. This, in turn, would reinforce a negative experience for students, who would then disregard the concept of seeking help at the Study Lounge, thereby creating conflicting feelings for students. Additionally, it was suggested that although the Studiosity service is beneficial in theory, it has been observed that the website could be seen as somewhat difficult to navigate, and has the potential to cause great confusion and frustration among students. It was therefore suggested that the website be reconsidered to combat its long-winded nature and to remedy the difficult navigation, which could serve as a deterrent for students from using it during high-pressure study periods, and therefore create a barrier to accessing the support available. Finally, it was suggested that although academic integration plans (AIPs) are a beneficial support in theory, it was the process of enacting the AIP that would most benefit students, and this had not been carried out on a consistent basis. Although
teachers acknowledged that AIPs were set out in good faith, with students’ best interests at heart, one teacher identified that at times, miscommunication between the dedicated AIP office and the class teacher could lead to students’ AIPs not being implemented in the most efficient manner. This is problematic, as it could potentially lead to students not receiving the support that they have been assigned, for example extra time in an exam or an altered version of an exam. Thus, it was suggested that the AIP process be streamlined to afford clearer communication among teachers and administration staff.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study drew upon the experiences of three faculty members of The College, in order to gain greater understanding of their professional experiences whilst working with ADLs. The strengths of the study include having direct contact with these professionals and being able to converse with them on an individual basis, to best understand their experiences and feelings. Conducting the data collection via interview proved to be a valuable method, as it allowed for confirmation of ideas and for additional questioning, as appropriate. This study is a valuable research tool as it is the first to specifically look at the teaching pedagogies as relevant to academically diverse learners, at The College, Western Sydney University.

However, it must be mentioned that some limitations have been identified. Firstly, this is a very small study with only three participants. Whilst it allowed for an intimate look into teachers’ experiences, it does not represent the entire faculty at the learning institution. Additionally, as the data collection method was interview, the data is comprised of teachers’ own self reflections, based on their own perspectives. This could be problematic, as it simply represents participants’ understanding from their own perspective, making the observations quite subjective. Finally, no direct observation was conducted by the researcher, with the result being that all data is based on participants’ own reports.

5.4 Recommendations & Future Research
This study sought to gain some insight into three teachers’ pedagogical experiences with academic diversity at The College, Western Sydney University. Three participants were interviewed and their reflections served the basis of the findings of the study. It would be recommended that future studies focus on repeating the study, with an emphasis on gaining the insights of more participants, in order to better understand the themes that arose from this initial study. Future studies would benefit from studying a larger number of participants, as this would provide a more generalised insight into teachers’ experiences. Additionally, future studies could modify the methodology to include not only a personal account via interview, but additionally, an independent data collection method, perhaps via objective observation. Alternatively, having participants keep a personal account of their experiences over a period of time could also prove useful as a snapshot into participants’ understanding of their situation and of their ADLs. Furthermore, additional interviews could be conducted, thereby allowing participants to add further detail or clarify particular points as they reflect on previous interviews.

5.5 Future Research Implications

The findings resulting from this examination of tertiary educators’ pedagogical experiences are beneficial for a number of college stakeholders, including faculty, management, administration and educational researchers. This study is a stepping stone toward understanding tertiary teachers’ pedagogical experiences as they relate to academically diverse learners. This study would also benefit future researchers interested in understanding the current educational landscape of tertiary institutions, understanding the term ‘academically diverse learners’, and garnering insight into instructors’ pedagogical strategies related with teaching ADLs at The College, Western Sydney University. Overall, future research into this area is essential as it would allow for further insight into teachers’ pedagogical experiences and allow for a greater understanding of teachers approaches with
academically diverse learners.

5.6 Implications of the study

This thesis has provided a close examination of tertiary teachers’ experiences about academic diversity, specifically with academically diverse learners. The aim of this investigation was to better understand tertiary educators’ understandings and experiences when teaching in an academically diverse context, especially concerning teaching academically diverse learners. Teachers’ self-reflections via interview served as the primary focus of this study, in order to gain a thorough understanding of their first hand accounts of their experiences. The study’s research questions served to guide the course of the study, and this thesis set out to understand three main questions, namely:

1) How do instructors define their ADLs?
2) What are some of the challenges teachers associate with ADLs?
3) What strategies do tertiary teachers utilise to address the needs of their ADLs?
   3.1) What support systems are in place to assist ADLs?
   3.2) Are any additional supports recommended to assist ADLs?

The implications and recommendations of the study are examined in the following paragraphs. Participants’ self-reflections provided the basis from which emerging themes were identified, namely ‘Defining academic diversity’, ‘Understanding pedagogical perspectives’ and ‘Support systems to assist ADLs’.

This study provided evidential confirmation that the tertiary educators who participated in the study viewed their academically diverse learners in a multitude of ways, however their pedagogical approaches were quite similar, with teachers identifying elements of Transition Pedagogy including student centred learning, student engagement and providing quality feedback, as important aspects of their teaching styles. Teachers identified their ADLs as presenting opportunities for differentiating lesson delivery, providing avenues for
developing interpersonal relationships, and also delivering lessons using student-centric pedagogies. Teachers also identified limitations and challenges associated with their ADLs, namely the administrative constraints, including the fact that assessments may not always be ideally timed for meaningful feedback. Additionally, teachers reported that although some support services were available to students, in line with Transition Pedagogy, not all students are aware of the support systems in place, and some students remain reluctant to make adequate use of the support systems available. Furthermore, teachers stated that although provisions are made for students with special needs via a document called an ‘Academic Integration Plan’ (AIP), this process can be inconsistent at times, with a delay between students obtaining their AIP and teachers receiving the formal documents necessary to action the AIP requirements.

Moreover, the faculty participants provided a number of recommendations. Recommendations include suggestions for personal care workshops for students, in order to provide students with knowledge to help them cope with their study loads. Workshops were suggested for breathing exercises, time management, mindfulness and focus. Other suggestions recommended that students’ courses be bridged more closely with their prospective careers, with suggestions for professional speakers and opportunities for students to meet members of their desired profession. Finally, it was also recommended that curriculum changes could be implemented to provide interactive lessons on a more-regular basis, in order to maintain student focus and interest. These suggestions are valuable additions to the literature, as they provide direct insight into teachers’ desires relating to their academically diverse learners, and the methods which these teachers believe would directly benefit their ADLs.

Gaining these insights into tertiary teachers’ pedagogical experiences about academic diversity has provided an opportunity for a number of positive steps. Firstly, it has allowed the participants and the researcher to undertake professional self-reflection, in order to identify the aspects of teaching that are relevant when discussing academically diverse learners, and
teaching pedagogies within an academically diverse teaching environment. Specifically, participants’ responses reaffirmed that The College has followed a Transition Pedagogy Model, in order to support students as they begin their academic journey with their first year in tertiary education. The College has provided a number of support systems including the provision of a First Year Experience Coordinator for each student, free access to a Study Lounge for academic support, free access to Studiosity for after-hours study help, as well as the provision of Academic Integration Plans, a policy which recognises the need to modify assessments and other student expectations, based on students’ individual needs. These considerations are in line with relevant literature, which suggests that providing this support to students will enhance their performance in the first year, provide opportunity for greater student engagement, and ultimately result in a higher rate of student retention.

Additionally, this study provided insight into teachers’ meaningful recommendations for consideration, from their own perspectives. It allowed a glimpse into tertiary teachers’ thoughts and perceptions in relation to their teaching pedagogies, from their own viewpoints. Teachers’ recommendations included suggestions for inclusion of breathing exercises and anxiety-controlling measures for students within the classroom, a greater emphasis on career expectations, suggestions for improving the timeliness of assessments and feedback, and the improvement of student engagement, through implementing more student centred, interactive lessons. These recommendations may be considered, as starting points for further research, as well as for future curriculum and policy review. They are discourse initiators in the specific context of TCWSU, and could be used to gain a greater appreciation of the issues raised, particularly from different viewpoints, including other teachers, as well as administrators and policy makers.

Finally, this study has created an avenue from which to further explore the experiences of tertiary educators with academic diversity at TCWSU. It is expected that further studies will
be conducted in order to gain a greater understanding of teachers’ experiences, and to gain a
greater understanding of teaching pedagogies with academic diversity. Future research could
focus on examining the perceptions of a greater number of tertiary teachers, creating a greater
opportunity to gain an overall view of tertiary teachers’ pedagogical experiences with academic
diversity.

5.7 Conclusions

This study provided a direct insight into the understanding of tertiary teacher’s pedagogical experiences about academic diversity. It allowed for a close insight into teachers’ self-reflections and self-perceptions, relating to their teaching pedagogies and their experiences with academically diverse learners.

It seems clear that although the literature is saturated with studies relating to diverse learners’ experiences, it remains relatively limited in regard to tertiary educators’ pedagogical experiences. The findings of this study provide a stepping stone toward understanding the pedagogies employed by tertiary educators as they interact with and deliver lessons to their diverse learners. The findings also help establish that although the educators have similar understandings of what constitutes academically diverse learners, no one definition has been employed, therefore, teachers’ perceptions of their academically diverse learners could be different, based on their own understandings of who their ADLs indeed, are.

This study provided insight into tertiary educators’ understanding of academically diverse learners, the pedagogical approaches they employ with these learners and the suggestions and recommendations they believe would benefit these learners. Teachers’ recounts displayed a unified pedagogical approach among the three study participants, with teachers valuing student engagement and student-centred learning, with strong ties to the Transition Pedagogy, as well as the MMR theory of teaching. Although teachers articulated their teaching pedagogies using their own words, the concepts they value aligned with these
pedagogical models of teaching.

Teachers’ recommendations provided an avenue from which further considerations may be undertaken. This study is valuable to college stakeholders, including teachers and policy makers. It identified a number of recommendations from college teachers’ viewpoints, and also identified a number of positive pedagogical approaches currently employed by The College, Western Sydney University.

Overall, it is evident that academic diversity and academically diverse learners are increasingly becoming the norm in many colleges in Australia and it is recommended that further research be solicited to further identify tertiary teachers’ experiences with academic diversity, and academically diverse learners.
References


sessional teachers to higher education. Sydney: Australian Learning and Teaching Council.


Appendix A

Interview Questions

History of teaching

• What do you think when I mention diverse learners?
• Please tell me about your experience in teaching?
• How was your experience at this college so far?

Present teaching situation

• What is your experience in teaching ADL (academically diverse learners)?
• Who are your ADLs?
• How do you view them?
• How do ADL students perform in comparison to your traditional students?
• How do ADL students perform in comparison to your ADL students from previous years or teaching contexts?
• Did ADL students change over time?
• Do you feel that ADLs are changing or challenging your teaching/pedagogy? How?
• Does academic diversity enrich your classroom or diminish your performance? In what ways?
• How do you treat classes with students of diverse academic backgrounds?
• Do you use specific ADL settings and policies?

• How have your expectations changed over time? What strategies did you abandon? What new strategies are you using now?

Looking forward

• What teaching changes could be done to improve ADL performances?
• What policies could be changed or implemented to improve ADL performances?
• What teaching approaches do you recommend to help ADL students?
• Is there anything that you would like to do in your teaching context, that you have not yet done? If so, what?
• Anything you want to add to our interview about ADL students?
Appendix B

The recruitment letter

Hi, my name is Safa Chmait and I am an Academic English teacher at The College. I am currently undertaking a Masters in Research at Western Sydney University, and as part of this course, I am conducting a study entitled “Exploring Teachers’ Pedagogical Experiences for Promoting Academic Diversity”. This study seeks to understand teachers’ experiences of promoting learning in academically diverse classrooms and will involve participation in a one-hour interview, during which all answers will remain anonymous. If you would like more information, or if you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me via my student email [redacted]. I will be happy to discuss this project with you further or to answer any questions that you may have. I have attached a file containing the project description for your perusal. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like more information, or if you wish to express your interest in participating.

Regards,
Safa Chmait
Appendix C

The consent form

**Consent Form – General (Extended)**

**Project Title:** Exploring Tertiary Teachers’ Pedagogical Experiences about Academic Diversity

I hereby consent to participate in the above named research project.

I acknowledge that:

- I have read the participant information sheet (or where appropriate, have had it read to me) and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
- The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to:

- [ ] Participating in an interview
- [ ] Having my information audio recorded

I consent for my data and information provided to be used in this project and other related projects for an extended period of time.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published and stored for other research use but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without affecting my relationship with the researcher/s, and any organisations involved, now or in the future.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Western Sydney University. The ethics reference number is: H[insert number]

What if I have a complaint?

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through Research Engagement, Development and Innovation (REDI) on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 or email humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix D

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: Exploring Tertiary Teachers’ Pedagogical Experiences for Promoting Academic Diversity

Project Summary: This research study aims to explore college teachers’ experiences with teaching students of varying academic abilities (also referred to as academic diversity or academically diverse learners). It focuses on understanding teachers’ pedagogical practices and the potential impact of academic diversity on their day to day teaching techniques. It will involve interviewing three participants regarding their experiences of teaching academically diverse learners in their classrooms and how this has evolved their teaching practices.

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Safa Chmait, Academic English teacher and Western Sydney University student under the Supervision of Dr Dorian Stoilesacu, Lecturer in Mathematics and ICT Education and Dr. Brenda Dobia, Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at Western Sydney University and Acting Higher Degree Research Director for the School of Education at Western Sydney University. The research is undertaken as a component of the Masters of Research degree, and aims to understand teachers’ experiences with teaching students with diverse academic abilities.

How is the study being paid for? This study is funded by Western Sydney University, Graduate Research School.

What will I be asked to do?
You will be asked to participate in an interview, during which questions will be asked regarding your teaching history and current teaching practices. You will be asked to reflect on past teaching experiences and contexts and to think about them along with your current teaching context, and to also consider the different teaching techniques you have used in the past, as well as the techniques you use in your academically diverse classroom(s).

How much of my time will I need to give?
The interview will take approximately one hour in total.

What benefits will I, and/or the broader community, receive for participating?
The benefits of this study include gaining a clearer understanding of tertiary teachers’ teaching methodologies, understanding the potential effect of academic diversity on teachers’ pedagogies and allowing for potential recommendations to better equip teachers to promote academic diversity in the classroom. Additionally, this study will add to the literature on this relatively new phenomenon.

Will the study involve any risk or discomfort for me? If so, what will be done to rectify it?
All precautions will be taken to ensure a private and quiet area for the interview. Your responses will remain anonymous, with no identifying data disclosed. In fact, your name will not be recorded at all by the researcher, and your responses will only be identified through the use of a pseudonym, to ensure total anonymity.

You will be given the opportunity to review the interview questions before the interview commences, and will have the opportunity to withdraw your participation consent at any time before or during the interview, if you wish to do so. No identifying information will be recorded, and you will remain anonymous at all times.

How do you intend to publish or disseminate the results?
It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that the participant cannot be identified, except with your permission. Your identity will be protected as your responses will only be referred to with the use of a pseudonym. At no time will your name be recorded. Participants will be provided with the opportunity to read the final research paper. An online link will be emailed to participants upon completion of the study.

Will the data and information that I have provided be disposed of?
Please be assured that only the researchers will have access to the raw data you provide and that your data will be de-identified and stored securely. Please note that minimum retention period for data
Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to be involved. If you do participate you can withdraw at any time before or during the interview without giving reason.
If you do choose to withdraw, any information that you have supplied will be disposed of securely.
If you wish to withdraw your participation consent, you may do so by contacting the student researcher via email: 15728278@student.westernsydney.edu.au

Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the Chief Investigator’s contact details. They can contact the Chief Investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain a copy of the information sheet.

What if I require further information?
Please contact Safa Chmait should you wish to discuss the research further before deciding whether or not to participate. You may also contact Dr. Dorian Stoilescu (supervisor), who is overseeing this project.
Safa Chmait
Student researcher
15728278@student.westernsydney.edu.au
Dr. Dorian Stoilescu
Lecturer in Mathematics and ICT Education
Western Sydney University, Kingswood Campus
Phone: +61 2 4736 0273

What if I have a complaint?
If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through Research Engagement, Development and Innovation (REDI) on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 or email humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au.
Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form. The information sheet is for you to keep and the consent form is retained by the researcher/s.
This study has been approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number once the project has been approved].
**Appendix E**

*Inductive Categorization: Staff Interview Responses to Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1 How do instructors define their ADLs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can come from any culture, any background … any status … any educational background … diversity means it’s open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backgrounds, cultures, ability is probably the key thing though … [a] diverse learner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about firstly their background in terms of what their ethnicity is, what their nationalities are, that’s one thing and their skills and learning; so it might be reading and writing, speaking or listening in that sense.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2 What are some of the challenges teachers associate with ADLs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[W]e don't know who's coming in. Because it is open [entry], we don't know whether they're psychotic or schizophrenic or borderline personality disorder, because there's no way of assessing that. So you discovered this, especially with the [disability] students, you just discover that they might need more help. Well, I had one schizophrenic lady in the class. She just said to me one day, because I didn't do something in a special consideration form - it's got all these things, I must do this, I must do that - she yelled at me and just said, can't you read, I gave you the form, I can kill, I can kill if I get stressed, I'm a schizophrenic. In front of the class, you know, I thought oh my god.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of them are just bloody hard to teach. Some of them are just unresponsive and it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

70
depends on the time of day. At 9:00am in the morning they're not awake. At 4:00pm in the afternoon they are dead asleep.

I can see that they struggle. They do struggle with some of the writing tasks.

One … also gets nervous when she’s speaking; very nervous if she mispronounces words as well.

I don’t want them to know that everyone's looking at them because … they’re struggling.

[T]hey don’t perform very well. They don’t have that comprehension and that level of understanding as my traditional - or the mainstream students do.

**Q3 What strategies do tertiary teachers utilise to address the needs of their ADLs?**

I can go around individually and say, how are you going, what do you need to do? She writes down questions. She's got a little book of questions that she asks me. I always say I'll stay back after class and help people, come to me and ask some questions.

I've had to teach them things like stress management and breathing techniques and study techniques[.]

They come up to me and they say, I'm really stressed. I said, look, don't get - don't say that to yourself because you're reinforcing your sub-conscious mind. We've done Freud, all these messages, you know they've learnt positives. All these messages, it's a self-fulfilling prophecy. So, look, just stand still and breathe. That's what I do as much as I can.

Or… , I'll tell everyone stop for a minute, we'll just do this. Everyone put your hand here, take four deep breaths and get your shoulders down and push your stress into your hand and shake it and then go like that and it'll all drop out like this. Just things like that.
Yeah. If they can't sleep I say, well, okay, just say to yourself - don't try and figure out things, just lie there and let your mind go and say let go, let go. One student said, oh yeah, I did that the other night and it works, it works.

I teach at a level to keep the HD level students … but I also break it down so it's absolutely clear to the students that are just …not getting [the concept]. I tell my students go and have a look at YouTube, go and look at Wikipedia but don't use it as a source. Layer your education from that point…Then start building your knowledge based from there and start us[ing] academic sources because now you know what it means.

At 4:00pm in the afternoon they are dead asleep and there are little tricks you can do to try and fix that like bringing in sugar lollies at 4:00pm in the afternoon. You give them a sugar rush for a couple of hours they're right to go.

[It's about] just interacting with them verbally and just go[ing] to their level and listening about their - what they did on the weekend, their family, their personal life, what happened with their girlfriend or whatever…

Q3.1 What support systems are in place to assist ADLs?

First Year Assistance Coordinator
Counsellor
YourTutor/Studiosity
Study Lounge
AIPs - Academic Integration Plans
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIPs - Academic Integration Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Centre / Study Lounge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studiosity/ YourTutor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year Experience Coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIPs - Academic Integration Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studiosity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q3.2 Are any additional supports recommended to assist ADLs?**

[Students should be taught] how to cope with - how to remember things, how to study, how to organise [their] study.

I think the gap between the real world and the education needs to be bridged we have two days before each term starts. I think there could be some emphasis in our professional development days on diverse learning and do some cultural diversity awareness consciousness raising.

Allow more time for student feedback between assessments - Put student needs before bureaucracy

More teachers in Study Lounge

AIPs should be followed up more closely

Reconsider Studiosity website - too long-winded and difficult to navigate

More interactive lessons