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Problem Statement

The purpose of the study is to explore and understand the experiences and outcomes of students during their study placements, with a particular focus on the effects on their professional development and preparedness for the health care industry. It will also explore challenges such as limited supervision, time constraints, and emotional demands of working with vulnerable populations, which will highlight the need for robust support systems and structured guidance.

General Research Approach

- This study emphasizes the significance of generating new, valuable knowledge, particularly in the Maltese context. It is crucial that both the researcher and the participants engage in conversation (Giba and Lincoln, 2005) The decision to conduct a qualitative study was obvious given that this method is frequently used to understand opinions and perceptions. This method also presents complex views collected through interactions with participants (Creswell and Creswell, 2018)..
- The foundation of my research philosophy is the conviction that knowledge is a dynamic construct that is moulded by a range of viewpoints, in-depth investigation, and ethical concerns. In my opinion, research is a complex process where curiosity, critical thinking, and teamwork come together to reveal discoveries and make various contributions.

Research Project Overview

This study aims to enhance students' health and social care studies at MCAST by providing valuable insights into work placements, enhancing their future career preparation. This study aims to enhance understanding of the benefits of placements in this subject domain, as recent research has not adequately explored them in local settings. The study utilized grounded theory for inductive qualitative analysis, utilizing semi-structured interviews and observations with Health and Social Care level 3 students to gather and synthesize information. Managers surveyed students in their placement environment, highlighting benefits and drawbacks. MAXQDA was utilized to analyze data, resulting in codes, categories, theory, and models. The study utilized an initial framework to analyze participants' placement experiences, actions, reactions, and subsequent outcomes, resulting in the development of a conceptual model..

Research Objective/s

- Main Research Objective:** What is the impact of study placements on Health and Social Care EQF level 3 students within Vocational Education in Malta?
- Secondary objective 1:** To shed light on how MCAST might enhance the students' experiences in a dynamic environment for the good of small Maltese enterprises.
- Secondary Objective 2:** To investigate further the extra value that MCAST students derive from their placements, as well as how they generally see the skills they have learned and the expectations they have about the placement.

Research Methodology

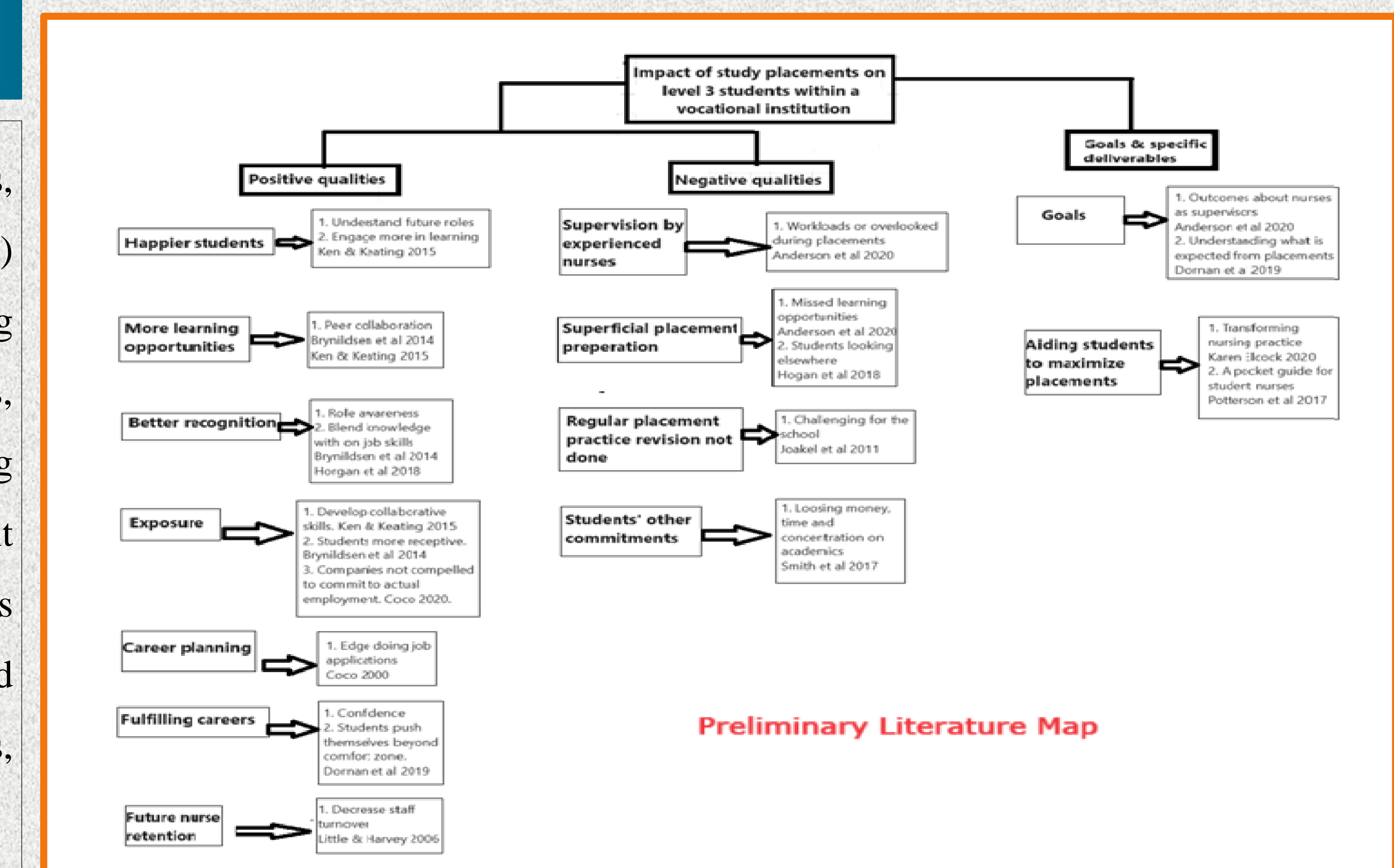
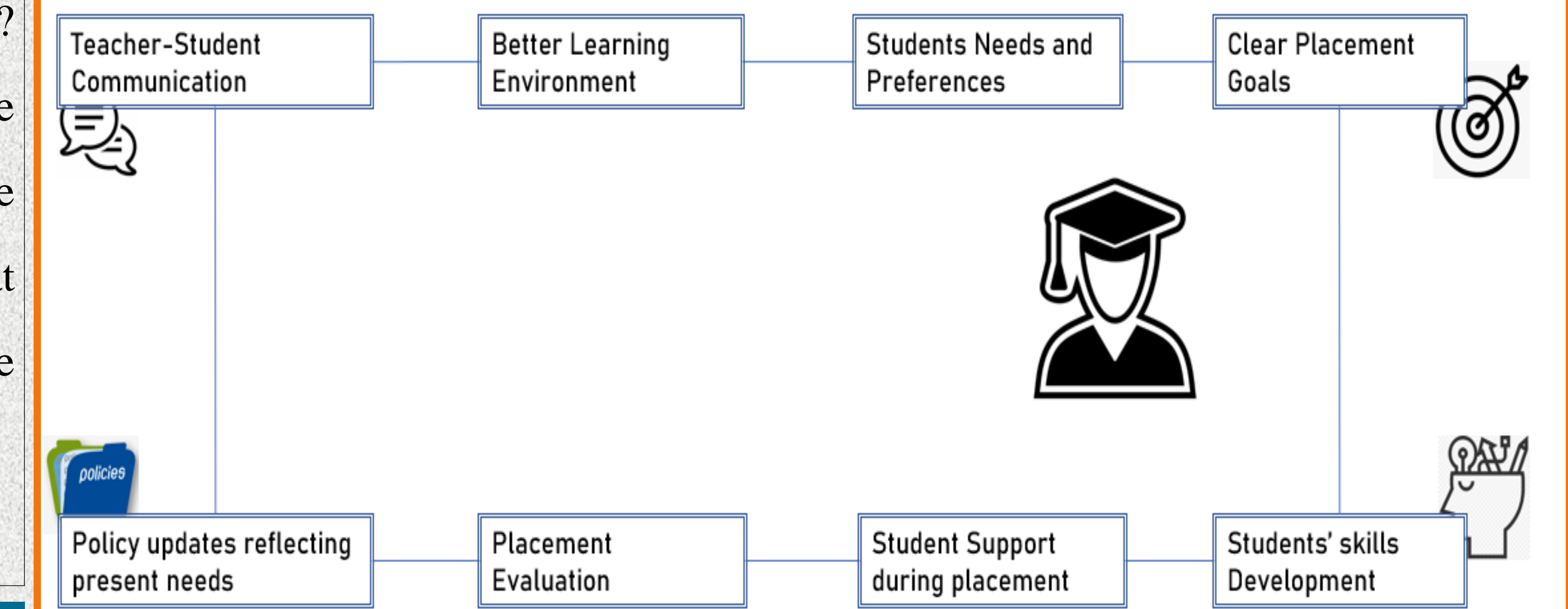
- Understanding the context and the relationships between many factors, stakeholders, and processes is essential in placement situations. Makri (2021) states that grounded theory places a strong emphasis on thoroughly examining the context. This approach enables researchers to find hidden patterns, connections, and underlying structures that support the operation of the setting and the researcher may be able to get a more complete picture of the placement environment. Makri (2021) continues saying that grounded theory provides flexibility in study design, enabling researchers to modify their approaches and inquiries in response to new information. This is useful in placement situations, which can be unpredictable and prone to change.

Research Propositions or Key Findings

- Propositions:** A conceptual model describing strategies instructors, stakeholders, and higher education institutions like MCAST need to adopt to achieve an optimal learning experience for students from placement contexts was developed using a constructivist grounded theory approach
- Finding 1:** The ideal learning environment for meaningful placement experiences is achieved through improved teacher-student communication and a learning environment that considers each student's unique needs and preferences.
- Finding 2:** MCAST and other stakeholders should also enhance communication to ensure placements are tailored to fully develop students' skills.

Emerging models

Emerging Models



Key References

- Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D. (2018) **Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches**. Sage, Los Angeles.
- Giba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005) **Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences**. In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S., Eds., **The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research**, 3rd Edition, Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Makri, C. et al (2021) **Grounded theory: A guide for exploratory studies in management research**. *International Journal of Qualitative methods*.